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Spiritual friendship: historical, theological and ecclesial implications

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Spiritual Friendship:
Historical, Theological and Ecclesial Implications

Thesis

Submitted to

The College of Arts and Sciences of the

UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

The Degree

Master of Arts in Theological Studies

By

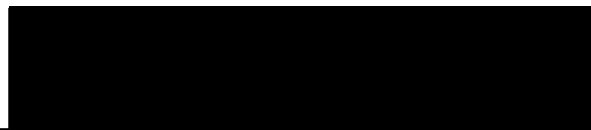
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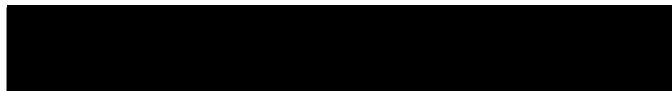
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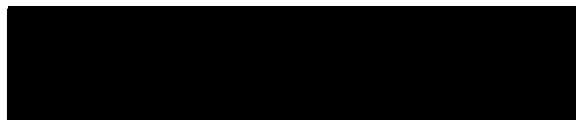
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ABSTRACT

SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP: HISTORICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND ECCLESIAL IMPLICATIONS

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Although the term "friendship" may be in common use in our society, we continue to long for what is so very seldom actually experienced - intimate, lifelong relationships in which persons are loved simply for who they are, and not for what they have to offer. Friendship, though it does fulfill many needs, is paradoxically a nonutilitarian relationship ultimately not intended for anything except the love of the friend. As a result friendship can, and should be, I argue in this thesis, the crux of a Christian lifestyle. Friendship is essential not only to our emotional development but also for our moral development. Because friendship invites us to rejoice in the particularity and the uniqueness of the other, we learn how to grow in love as we reach toward that divine Other. So particular friendships lead us in the direction that enables us to better love everyone; additionally, mature friendships seek the growth of community. In the Christian community, this entails that the encouragement of friendship could have immense implications for the church itself. The main goal of this thesis therefore is the development of a theological concept of friendship adequate for Christian practice today. The primary strategies for developing this concept are a gleaning of classical, traditional and contemporary sources for useful elements; an identification of major obstacles to understanding and practicing friendship as associated with the emergence of the modern

world after the Enlightenment; and a consideration of contributions from the human sciences, including motivating factors regarding the practice of friendship. I also consider the impact of the Second Vatican Council upon the theological concept of friendship and its potential links to holiness and *communio*. An explication of these topics in the work of selected contemporary authors then follows. The final chapter attempts to construct an ecclesiological model of friendship with some degree of critical depth and practical application for the Church today.

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First, my unending gratitude to my husband Larry Sack, and sons Dan, Joe, Tim and Andy, who gave me the space and encouragement to get this work completed. Thanks for the late night grocery runs, rescue work, understanding ears, and so much more. What else can I say?

I would also like to express my appreciation and admiration for the members of my thesis committee: Dr. Dennis Doyle, Dr. William Portier, and Father Paul Marshall. There are friends, and there are *friends*. Each of these men daily continue to perform this thesis of friendship in their own unique and wonderful ways, and for their presence in my life, and in the world, I am very grateful.

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of friendship is discussed so often, we might construe that it is widely and easily experienced in our culture. After all, we have ministries of hospitality, user-friendly machines, and we constantly wish each other a good day. Yet behind the rhetoric is an immense longing for what is so very seldom actually experienced - intimate, lifelong relationships in which persons are loved simply for who they are, and not for what they have to offer. Paradoxically, those persons who most boast of "my friends" may be among the exceptionally lonely as they are surrounded by acquaintances or business colleagues allied by obligations and assistance through an unwritten contract of the reciprocal meeting of needs.¹ Friendship, though it does fulfill many needs, is paradoxically a nonutilitarian relationship ultimately not intended for anything except the love of the friend, and therefore friendship can, and should be, I argue, the crux of a Christian lifestyle.

Few would disagree that friendship is crucial to both emotional and spiritual development. We learn to become fully human persons in part through our relationships. As Augustine of Hippo wrote, two things are necessary for human beings, "a healthy life and friendship."² Friendship is essential not only to our emotional development but also for our moral development. One reason for this is that friendship offers a second self with whom we can share feelings, thoughts, judgments and criticism. Paul Wadell notes, "One

¹ Retrieved from <http://www.ivmdl.org/cbec.cfm?study=125>, on November 11, 2004.

² Augustine, "Sermon 299D, I," in Bernard Brady, *Christian Love* (Washington, D.C.:Georgetown University Press, 2003), 89.

reason we have friends is that there is a good we share with them, but the reason friendships grow and become such a delight is that we cannot be good without them, indeed, we cannot be good at all.”³ Commenting on this, Stanley Hauerwas reflects that the preferential nature of friendship, *philia*, through which we choose to relate intimately with a few people-has always seemed to contradict and oppose the Christian obligation to love everyone, *agape*.⁴ But because friendship invites us to rejoice in the particularity, the uniqueness, and the specialness of the other, we learn how to grow in love as we reach toward that Other. So particular friendships lead us in the direction that enables us to better love everyone, even as mature friendships will admit, and even seek, the growth of community. In the Christian community, this entails that the encouragement of friendship could have immense implications for the church itself.

The question becomes though, in assuming that friendship is essential to our human nature, what sort of friendship should play a role in the Christian church? How might we describe this type of friendship, and where do we find God in it? Does a theological basis exist for this assumption? What about the psychological and sociological implications? In an individualistic, privatized society, how might one create and encourage these forms of relationship? What does this have to do with being church?

The main goal of this thesis therefore is the development of a theological concept of friendship adequate for Christian practice today. The primary strategies for developing this concept are a gleaning of classical, traditional and contemporary sources for useful elements; an identification of major obstacles to understanding and practicing friendship associated with the emergence of the modern world; and a consideration of contributions

³ Paul J. Wadell, *Friendship and the Moral Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2002), 6.

⁴ Wadell, *Friendship and the Moral Life*, x.

from the human sciences, including motivating factors regarding the practice of friendship. The final chapter attempts to construct a Christian model of friendship with some degree of critical depth and practical application for the Church today.

Throughout this paper I refer to interviews I conducted as a dimension of the work for this thesis. These interviews took place between January and April, 2005 with various persons I knew, or to whom I was referred, who were participants in various types of small Christian Communities. They were lay Marianists and Carmelites, Benedictine Oblates, cursillistas, members of the charismatic renewal, and JustFaith participants. I also spoke for quite a while at a local parish with a community oriented toward high school youth. Altogether probably ten interviews took place, although not all narratives are referenced within this paper.⁵ Since these interviewees were purposely selected based upon their involvement in various ecclesial structures, I cannot claim they hold impartial opinions in regard to these structures. I believe, however, their narratives further lend a necessary, realistic, pastoral tone, an urgency even, to the otherwise more conventionally academic aspects of this thesis.

Chapter One of the thesis will examine the development of the concept of friendship through scriptural, classical, and theological sources up to the time of the Enlightenment. I argue that during these eras the theme of friendship was treated as a

⁵ About 5 of those interviewed were lay Marianists, one couple were Benedictine Oblates, another was a lay Carmelite. Three had, in the previous decade, completed the Cursillo weekend, and were currently Fourth Day Ultreya members. Two women friends were very active in a Life in the Spirit group, and close to a half-dozen were past participants or leaders in JustFaith programs. Additionally, three were adult members of a parish small Christian community, and another fifteen were youth members. Each meeting was tape recorded, and notes were later compiled for the purposes of this paper. For purposes of privacy, I use initials when referring to those interviewed. Each interview was conducted using the same list of questions, which ranged from a discussion of their involvement in their pertinent organization, how they might describe friendship, where they saw friendship manifested in the church, brainstorming on what that form of friendship might potentially look like, and if they believed friendship with God was possible.

serious intellectual and public topic, and to situate it within a spiritual context was readily accepted. Beginning with the Enlightenment, however, the perception of friendship changes immensely, and the intent of these early writers concerning this topic is not again understood until well into the twentieth century. Chapter Two therefore picks up this thread, explaining in what manner many of these changes occurred, using examples from the work of several philosophers and social scientists. This chapter concludes with an examination of some of the issues surrounding the psychological and social needs of human beings for friendship.

Chapter Three begins with the impact of the Second Vatican Council upon the theological concept of friendship and its potential links to holiness and *communio*. An explication of these topics in the work of selected contemporary authors then follows. Finally, the last chapter considers the ecclesiological and practical implications of a spiritual form of friendship, particularly within the Catholic Church.

CHAPTER ONE

A HISTORY OF SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP

This first chapter will examine then, in historical progression, the development of the Christian concept of friendship. After briefly purveying Scripture and the Greek classics upon which Christian thinkers draw, it examines the work of four Catholic theologians noted for their interest in this topic. Certainly others might have been chosen. However, the influence of these on Christian friendship is immense, such that they could not have been omitted. Additionally, they build upon each other's work, and so through their writings, a continuous unfolding of these ideas until the Enlightenment can be observed.

Friendship in the Bible

The Bible addresses the subject of friendship from several angles including narrative example, personal reflection and explicit theological reflection. Although an entire thesis might in itself be written concerning the use of various connotations of friendship within Scripture, within this chapter I discuss only two primary narratives, as well as passages from the Gospel of John, which well exemplify themes later theologians will find important in discussing concerning this topic.⁶

⁶ Similarly, for reasons of time and page length I do not delve into historical criticism or other perspectives in which these stories might be read and interpreted.

For example, an early Scriptural narrative dealing with friendship is found in the relationship of the son of Saul, Jonathan, with David.⁷ Characteristic of their model friendship is the objectivity, or non-utilitarianism, of Jonathan's friendship with David, for the relationship ultimately would make David and not Jonathan the successor to the throne. Such friendship was precarious because the two found themselves caught in a triangle with Saul, the jealous father. Only once are David's feelings toward Jonathan addressed, and that is in the lament over his death: "Your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. As a mother loves her only son, so I was loving you" (2 Samuel 1:26). This same-sex friendship was secured by a covenant (1 Samuel 18:3), a covenant which David honored long after his friend's death (2 Samuel 9:1-13). The relationship, therefore, was both lifelong and continued even after the death of one of the friends. Most significant was the spirituality of the friendship; Jonathan sought to give David strength in the Lord, not in their relationship (1 Samuel 23:16-18).

Another example of a biblical reflection on friendship is found in Ecclesiastes 4:7-12, which includes a discussion of the rewards of friendship.⁸ Such rewards are practical support when one falls down (Eccles. 4:10), or requires warmth (Eccles. 4:11), or assistance and spiritual encouragement.⁹

⁷ See, for example, 1 Samuel 18:1-4; 1 Samuel 19:1-7; 1 Samuel 20; 1 Samuel 23:16-18; 2 Samuel 1:17-27; 2 Samuel 9:1-12. The New American Bible is used for all Scriptural references throughout this thesis.

⁸ Ecclesiastes 4:9: "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their work," implying that unlike one who works in solitude, those who work together have companionship to lift them up when necessary.

⁹ Ecclesiastes 4:12; "a three-ply cord is not easily broken".

The psalms offer the witness that even our friends will betray us, and that the search for a true friend will lead us to the conclusion that only God is our help.¹⁰

Friendship, therefore, should ultimately be centered in God. Nevertheless, the worth and pleasure of the bond experienced between like-minded persons is glorified: "Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity" (Psalm 133:1).

The Bible puts human friendship into the context of the relational life within God and the good news in which God makes friends out of his enemies.¹¹ Friendship between God and humanity is the definitive reason for God's grace on the spiritual path.¹² This was especially represented by Moses with whom God spoke on Mount Sinai "face to face, as a man speaks with his friend" (Exodus 33:11). Abraham was declared a friend of God.¹³ Similarly, Job wished God's friendship even more than he desired relief from his own misery: "Oh, for the days when I was in my prime, when God's intimate friendship blessed my house" (Job 29:4). Satan's question at the beginning of the book of Job addressed the crux of his friendship with God: "Is it for nothing that Job is God-fearing?" (Job 1:9). Friendship, even friendship with God therefore, has no utilitarian value. As the Danish philosopher Kierkegaard wrote, the true friend expects and requires nothing in return, and cannot be deceived by his or her friend. The true friend abides in love, both

¹⁰ Psalm 55:13-15: "If an enemy had reviled me, that I could bear; If my foe had viewed me with contempt, from that I could hid. But it was you, my other self, my comrade and friend, You, whose company I enjoyed, at whose side I walked in procession in the house of God."

¹¹ "So that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me....so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me....they are you gift to me....I made known to them your name and I will make it know, that the love with which you loved me may be in them and I in them." John 17:21-24, 26.

¹² Nicholas Lash, *Believing Three Ways in One God: A Reading of the Apostle's Creed*. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993). See especially Chapter 5. which concerns the appearance of Jesus on earth through the Incarnation and work of the Spirit.

¹³ "But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, offspring of Abraham my friend." Isaiah 41:8; also "Thus the scripture was fulfilled that say, 'Abraham believed God, and ...he was called 'the friend of God.'"" James 2:23.

believing in and trusting in one's friend.¹⁴ The problem of Job, therefore, is not whether or not to believe in friendship; it is whether to believe in one's friends. It might also be said that Job's supposed friends in this narrative, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, although they came to give Job comfort and sympathy, were not true friends.¹⁵ They were far more concerned with assuaging their own guilty misery than in assisting Job with his own problems. In the depths of his loneliness, though surrounded by his friends, Job cries, "A friend owes kindness to one in despair, though he himself have forsaken the fear of the Almighty. My brethren are undependable as a brook, as watercourses that run dry" (Job 6:14-15). When Job's friends attacked in their lack of understanding, instead of inducing guilt they provoked Job to self-justification, which seems to have alleviated his suicidal despair.

In one of the most pertinent passages concerning friendship in the New Testament, Jesus said, "No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends" (John 15:15). But ordinary friendship is perhaps not truly an appropriate or adequate metaphor for friendship with Jesus, for it involves obedience to his commands. Seldom is it likely, however, particularly in contemporary society, that we associate the connotations associated with the word "obey" with our perceived understanding of the equality of friendship.¹⁶ Obviously in these passages a deeper or alternative meaning of "friendship" is at play. Indeed, one might argue that friendship with Jesus is inseparable from the message of

¹⁴ Søren Kierkegaard cited in Gilbert Meilander. *Friendship: A Study in Theological Ethics*. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 42.

¹⁵ "Now when three of Job's friends heard of all the misfortune that had come upon him, they set out each one from his own place: Eliphaz from Teman, Bildad from Shuh, and Zophar from Naamath. They met and journeyed together to give him sympathy and comfort." Job 2:11.

¹⁶ "You are my friends if you do what I command you." John 15:14.

Jesus, for Jesus himself is the message; the life of Jesus exemplifies the potentiality of friendship. As a result friendship with Jesus is more than mere sentimentality; to disobey his commands is to deny his friendship.

This therefore raises yet another question which will be addressed in this thesis, of just what friendship with God might consist, or if it is possible at all. Although Aristotle believed that "love equalizes lovers," he himself did not think friendship with God possible. Similarly, although Jesus called for nonpreferential love for all, he obviously had particular friendships himself.¹⁷ Reflect on, for example, Lazarus, Mary and Martha, and the disciple whom he loved.¹⁸ Jesus required adamant faithfulness to himself even if it meant dissolving human relationships, yet he encouraged such relationships and described his connection with his apostles and disciples as friendship.¹⁹ So, an additional question to address then might be just what the role is of particular friendships, or *philia*, within Christianity, in comparison with what might be called Christian charity, or *agape*?

The theological background for Jesus' view of friendship is the relational nature of humans created in the image of God and the Trinitarian "friendship" relationship within the personhood of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.²⁰ This is a social bond of love, mutual respect, common interest and relational joy in which human beings share. As John writes, "Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ" (1

¹⁷ Consider, in regards to the question of universal, nonpreferential love for example, "If you love those who love you, what reward will you get?" Matthew 5:46.

¹⁸ "And Jesus wept. So the Jews said, 'See how he loved him'" John 11:35-36. Also, in regards to John "One of his disciples, the one whom Jesus loved, was reclining at Jesus' side." John 13:23.

¹⁹ "If anyone comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple." John 14:26.

²⁰ Consider especially, "God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them." Genesis 1:27.

John 1:3). Behind the verse in 1 John 4:16, "God is love," is the implication that whoever lives in friendship lives in God. If one lives in God by following the greatest commandment and loving God, one's friend, as well as one's neighbor, (Luke 10:27), it follows that to love one's neighbor as a friend is also to love God.²¹ It does appear quite significant that Luke followed his discussion of this commandment of Jesus with both the parable of the Good Samaritan, as well as a narrative about his friends Martha and Mary and the need to spend time with Jesus their friend.²² Here are very specific, embodied examples of how to love both God and one's neighbor in friendship.

Friendship through the Classics

The roots of Christian friendship lie in the ancient classics as well as in the Bible.²³ Aristotle and Cicero maintained that the good life cannot exist without friends spending time together and sharing in discussion and thought.²⁴ Already present before the Christian era therefore, is the idea that happiness in human life depends on friendship. Communicating life with others permits the human to actualize him/herself. As wrote Aristotle, "God is his own good activity, but human good consists in relationship to others."²⁵ Intimacy, therefore, is the fullest expression of human life. However, often where friendship existed in the Greek world, it was more of a sociopolitical relationship than the private and personal association sought today.

²¹ "He said, you shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." Luke 10:27.

²² The parable of the Good Samaritan can be found in Luke 10:29-37, and the story of Martha and Mary later in the same chapter Luke 10:38-42.

²³ Those roots go very deep and wide. Here I limit my discussion to Aristotle and Cicero, whose influence concerning the topic of friendship upon later Catholic theologians was, and remains, immense.

²⁴ Aristotle (384 – 322 BC) was a Greek philosopher, teacher, and student of Plato. His own most famous student was Alexander the Great. Marcus Tullius Cicero (106 BC – 43 BC) was a Roman statesman, lawyer, political theorist, philosopher, widely considered one of Rome's greatest orators and prose stylists.

²⁵ Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics : Books I, II, and VIII*, translated and with a commentary by Michael Woods (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1982), I: 18-19.

Aristotle wrote of "civic friendship," the bond which holds the members of a political community together. Friends are loved because they are useful, they are pleasant, or because they are good. He also believed though, that the highest form of friendship occurs when those who are equal choose one another as friends, not for the sake of pleasure or advantage, but because of the other's character – i.e. 'character' friendship.²⁶ Friendship thus becomes a consequence of virtue. A virtuous person loves in one's friends the moral beauty one loves in one's self. Love for goodness therefore is in some way love for oneself. Friendship plays a large role in self-knowledge, for one begins to think of "the friend as the other self."²⁷ Through friendship then one can see oneself in a friend, and the nature of the goodness in that friend binds both together.

For Aristotle however, like Plato, mutuality and good will are not enough for a friendship to exist – those sentiments must also be communicated through a period of time. Friends delight in one another's company and spend time together. This develops intimacy, which is the essence of friendship, although intimacy is meant by Aristotle as affability and good conversation, not necessarily one's most private thoughts. Through intimacy friends share thoughts and their common interests, and subsequently grow closer. Therefore, friendship is generally limited to one's inner circle. "Perfect friendship cannot extend to many persons."²⁸ The true friend is a rare find, for "Friendship is

²⁶ Meilander, *Friendship*, 13.

²⁷ "When we want to know ourselves we need only look at our friend. For the friend is an other self. If then it is agreeable to know oneself, but on the other hand it is not possible to arrive at this without an other, who is our friend, the man who is sufficient in himself needs friendship to know himself." Aristotle, *Magna Moralia* II, 17, 1213a 22-26 cited in Terrence A McGoldrick. *The Sweet and Gentle Struggle: Francis de Sales on the Necessity of Spiritual Friendship*, (Lanham: University Press of America, Inc., 1996), 26. Hereafter referred to as *Struggle*.

²⁸ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1985). IX, 10, 1171a 8-14. Aristotle argues here that intimacy with all implies intimacy with no one. True friends were a rare find, because persons of true virtue are rare.

communion,” and such unity is not often found.²⁹ Friendship also requires a risk, and a decision about the other, which implies an implicit and perhaps unrecognized testing of the other to prove that person worthy of one’s trust.

According to Aristotle, friendship is only possible between equals. Friendship with God therefore, is impossible, due to the inequality in the relationship, as well as the lack of mutuality.

Friendship and Augustine

The thought of Bishop Augustine of Hippo (354-430 C.E.) contains a synthesis of the Classic concepts of friendship. His work is also a bridge between classic writers like Cicero, Aristotle, and Plato with Christianity.³⁰ For Augustine, friendship is defined as an agreement on things human and divine, combined with both the mutual good will and love of the friends.³¹

One major point of difference between Augustine and the classical writers, however, is just what the source of friendship might be. Cicero thought friendship was simply caused by nature, and he had more faith in nature than did Aristotle, for whom friendship was only possible between the virtuous. Augustine, however, believes friendship’s bond comes from a “divine work.” Indeed, “there is no true friendship unless “You weld it between souls that cleave together through that charity which is shed

²⁹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*. Ending of VIII.

³⁰ *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* considers Augustine one of the most prolific geniuses that humanity has ever known, admired not only for the number of his works, but also for the variety of subjects on which he wrote. He was born in Tagaste, in Northern Africa, a small free city which had recently been converted from Donatism. After study in Carthage, dabbling in Manichæanism, and a journey to Rome where he fell under the influence of Bishop Ambrose, he was ordained in 391 and became bishop of Hippo in 396.

³¹ See for example, Augustine, *De Amicitia*, 20 also *Contra Academicos* III, vi, 13 in 386. and *Soliloquia* 1, 16.

in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us.”³² Only this kind of friendship, fostered by God, does Augustine call true. Indeed, he believed that the chemistry one feels when with a friend, “the rush of affection” as described by Cicero, is clearly God himself.³³

To love friends therefore is essential to human nature, for we are naturally attracted to things and to people. We desire to satisfy that “unsatisfied longing of the homesick heart,” which is actually a longing for God.³⁴ Indeed, as mentioned before, two things are essential for any person according to Augustine. These are: “a healthy life and friendship.”³⁵ He builds upon the neo-Platonic “Ladder of Love” image, in stating that all other loves are continuous with and a vehicle for the love of Being, the love of God, and the love also of God’s principles. Friendship is therefore “a nest of love and gentleness because of the unity it brings about between many souls” through this relationship with God.³⁶

A mutual attraction, an affinity in thought and action, must exist for friendship to occur. To begin a friendship is to communicate our admiration and affection to the other person. For, “there is no greater invitation to love than to lovingly make the first

³² “Vera amicitia, quia non est vera, nisi cum eam tu agglutinas inter harentes sibi caritate diffusa in cordibus nostris per spiritum sanctum, qui datu sest nobis,” Augustine *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*, trans. Edward B. Pussey (New York: Collier Books, 1972) IV, 7.

³³ Cited in McGoldrick, 61. As Francis De Sales wrote to Jane de Chantal, “It is to that great God, I say, the one to whom we are consecrated, that renders me forever and without reserve dedicated to your soul, and you to me the same, in this Savior, we are inseparably joined. Long live Jesus!” *Oeuvres de Saint François de Sales, Evêque de Genève et Docteur de l'Eglise, Edition complete, d'après les autographes et les éditions originales*. Published by the Religious of the Visitation of the Premier Monastère d'Annecy, 27 Volumes, J. Niérat, et al., Annecy, (1892 – 1964). Vol 1: *Les Controverses.*, II: *Défense de l'Estendard de la Sainte Croix.*, III: *Introduction à la Vie Dévote.* IV and V: *Traité de l'Amour de Dieu.* VI: *Les Vrais Entretiens Spirituels.* VII to X: *Sermons.* XI to XXI: *Lettres.* XXII to XXVI: *Opuscules.* And XXVII: *Index.*, Hereafter known as *Oeuvres*. Letter CCCIV. My translation.

³⁴ John Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine* (Norwich: The Canterbury Press, 1991), 96.

³⁵ Augustine, “Sermon 299D,I,” cited in Donald Burt, *Friendship and Society: An Introduction to Augustine's Practical Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, MI: William Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 57.

³⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, Book 4, section 6.

advances.”³⁷ Communication therefore is a primary element in the relationship as a way to invite friendship and express that affection.

A friendship creates its own wisdom if it comes from a life lived in God, and such a friendship, thought Augustine, has four duties. The first is to desire God and Christian perfection for the friend and for oneself. Additionally, the friends must respect each other enough that confidence is fostered in the friendship, in order that they are willing to be vulnerable to each other. This confidence is also fostered if the friendship is based upon necessary truth and frankness. Finally, Augustine believed the friends must pray for each other.³⁸

Although words may be all that are available at the commencement of a relationship, with faith one is willing and able to risk reaching out to this new person.³⁹ It is the realization that God is behind this incipient friendship that offers the inspiration for a person to expose oneself and be vulnerable. It is, after all, quite probable the relationship, as well as one’s ego, would be damaged if the love is not mutual, and if one would believe his or her love is not returned for love in kind.

Therefore, it is necessary that one choose one’s friends well. Caution must be used, for friendship most certainly can be dangerous and does entail risk. It can involve a

³⁷ “Nulla est enim major ad amorem invitation, quam praevenire amando; et nimis durus est animus qui dilectionem si nolebat impendere, nolit rependere.” Augustine *Eighty Three Various Questions* Question 71.6 cited in Brady, *Christian Love*, 97; also McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 65. This volume was written between 388-395 and is a collection of short treatises, many exegetical but some philosophical, on a variety of topics, written at Tagaste and Hippo.

³⁸ For example, *Epistulae* 231, 6: “Ora fili, ora. Sentio, quid diam, scio, quid petam; no tibi videatur indignum et quasi ultra merita tua; faudabis me mango adjutorio, sinon feceris. Non solum t used etiam ommnes, qui me ex ore tuo dilexerit, orate pro me.” Cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 62. This letter of Augustine’s was written to Darius about 429 A.D.

³⁹ “Et si quisquam sit qui se non audit intenere ad amicitiam faaciendam, cum aliquot nostro temporali honore aut dignitate revocetur, descendendum est ad eum, et offerendum illi quadam comitate et submissione animi, quod petere per se ipse non audit.” Augustine, *Eighty-Three Various Questions*, Question 83, 71 cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 64.

"seduction of the mind" and might be a "dangerous enemy."⁴⁰ However, do not dismiss the possibility of friendship with any one, wrote Augustine, and remember that intimacy cannot exist without humility. This humility must be based upon true self knowledge, for friends must be aware of the limitations of human nature and their duties as friends. It is our humble Christian duty never to refuse someone's offer of friendship. According to Augustine, it was far better to risk oneself and fail, then to be too prudent when it comes to friendship, for one must at least attempt to follow God's will in the matter.⁴¹

Indeed, with Augustine it was love of God that was the greatest good, and that on which all other beauty, including friendship, comes to rest and to which it must be compared. Others then are to be loved for the sake of God; this is a love which understood properly also includes action of some type. The mission of love, the action of friendship, is to carry one another's burdens, miseries, and faults.⁴²

Right friendship, taught Augustine, comes from an ordered will, from God one might say, while a bad will produces bad love. Friendship is a kind of service which listens to the loved, is present to the friend, and can be shared, Augustine believed, and unlike Aristotle thought this occurs even between unequals. Since the loving relationship of friendship is not for gain, but overflows from benevolence, it is constant despite lulls in communication or love. However, if the friend is strong, she will hold onto and

⁴⁰ Brady, *Christian Love*, 89.

⁴¹ "Et si quisquam sit qui se non audit intenere ad amicitiam faaciendam, cum aliquot nostro temporali honore aut dignitate revocetur, descendendum est ad eum, et offerendum illi quadam comitate et submissione animi, quod petere per se ipse non audit." Augustine *Eighty-Three Various Questions*, Question 83, 71 cited in Brady, *Christian Love*, 97, also McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 64. Terence McGoldrick also mentions that Francis de Sales understood that it was a Christian duty to never refuse someone's sincere offer of friendship, one must "never scorn the meeting of anyone."

⁴² "For it is in loving Christ that we tolerate the weakness of our neighbor with ease, even those whom we do not yet love for their qualities." Augustine, *Eighty-three Various Questions*, Question 83, 71 cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 96. Also "The mission of this love is that we carry one another's burdens. For nothing proves friendship as well as carrying the burden of a friend." Ibid., cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 91.

continue in the friendship even during times of difficulty, because the meaning of friendship is "to love not to enjoy, but to heed the interests of the other."⁴³ If one "loves his friend for what God might be in him," then it is natural to pray for him or her, even if the friendship is difficult.⁴⁴ Prayer is a proper means of expressing the benevolence of a friendship, thought Augustine, and is indispensable not only for the advancement in God of the friends themselves, but for the very union of the friendship.

It is quite possible, Augustine therefore believed, for a person of faith to find friendship with God. It was this friendship itself that Augustine felt compelled to share with others. He considered it necessary to bear a friend's weaknesses, as well as their strengths, in order that friends might be led to the joy that comes from loving, and being loved by, God. Such friendship with God compels one to share its good with others:

What limits can there be to my love of this beauty? Not only do I not envy it to others, but I encourage as many as possible to seek it with me, to aspire after it with me, to possess it with me, to delight in it with me. And I shall always hold as more truly my friends those who share more intimately the object of my love with me."⁴⁵

United in a mutual love of God, every Christian is in some way a friend of every other, thought Augustine, and when conditions are right it might happen that one meets another with whom an instantaneous friendship could spring forth.⁴⁶ Because friendship as described here is free and joyful, it easily extends to the family of the friend. This kind

⁴³ "Si crederit, frigidior erit in eo amore quo invicem homines mutual familiaritate perfruuntur: et si non ita est infirmus, ut haec illum offension faciat ab omni dilectione frigesce; in ea se tenet, qua non ut fruatur, sed ut consulat diligit, Augustine, *De Catechizandis Rudibus* IV,7 cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 72.

⁴⁴ "I think that when you raise your good heart to the Lord," Augustine wrote to his friends Nebridus and Memor, "you raise me with it, since you have me in it." *Epistulae*, 101 cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 61.

⁴⁵ Augustine, *Soliloquia* 1,22 cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 67.

⁴⁶ "Bona opera tua Christi gratia germinantia ten obis in membris eius honorandum et plane notissimum dilectissimumque facerunt. Neque enim, si quotide faciem tuam viderem, notior mihi esses, quam cum interiorem tuum pacis docrem puchrum ac vertiatis luce radiantem in unius tui facti candore conspexi, conspexi et agnoui, angoui et amaui." Augustine, *Epistulae*. 58, 1 cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 88.

of love requires the stripping of possessiveness. The desire to have becomes a desire to share, for when one is secure in friendship with God, one becomes rich in love, rich enough to give away what one has. Indeed, for Augustine, the ideal Christian life is *anima una et cor unum in Deum*, "one spirit and one heart in God."⁴⁷ Also, considering life as a friend of God and Christian friend of the world, Augustine wrote "Love and do what you will; if you hold your peace of love hold your peace; if you cry out, of love cry out; if you correct, of love correct; if you spare, spare through love; If the root of love be within, from this root nothing can spring but what is good"⁴⁸

We are not to become slaves to our friends, for we are to love them not less nor more than we love ourselves. To love like this however, understood Augustine, is very difficult. We always fall short. For one, it is impossible to ever be able to truly share our innermost self with our friends, regardless of how we try. It is only in heaven that the potential friendship with those we love on earth will fully be realized. His understanding of Christian friendship is therefore necessarily quite eschatological in nature. Indeed, death does not destroy friendship, for Christians it simply transforms it with a certain glad joy amidst the grief. Only in heaven will no misunderstandings occur, and there will be no need for words, no miscommunications, only true peace and intimacy.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ See for example, Augustine *Epistulae* 243, 4; *Epistulae* 211,2; *Regula ad servos Dei*, 1; and *Contra Faustum Manichaeum*, V, 9.

⁴⁸ "Dilige et quod vis fac; sive taceas, dilectione taceas; sive calmes, dilectione calmes; sive emendes, dilectione emendes; sive parkas, dilectione parkas; radix sit intus dilectionis, non potest de ista radice nisi bonum exire," Augustine, *Tractatus in evangelium Iohannis* VII, 8 cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 86.

⁴⁹ For example, "Peace shall then be made pure in the sons of God, all loving one another, seeing one another full of God, since God shall be all in all." Augustine, *En in Psalms LXXXV*, 10 cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 91.

Aelred and Spiritual Friendship

Saint Aelred (1109-1166) became novice-master at the Cistercian monastery at Rievaulx in Yorkshire, England, sometime after 1142 C.E.⁵⁰ It appears he had three special reasons to write on, or sources to draw from, in regards to the topic of friendship. The first was his own experience in court and monastery, including his lifelong delight in friendship, as well as his frustration at his inability to form true, lasting friendships. Second was the influence of Cicero, and in particular the work *On Friendship*. Third was Aelred's own Christian beliefs. His project in this regard, particularly his book *Spiritual Friendship*, is nothing less than the attempt to bring these first two reasons into alignment with Christianity, and thus to derive some overarching guidelines for forming spiritual friendships.⁵¹

Aelred's Neo-Platonism envisioned a continuous movement from physical loves to pure love of God, from lower relationships to pure spiritual friendships that take one to the heart of God. So he categorized a ladder of friendships from the functional, the receptive (director to disciple), reciprocal (pilgrims together), and finally the knitting of souls.

The idealized view of friendship that so stirred the soul of Aelred is a very different one than that held by most contemporary people. To judge from his description of friendship, he appears to have expected almost as much of his friends as those in the

⁵⁰ Aelred of Rievaulx was the son of an English married priest. He was also the friend of King David of Scotland, at whose court he resided for quite a while, and who desired to make him a bishop. Aelred instead decided to become a Cistercian monk, in the recently founded abbey of Rievaulx in Yorkshire. Soon afterward he was appointed master of novices, and was especially remembered for his tenderness and patience towards those under his charge. In 1146 he was elected abbot of Rievaulx. In this position the saint was not only superior of a community of 300 monks, but he was head of all the Cistercian abbots in England.

⁵¹ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, translated by Mark F. Williams. (Scranton, NJ: University of Scranton Press, 1994). 15.

twenty-first century do of their spouses, or perhaps even more. To begin such a friendship is very difficult, and as has already been suggested within this paper, often results in the label "friendship" being applied to relationships which fall far short of the ideal. Conversely, it may result in persons who yearn their whole lives for an intimacy they know not how to, or are never able to find.

Aelred begins by agreeing, provisionally, with Cicero's definition of friendship as "agreement on both human and divine affairs, combined with good will and mutual esteem."⁵² However, he expands upon this description by first translating this into Christian terms, and then by asserting that although Cicero might believe few could achieve such friendship, Christians are more than capable of attaining true friendship, but, to be exact, a specific kind of true friendship.

Aelred very quickly places friendship within the realm of love, and states that "the word 'friend' or *amicus* is derived from the word love' or *amor*, as it seems to me; and 'friendship' or *amicitia* is derived from 'friend.' However, love is an affection of the rational mind through which the mind seeks something for itself with desire and strives to enjoy that object of its desire."⁵³ A friend might be called "the guardian of love," so therefore the friend must be the guardian of the mutual love between the two friends, or even of the very soul of the friend. As guardian the friend can preserve "in faithful silence all the secrets [of the soul], but not only preserve in silence, but correct or endure whatever is flawed."⁵⁴ Friends rejoice when the other rejoices, grieve as the other grieves. Friendship joins minds in such a bond that they are made "one from many," as

⁵² Aelred, *Spiritual Friendship*, I:11.

⁵³ Aelred, *Spiritual Friendship*, I:19.

⁵⁴ Aelred, *Spiritual Friendship*, I:19.

Cicero said.⁵⁵ Friendship, therefore, is eternal, not subject to chance and change. A relationship that ends was never true friendship. "You should not believe that a man has ever tasted the delights of true friendship if he stops loving the friend he once loved, even if that friend did him some harm."⁵⁶

Good people therefore, make good friends, thought Aelred, particularly as they are aware of each others' virtues. However, he often inserts a warning against the impulse toward love which makes impossible the opportunity to test the friendship. It is important to first discern who has the necessary virtues for friendship. Not only the "good" can be friends though, however the partners must instead be living "soberly and justly and godly in this world."⁵⁷ Aelred quotes Cicero in saying that both friendship and love arise when people see virtue and goodness in another, but the more perfect and virtuous the friends, the more perfect the friendship.⁵⁸ Does this imply true friendship is rare? Aelred replies that actually he sees thousands of pairs of Christian friends, "who by faith in the Lord were ready to die one for another...for as Acts 4:32 says 'There was one heart and one mind in the multitude of believers.... they had all things in common'." How, he asks, could Cicero's definition of friendship fail to exist between people who are of "one heart and one mind"?

Aelred also addresses Cicero's use of the term "good will" by stating that it refers to the mental emotion of friendship, whereas "mutual esteem" means the expression of friendship through deeds, or similar interests.⁵⁹ However, he agrees, a great difference

⁵⁵ Aelred, *Spiritual Friendship*, 1:20.

⁵⁶ Aelred, *Spiritual Friendship*, 1:23.

⁵⁷ Katherine TePas. "Amor, Amicitia and Misericordia : A Critique of Aelred's Analysis of Spiritual Friendship," *Downside Review* 112: 252. Here "the good" refers to "good" or virtuous people; TePas / Aelred are implying that the "imperfect" can also be friends, if they live a sober, just and godly life.

⁵⁸ Aelred, *Spiritual Friendship*, 3:49.

⁵⁹ Aelred, *Spiritual Friendship*, 1:15.

does exist between 'good will' and friendship, for more people ought to receive our good will than whom we embrace as friends. Jesus tells us not only to receive friends but also enemies with esteem or good will.⁶⁰ A legitimate reason for loving others therefore is to obey God's command – thus one might love one's enemies, even though they are not enjoyed, because this allows the attainment of a relationship with God. They are loved for God's sake. It is our friends though to whom we are not afraid to entrust our hearts.

As did Aristotle, Augustine and a century later Aquinas, Aelred distinguishes between several kinds of friendship. Carnal friendship is that which is created by "an agreement in vices," wherein the result of this is that "the one will do or suffer anything that is criminal or sacrilegious on behalf of the other; both partners think that nothing is sweeter than their friendship, and that nothing is more just....rather it follows the impetus of emotion.. nor does it aim at what is honorable."⁶¹

Worldly friendship, on the other hand, is created by desire for things of this world, and is always full of deception; nothing within it is secure. Elements of true friendship, however, might be found within it. Especially Aelred writes this is the case of those who enter this bond of friendship in the hope of common gain. Still, it cannot be called true friendship.⁶²

Spiritual friendship, which is what he deems to be true friendship, is not desired for any reason extrinsic to itself, but only for the worthiness of its own nature, for a reward

⁶⁰ By stating "But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you." Matthew 5:44.

⁶¹ Aelred, *Spiritual Friendship*, I:41.

⁶² Aelred, *Spiritual Friendship*, I:44.

of nothing beyond itself.⁶³ This kind of friendship therefore is created among good people through the similarity of their characters, goals, and habits in life.⁶⁴

Aelred believes that from the beginning of time “nature impressed upon human minds the emotional desire for friendship and affection.”⁶⁵ Such friendship flows from God through God’s work in creation. Friendship therefore is part of the natural law. After the fall, however, greed began to creep in, bringing avarice, envy, disputes and hatred. A distinction was now made between friendship and affection, between good will and true friendship. A few perceptive people realized that riches themselves afforded no delight, nor fame or sensuousness. Humans thence retained their desire to love as they realized happiness could not be found only from within. Natural friendship, therefore, Aelred compares to a virtue, like wisdom, which is sought and preserved for its own sake. Indeed, he claims, friendship is so close to wisdom, “or even filled with wisdom, that I would almost say that friendship is nothing else but wisdom.”⁶⁶ Friendship cannot exist without grace, Aelred believes. Does this then imply that God is friendship, as John states that God is love?⁶⁷ As that statement has no scriptural authority, Aelred does not judge one might say it is so; however, he does think that friendship follows from grace, or love, for “those who abide” in friendship “abide in God, and God in them.”⁶⁸ To participate in a friendship then is to participate in a union of some kind with God, who is involved in multiple ways in the relationship.

⁶³ Aelred, “For he who seeks from friendship some profit other than friendship itself has not yet learned what friendship is,” *Spiritual Friendship*, 2:61.

⁶⁴ Aelred, *Spiritual Friendship*, 1:46.

⁶⁵ Aelred, *Spiritual Friendship*, 1:58.

⁶⁶ Aelred, *Spiritual Friendship*, 1:66.

⁶⁷ 1 John 4:16,

⁶⁸ Aelred, *Spiritual Friendship*, 1:70.

Friendship therefore, Aelred maintains, can be a "path to the love and knowledge of God."⁶⁹ Indeed, he believes, those who are a friend of another are made into a friend of God, according to what Jesus said in the gospel of John 15:15: "Now I will no longer call you servants, but my friends." The key ingredient in this friendship is that its focus is not now exclusively on the friend, but on God through Christ. The Christ-centered relationship permits friends to experience a unity of heart and mind that is the essence of true friendship. Christ is always the benchmark by which one can measure friendship. "If we begin with Christ, the ascent to friendship does not seem too difficult or unnatural, since it is Christ who inspires the love with which we esteem a friend, Christ who even points out to us the friend whom we love."⁷⁰

Hence, God models for us what true friendship actually should look like. "When God himself is at work and pouring forth such great friendship and love between himself and his creation .. each loves the other as he loves himself. And through this friendship each one rejoices in the happiness of another as much as in his own; and so the happiness of individuals is the happiness of all."⁷¹ God did not begin such love because a need within God's self was first recognized, and then sought enjoyment. Instead, this occurs out of an overflow of charity. Out of such an overflow of God's love for humanity, the Father sacrificed the Son in the ultimate act of friendship.

This act of friendship explicates the type of friendship and love that God has for humankind and also wishes for humankind. Aelred takes care to explain that this is not so much the difference between *eros* and *agape* as it is the perfection of God's love as compared to that of human loves. God's love is passionate. God "longs to be with

⁶⁹ Aelred, *Spiritual Friendship*, 2:18.

⁷⁰ Aelred, *Spiritual Friendship*, 2:21.

⁷¹ Aelred, *Spiritual Friendship*, 3:79.

humans and desires to embrace them.”⁷² The difference begins in the motivation for love. Rather than starting with the virtue or goodness of the beloved for motivation, divine love does so because it is in God’s nature to do so, as it was in humankind’s before the Fall. Thus, nothing is required of humanity in order to be loved by God. Such love is an unmerited, merciful love, and is the beginning of friendship.

Merciful love has a profound and intimate knowledge of those loved and knows how each should be loved in order to encourage growth in virtue. Such love is transformative. “Virtue is inspired by love, rather than love being inspired by virtue.”⁷³ Mercy therefore has the power to purify the beloved.⁷⁴

Spiritual friendships thus, according to Aelred, model themselves upon this form of friendship from God. A virtuous friend continues to love even when faults appear in the other, and will bear the weight of the other’s guilt and burdens as if they were their own.⁷⁵ Such a friendship that ends on one side will still be preserved through the faithful partner’s perseverance and love. This type of friendship takes shape here, in this world, and is perfected in the next. God therefore is not the only one who can love with affection those who at times might lack virtue. Instead, any Christian filled with the Spirit can love with mercy, particularly when within a spiritual friendship.

Friendship in Aquinas

A century after Aelred, and almost eight centuries after Augustine, the Dominican theologian Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) wrote fairly early in the *Summa Theologiae*

⁷² Aelred, *Spiritual Friendship*, 2:51.

⁷³ Aelred, *Spiritual Friendship*, 3:3.

⁷⁴ TePas, “Amor, Amicitia and Misericordia,” 258.

⁷⁵ Aelred, *Spiritual Friendship*, 260.

how a creature is “ordered” to other creatures of its own kind.⁷⁶ In his opinion it was not opposite but similar things that attract. We draw close to those who enhance our existence, and we avoid those who threaten harm.⁷⁷ Thomas saw all this approaching and avoiding as a call towards man’s beatific vision or Ultimate Good, union with God. God is calling all people into further communion—greater fulfillment, greater community, greater love. God has given us a passion for God. God has also given us a passion for the good that we find in our fellow humans. We are attracted to that good, and we will our intellect to approach that good. That willing of the intellect, according to Aquinas, is the first step towards possible friendship.

As Aristotle taught, Aquinas agreed that not every love is friendship, but friendship is that love we direct towards someone to wish good to him.⁷⁸ Thomas wrote that when love has lasted sufficiently long to have become rather like a permanent disposition of the soul, or a habit, this love is called friendship. Also, as did Aristotle and Augustine, he believed that friendship love must be both mutual and benevolent. It is a mutual goodwill built on what we have in common and based on some form of communication. “Yet neither does well-wishing suffice for friendship, for a certain

⁷⁶ Thomas Aquinas, philosopher, theologian, doctor of the Church (often known as the “Angelic Doctor”), and patron of numerous Catholic universities and colleges, was born in the Kingdom of Naples, in either 1225 or 1227; he died at Fossa Nuova, in 1274. About the year 1236 he was sent to the University of Naples where he studied the liberal arts, and especially theology. Some time between 1240 and August, 1243, he entered the Dominican order. This caused major consternation in his family, who attempted to block this decision. After that he spent his life preaching, teaching and writing. His most famous work was most likely the *Summa Theologiae*, which had been completed only as far as the ninetieth question of the third part at his death. He was canonized by John XXII, in 1323.

⁷⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: A Concise Translation*. Translated by Timothy McDermott, (Allen, TX : Christian Classics, 1989), 270 (85:6), and 357 (26:5). Hereafter *McDermott*.

⁷⁸ “Not every love has the character of friendship, but that love which is together with benevolence, when, to wit, we love someone so as to wish good to him.” Aquinas, *McDermott* (ST II-II 23.1), 349.

mutual love is requisite, since friendship is between friend and friend: and this well-wishing is founded on some kind of communication.”⁷⁹

Aquinas also agreed with Aristotle that two kinds of friendship exist. What distinguishes the two is the goal of the relationship. One type, virtuous friendship, always concerns itself with the good of the other, in particular the Ultimate Good of the other. In this mode of friendship the lover cares for her friend simply because the friend’s great worthiness makes her entitled to receive the love offered. The lover takes pleasure in the good of her friend. This is likely an occurrence of two people who meet and recognize the resemblance between them; they in turn create what Aquinas called a “union of affection.” With this form of love, the one friend wishes the other the good he wishes for himself. “To will for another what we will for ourselves, to love another for himself as we love ourselves for ourselves is to treat the beloved as another self. It is to make an alter ego of him.”⁸⁰

In a union of affection the friendship is no longer just a union like that of the knower with the thing known, but two things, two people, actually becoming as one. The beloved is in the lover, and the lover in the beloved. Aquinas believed that when we love another in friendship-love, it is no longer in himself that the lover lives, but in the one whom he loves.⁸¹ Whenever good or evil befalls one of two friends, it happens to the other as well. One’s joys and troubles are the other’s too. Friendship therefore consists in loving others as they love themselves, but as stated above, friends are those who return

⁷⁹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II 23.1. Retrieved from <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/> on April 10, 2004. Hereafter *ST*.

⁸⁰ Aquinas, *McDermott* 351 or *ST* II-II 23:5.. “Friendships differ in type according to the goal pursued: Profit, pleasure or esteem for virtue; and, as Aristotle says, according to the kind of life the friends have in common.”

⁸¹ See, for example, *ST* II-II:26; also II-II: 27:2.

each other's friendship. Friends have a common project, they are in tune, and they share a common goal or will. Certainly, in a friendship, one must have reasonable grounds for abandoning oneself to another, for committing or entrusting oneself to the other. However, for Aquinas, to form a friendship one must venture more than the grounds seem to justify. The formation of union always entails a risk.⁸²

Friendship aiming at our joint ultimate goal of eternal happiness actually aspires to God, as God is the good, Aquinas wrote, at which our lives direct themselves. As Aquinas commented, "Now the aspect under which our neighbor is to be loved, is God, since what we ought to love in our neighbor is that he may be in God."⁸³ The happiness that God communicates to us is the basis of friendship between man and God; that friendship Aquinas called charity.

Charity bases itself on God's goodness, not men's virtue, and is divinely inspired. Charity's goal is always eternal happiness for our friend and for us, and therefore involves loving as God loves.⁸⁴ Acts of charity are beyond our natural ability to will; so, we must have a disposition implanted in us inclining us to love readily and with joy. As charity is an instilled grace or disposition from God, it is by definition a virtue, and

⁸² See for example Richard Rohr, *Near Occasions of Grace*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), especially pp 25-46, his chapter explicitly on human sexuality, in which the Franciscan priest Rohr (b. 1943) writes about the difficulties of our desire for communion, as based upon Trinitarian characteristics, and the risks involved in being so vulnerable, all of which tends to lead to what he calls a "crisis of friendship." Also, Karl Rahner, *The Love of Jesus and the Love of Neighbor*, trans. Robert Barr. (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1983), 15-24; and Wadell, 15-45.

⁸³ Aquinas, *ST II-II* 25.1.

⁸⁴ See for example: "Since there is a communication between man and God, inasmuch as He communicates His happiness to us, some kind of friendship must needs be based on this same communication, of which it is written (1 Corinthians 1:9): 'God is faithful: by Whom you are called unto the fellowship of His Son.' The love which is based on this communication, is charity: wherefore it is evident that charity is the friendship of man for God." Aquinas, *ST II-II* 23:1. Also, "Now God is love. Therefore it follows that he loves God in the first place. Again he says (Augustine, *De Trinitate*, xv, 17): 'It was said: God is Charity, even as it was said: God is a Spirit.' Therefore charity is not something created in the soul, but is God Himself." *ST II-II* 23:2.

Aquinas names this “the form of the other virtues.”⁸⁵ In so doing he implies that charity is involved in every act of life, and that it controls the other acts, which are the immediate exercising of other virtues. Charity directs our behavior to its ultimate goal, and so gives all virtuous behavior its existence and life. This form of charity, also known as virtuous friendship, or friendship-love, is a type of friendship, which loves God in the first place and our fellowmen for God’s sake.

The goals of the other types of friendship vary according to what they pursue: profit, pleasure, or esteem. These types we call concupiscence or covetousness. Aquinas would not consider these forms of friendship charity, as the goal is not the good of the one loved. Instead, when an individual lacks something and meets what it lacks, it covets it. The one who covets loves the pleasures and advantages he draws from the love of his friend more than he loves his friend herself. This type of relationship is unfortunately most common and causes most people to seriously hesitate before committing themselves to another. As Franciscan priest Richard Rohr commented in the early 1990’s:

We have so accepted the functional and the competitive nature of most human relationships that any friendship is immediately suspect.... We are all affected by this climate of fear and mistrust of ourselves and of others. The usual solution is to remain aloof....⁸⁶

Concupiscence may often accompany friendship, but it is not in itself friendship. Aquinas argued that concupiscence in the pleasuring and useful friendship need not destroy those relationships, as long as the love for the pleasurable or useful good is subservient to the well-wishing of the love of the friendship. However, when the lover no longer wishes her friend the pleasure or advantage but instead desires that good for herself, then the

⁸⁵ Aquinas, *ST II-II* 23:6.

⁸⁶ Rohr, *Near Occasions*, 46.

character of charitable friendship is lost. Instead of benevolence and a union of affection, the covetous lover is concerned with attaining the good he lacks and wants.

In friendship love or charity, by contrast, we love our friends for the goodness and the eternal happiness they share with God. This charity, wrote Aquinas, therefore is friendship of man with God, and is nothing less than loving God for the goodness that he is.⁸⁷ Just as with our friends on earth, friendship with God is mutual. God, through this friendship of charity, loves us in return. The existence in us of charity "is loved by God since he cannot fail to be delighted in the loving of God for the goodness he is."⁸⁸ Those people who practice the friendship of charity resemble God, and so God loves them as he loves himself, and they share in God's life.

How does God love us? Aquinas stated He does so by eternally willing, always being at rest in, and ever delighting in absolute goodness for its own sake, and not as a means to an end.⁸⁹ God's love for us is therefore a love of friendship, not that of concupiscence. Our charity in return embraces God simply to rest in him and looks for nothing from him. As Aquinas quoted St Augustine "By charity I mean the movement of the soul towards the enjoyment of God for His own sake."⁹⁰ Since in charity we embrace God himself, it is "a virtue which, as our most ordered affection, joins us to God in love," Augustine also wrote.⁹¹ Therefore, man needs out of charity to love God who is the common good and goal of all, especially since happiness as given by God is the basic principle for all other

⁸⁷ "God is loved by charity for His own sake: wherefore charity regards principally but one aspect of loveliness, namely God's goodness, which is His substance, according to Ps. 105:1: 'Give glory to the Lord for He is good.' Other reasons that inspire us with love for Him, or which make it our duty to love Him, are secondary and result from the first." Aquinas *ST* II-II 23.5.

⁸⁸ Aquinas, *ST* II-II 25.2.

⁸⁹ Aquinas, *ST* II-II 25.

⁹⁰ Aquinas, *ST* II-II 23.2.

⁹¹ Aquinas, *ST* II-II 26.3.

happiness. The famous twentieth century theologian Karl Rahner (1902-1984) would agree with Aquinas that to love God in this way is the fulfillment of the totality of human existence, and that indeed friendship love with God is the basis and goal of all the commandments.⁹²

Whoever loves God must also love his brother or sister. As it is written in the Gospel of John "Love your neighbor as yourself."⁹³ The same charity with which we love God and ourselves requires us also to love the fellow people in our life, as we are all embraced by the common good that is God. Our friendship with God and our fellowmen consists in that we all love God, for friendship as we have seen builds on those things we hold in common and communicate to each other. Since charity is in the spiritual life the greatest of the virtues, it is the good we love and desire for all who are our neighbors. If a person does not love his fellows, it is possible to argue that that person does not love God, simply because our fellow persons are present to our senses before God is.⁹⁴ Even if we might protest that we do not "know" our neighbors, it is possible to will good to them, as likewise they can will good to us, and as we do with God. The likenesses we see in our fellow human beings are a result of the sharing in the same good gifts of God, including God's charity for us. The fellowship we have in aiming together toward eternal life is more of a reason for loving our neighbors than the happiness we might feel at being in their presence.

⁹² "The love of God is the totality of the free fulfillment of human existence. It is not, in the last analysis, the content of an individual commandment, but is at once the basis and the goal of all individual commands. And it is what it must be only when God is loved for his own sake." Rahner, *Love of Jesus*, 70.

⁹³ John 15:15.

⁹⁴ "For it is written (1 John 4:20): 'He that loveth not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God, Whom he seeth not?' Whence it seems to follow that the more a thing is visible the more lovable it is, since loving begins with seeing." Aquinas, *ST II-II* 26:2.

Aquinas said that, although we must love our fellow people, the charitable friendship we have flows from our charity for God, and love for God must always come first.⁹⁵ Beyond the love of God, Aquinas, like Augustine, believed an order exists to our virtuous friendship. He stated that our affection of charity must match our outward activities, being more intense towards those to whom most kindness should naturally take place. He taught that family and close friends should receive our charity before acquaintances and enemies do. Those close to us we love not only with charity but with other varieties of friendship too, depending on the types of connection.⁹⁶

Francis de Sales and the Struggle of Friendship

The writing of Francis de Sales in the early 17th century is until contemporary times perhaps the epitome of that concerning friendship.⁹⁷ Francis drew upon the work of all of the preceding writers in describing, directing, and participating in friendships. Despite his academic degrees he was more a mystic than a speculative theologian, and his discussion of friendship reflects that bent. In addition, he had an immense number of friendships

⁹⁵ "Therefore God ought to be loved chiefly and before all out of charity: for He is loved as the cause of happiness, whereas our neighbor is loved as receiving together with us a share of happiness from Him." Aquinas, *ST II-II* 26:2.

⁹⁶ Aquinas, *ST II-II* 26:7.

⁹⁷ Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva, and Doctor of the Church was born at Thorens, in the Duchy of Savoy, in 1567 and died at Lyons, in 1622. His father and his mother belonged to old Savoyard aristocratic families. The future saint was the eldest of six brothers. His father intended him for the magistracy and sent him at an early age to the colleges, where he studied rhetoric and humanities at Paris under the Jesuits. While there he began a course of theology. In 1588 he studied law and received his doctorate in 1592. Having been admitted as a lawyer he was about to be appointed senator. Although his parents wished him to wed, he chose, to their dismay an ecclesiastical life, and after many struggles, was ordained in 1593. He was made Bishop of Geneva in 1602, and met Jane de Chantal, his future friend and collaborator, in 1604. They remained close correspondents and intimate friends until his death.

during his life, similarly to Aelred, but which included numerous women. Such relationships were quite unusual at that time for a man of the Church.⁹⁸

In particular he had a special friendship with a woman by the name of Baroness Jane de Chantal (1572-1641).⁹⁹ When they met she was just beginning to emerge from mourning over the loss, a few years prior, of her husband in a hunting accident. She had been left with four children from that marriage. Their friendship was a wonder, bringing forth one of the great spiritual movements in Christian history, enabling the completion of actions together they would never have achieved on their own. She, under the direction of Francis, was to form more than eighty-five houses based on a new idea of contemplative religious life. In many ways their friendship is a paradigm of spiritual friendship, and so will be used throughout the remainder of this paper in that capacity. According to theologian Terrence McGoldrick, it entailed "a rare purity, an ardent love of God, and earnest mutual respect."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Of course some would say this is still very unusual. De Sales suffered as a result of these friendships also, and was accused numerous times of harboring a "harem," engaging in sexual misconduct, and illegally appropriating wedding doweries. Each charge was later dismissed as slander. See McGoldrick, *Struggle*, pp190-191.

⁹⁹ Jane de Chantal was born at Dijon, France, in January, 1572 and died at the Visitation Convent at Moulins, in December, 1641. Her father was president of the Parliament of Burgundy, and the leader of the royalist party that brought about the triumph of the cause of Henry IV. In 1592 she married Baron de Chantal, and lived in the feudal castle of Bourbilly. Her husband however was killed in a hunting accident in 1601. Left a widow with four small children, she took a vow of chastity, and became even more devout in prayer. One of her constant prayers was for a spiritual guide. While visiting her father at Dijon in 1604, she met Francis de Sales, bishop of Geneva. They began corresponding, became close friends, and in 1610, after seeing to the education and care of her children, she left her family to open the first house of the Congregation of the Visitation. Its aim was to aid in the spiritual advancement of young girls and even widows who had not the desire or strength to subject themselves to the austere ascetical practices in force in all the religious orders at that time. At the time of the death of St. Francis de Sales in 1622, the order already counted thirteen houses; there were eighty-six when St. Jane died; and 164 when she was canonized.

¹⁰⁰ McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 141. In a similar manner, Henri Nouwen called their relationship "a Jesus-centered affectionate friendship," and a "healing relationship." He comments: "in an era in which so much emphasis is put on the interpersonal and so much attention is given to emotions, passions and feelings as the 'stuff' that makes or breaks relationships, the Jesus-centered friendship between Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal is a challenge to us...there is no careful distance, no concern about possible misinterpretations...to the contrary...a mutual openness, a mutual sharing, a mutual confession of needs, a

De Sales truly believed that happiness in human life depends on friendship. The communication of one's life with others permits a human to actualize him or herself.¹⁰¹ Intimacy therefore is the fullest expression of human life, and is in some way quite necessary. With Aristotle he saw friendship as the intersection of the contemplative and active lives. Friendship is most definitely a necessary means to salvation, especially "for persons walking along the 'rough and slippery passages' of life among the worldly, to form an alliance of holy friendship and 'hold onto one another'."¹⁰²

As with Aristotle, Aelred and Augustine, Francis understood that mutuality and good will between friends was not sufficient. Communication of that benevolence was a necessity, time must be spent together, and common interests nurtured in the relationship. He wrote, "friends must love each other, know they love each other, and have communication, privacy and familiarity together."¹⁰³

He and Jane certainly had that. Their friendship grew from an immediate recognition of an attraction between the two. He was impressed with her great attention to his words while preaching and speaking. She recognized in him an answer to a prayer, and a God-sent response to her immediate need for spiritual direction. During the almost twenty years duration of their friendship Francis wrote over three hundred letters to

mutual confession and forgiveness...that is the source of a community where God's strength is made manifest among weak people...their friendships point the way to healing, reconciliation and new life." From *Francis de Sales, Jane de Chantal, Letters of Spiritual Direction*, selected and introduced by Wendy Wright and Joseph F. Power O.S.F.S., trans. Péronne Marie Thibert, preface by Henri Nouwen. (New York: Paulist Press, 1988) pp. 3-5.

¹⁰¹ "God is his own good activity, but human good consists in relationship to others." Aristotle, *Eudemeanian Ethics*, 18-19.

¹⁰² De Sales, *Oeuvres...* III, p. 204, cited in McGoldrick, 384.

¹⁰³ De Sales, *Oeuvres...* IV, p. 70 cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 17. Also, in instructing his friend Jane de Chantal, "Friendship requires a great communication between lovers, otherwise it cannot be born nor subsist." De Sales, *Oeuvres...* III 213, cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 18.

Jane.¹⁰⁴ These are, from the first, filled with a tenderness and openness full of respect. The fondness he shows for her is based upon her desire for holiness, which moved him deeply. Almost at once he felt the need to befriend her, and to make known to her his sincerity and the integrity of his desire for friendship in Christ. Only through communication and the passage of time, though, could these wishes be fulfilled.

Communication, de Sales believed, therefore is the primary element of friendship. "Silence between brothers is always painful," he noted, and later, in writing to Jane, he disclosed that he was looking forward to "...not only a serious conversation, but amicable babbling!"¹⁰⁵ Certainly different degrees of communication are possible in a friendship, as well as is progress in communication. The purification of love, and the struggle to step outside of oneself, requires much patience, both with oneself and with the friend. We all, thought Francis, have difficulty in treating others as we believe they deserve to be treated, as well as a problem with a stubborn self love that interferes with the love we truly desire.¹⁰⁶

Intimacy, even if not perfect, consists in affability and good conversation, though not necessarily of our most private inspirations. Within this form of closeness friends share their thoughts and their common interests and grow closer together by what is said and the activities in which they participate together.

This fact makes it even more imperative to communicate affection consistently and frequently in the relationships we do have. In the case of Francis and Jane, Francis understood at once that their meeting was a gift from God, and he never failed to remind her of this. "God, it seems, has given me to you, I mean uniquely, entirely, irrevocably. I

¹⁰⁴ Unfortunately, as upon hearing of his death she burned her letters to him, few of these survive.

¹⁰⁵ De Sales, *Oeuvres*....ltr XXI, cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 34

¹⁰⁶ De Sales, *Oeuvres*....ltr. DCCXCVIII cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 35.

am more sure of it at every hour.”¹⁰⁷ Later, he wrote that his affection for her is “Far beyond all comparison,” and “white like snow,” which, he explains, is why he lets it run unbridled, and he is dedicated to her soul’s good just as he is to his very own.¹⁰⁸ He appeared to be keenly aware of the almost insatiable human need for affection. As was remarked earlier in this paper, Augustine believed it was better to risk oneself and fail than be too prudent when it comes to friendship. Francis agreed that it was far better to undergo the peril of conveying one’s heart, even though friendship can be dangerous. As he wrote, “Friendship is the most dangerous of all loves, because the other loves can be without communication, but friendship being totally founded upon this, nearly cannot be had with a person without participating in his qualities.”¹⁰⁹

One of the reimbursements and concerns of friendship is that we have the ability to enjoy the goods defining the friendship, the side benefits. If one, therefore, is friends with a virtuous person, one has the opportunity to better learn virtue. Of course this also implies that a friendship with one who is evil can cause both friends to grow in evil ways – thus the dangerous possibilities. But de Sales did not believe such a relationship was truly a friendship. Friendship is more than a common interest in a mutual profit, particularly profit derived from evil.¹¹⁰ Instead, false friendships are selfish and expose themselves through their emphasis upon sensual pleasure. By contrast, true friendship

¹⁰⁷ De Sales, *Oeuvres*.... CCXL, in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 151; Also, , “A ce grand Dieu, dis je, auquel nous nous sommes voués et consacrés, et qui m’a rendu pour jamais et sans reserve tout dédié a votre ame, que je chéris comme la mienne... en ce Sauveur... nous joint inseparablement en luy.” *Oeuvres*.... ltr. CCCIV.

¹⁰⁸ De Sales, *Oeuvres*... ltr. CCCIV cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 151.

¹⁰⁹ De Sales, *Oeuvres*.... III, 194 cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 21.

¹¹⁰ McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 194. In one of his hundreds of letters to her, Francis writes to Jane, “Oh God, why do I tell you all this, if not because my heart always opens and pours itself out without hesitation when it is with your own.” From letter CCXL he also wrote: “I wouldn’t know how to prevent myself from doing so; my heart must dilate with yours like this.” Letter CCXL from *Oeuvres* cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 164.

endures eternally and is always virtuous in nature because the characters of the persons involved are shaped in the image of God. The friends must know both to look for this and to appreciate this.

The entire purpose of Francis de Sale's life was to live Jesus, and that type of love compelled him to love God's images, his neighbors, in the world around him. In the letters he and Jane shared, the words "LIVE JESUS!" appear often at the top of the page. Later, she herself used the same motto in writing to her sisters, a practice which continues till today with the Sisters of the Visitation. It was for Francis and Jane their motto, their "call to arms," a mutual encouragement for their friendship. Living Jesus for both of them aimed at loving both humanity and God as Jesus.

In any relationship, particularly friendships between those of opposite genders, the dangers of exploitation can loom large. However, Francis and Jane do not fail, almost immediately, to clarify that their pledged obedience to each other lies within the boundaries of Christian friendship. He tells her, "I never intended there be any liaison between us that carried any obligation whatsoever, if not that of charity and true Christian friendship, which bond St. Paul calls *the bond of perfection*."¹¹¹ Their friendship, they therefore determined, was to be limited by what was permissible within a good Christian life. It subsists within their friendship with God. Understanding that confusion can often result within cross-gender relationships, Francis clearly assures Jane that this commitment is not contrary to any other obligation she may have, "whether it be of vows or of marriage."¹¹² "Everywhere," he writes several years later, "holy freedom and

¹¹¹ McGoldrick, *Oeuvres* ... ltr CCXXIII_cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 179. In particular de Sales appears to be referring to Colossians 3:14, which reads: "And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."

¹¹² Francis de Sales, *Oeuvres* ... ltr CCXXIII cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 180.

frankness must reign, and we must have no other law or constraint than love.”¹¹³ This context allows us to see both how seriously de Sales took friendship, and how willing he was to express honestly his intentions for and yet also his delight in their relationship.

This perfect or true friendship of de Sales could thus be termed a spiritual friendship of the sort espoused by Aelred. The common interest of the people involved is greater than the virtue of Aristotle and Cicero, it is instead the love of God. “But if your mutual and reciprocal communication is made from charity, devotion and Christian perfection, oh God, how your friendship will be precious! It will be excellent because it comes from God.”¹¹⁴

Rather than loving a person because of his virtuous character in himself, St Francis would suggest one must “love God in man and man in God.”¹¹⁵ One’s love of a friend can never surpass one’s love of God, as true friendship is caused by God and aided by grace. This idea of the involvement of God in relationships Aristotle never addresses, except as a communication of virtue. Aristotle, as has been seen, believed that friendship was not possible with God, because of the inequalities in the relationship. However, de Sales would reply that “Love equalizes lovers.”¹¹⁶ This implies that we become like those things and people we love, and those who find friendship through and in God, thus become more like God in their daily lives, as well as in their ability to share in the suffering of their friends. A true friend who can do this is a rare find, and one who consequently grows in wisdom from a life lived in such grace.

¹¹³ Sainte Jeanne de Chantal, *Correspondence*, 1.2 p 166 cited in McGoldrick *Struggle*, 181.

¹¹⁴ De Sales, *Oeuvres* III p. 202, cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 26

¹¹⁵ De Sales, *Oeuvres* V 205 cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 27.

¹¹⁶ McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 28

In a letter to Jane written in January of 1606, Francis tells her, "I feel a little more loving of souls than usual; It's because of the advancement spiritually I've made since seeing you."¹¹⁷ Her friendship has been an instrument in the molding of his heart to love others in increasing amounts. Friendship is a way to exercise our charity; as Aquinas put it, the more we love the more we learn to love.¹¹⁸

This form of spiritual friendship then has four duties according to Francis: 1. The friend must both desire God and perfection for the friend; 2. The friend must respect his or her friends and their vulnerabilities enough to foster confidence; 3. The friendship must be based upon truth and be frank; and 4. One must pray for one's friends. These duties, says de Sales, come from love's most demanding duty, which is that of friendship, where souls are exposed to a love that is 'glued together' by the Holy Spirit, the carrier of friendship.¹¹⁹

Such an idea of friendship is very different from that of the classical writers, and even from Augustine. Aquinas in many ways comes close, in considering his concept of charity as desire for God, or friendship with God. De Sales, however, is the first to explicitly state that God is friend, and a friend both desirable and obtainable, who guides us on a path to perfection. "'Ointments and perfumes rejoice the heart, and the good counsels of a friend are sweet to the soul,' says Solomon. Of what friend and of what counsels do we speak? O God, it is, of the friend of friends, and his counsels are more

¹¹⁷ De Sales, *Oeuvres* ltr CCCXXVIII cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 182.

¹¹⁸ "Grace brought them together, it inspired a rush of affection and lifelong desire to serve, and most of all it revealed something to each through the other about divine love." McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 182.

¹¹⁹ McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 98.

pleasing than honey. That friend is the Savior; his counsels are for our salvation.”¹²⁰

Later, in his treatise *On the Love of God* he also writes:

It is heresy to say that our Savior has not given us good counsel. It is blasphemous to say to God, “Depart from us, we do not wish to learn your ways.” It is horrible irreverence to him who with so much love and sweetness invites us to perfection to say, “I do not want to be holy, or perfect, or to have a greater share in your friendship, or to follow the counsels you give me to advance in it.”¹²¹

God therefore is the most perfect of friends, and the friendship we can have with God is the most perfect of friendships. For after all, “One has a great need and capacity to receive goodness, and the other has a great abundance and inclination to give that goodness.”¹²² Perfect friendship therefore shares friendship and love with God. This is the paradigm that defines our friendship with others, as well as our interior life with ourselves. God is “The friend of my heart or the heart of my soul.”¹²³ This is perhaps why Francis de Sales, as well as Aelred, cautions us that all possible friendships must be seriously considered and treasured, for all contain an element of our friendship with God within. Every friendship causes advancement in the love of God.¹²⁴ “If the love of God, grace, works in

¹²⁰ Francis De Sales, *On the Love of God*, (London: Burns & Oats, Ltd; New York: Benziger Brothers, 1884), 8:9.

¹²¹ De Sales, *On the Love of God*, 8:8.

¹²² De Sales, *Oeuvres*... IV, 74-76 cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 36. Francis argues: “Il y a une correspondance numpareille entre Dieu et l’homme pour leur reciproque perfection; non que Dieu puisse recevoir aucune perfection de l’homme, mais parce que, comme l’homme ne peut ester pefectionné que par la divine Bonté, aussi la divine Bonté ne peut bonnement si bien exercer sa perfection hors de soy qu’a l’endroit de nostre humanité l’une a grand besoin et grande capacité de recevoir du bien, et l’autre a grand abundance et grand incination pour en donner.”

¹²³ De Sales, *Oeuvres* ...IV, 189 cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 37. “L’ami de mon Coeur ou le Coeur de mon ame.”

¹²⁴ McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 182.

human ways, in daily life, then where can it be more human than in human love's most far reaching and profound engagement – friendship?"¹²⁵

For de Sales then, friendship becomes a way of sharing the happiness of knowing we are loved and that life has meaning because of Christ's love for us. Through friendship with Jesus one is changed, if one so permits this to happen. This friendship creates a joy that seeks to share that happiness, and makes a person more likely to be a friend to others. The gifts of the spirit that are generated by this friendship enable one to risk rejection in other friendships because one's happiness is now found not in the relationship itself as much as in Christ. De Sales typified this in his correspondence by often concluding with the words "Go jovially,"¹²⁶ as well as "Live joyfully!"¹²⁷ One can therefore suffer much and still be happy, for one's joy is found in being loved and loving God, which Francis clearly sees as the universal reason for every human love.¹²⁸ To love as Christ does, we must love our neighbors more than we love ourselves, and we must then be willing to offer ourselves to those neighbors. Similarly, in opening ourselves to those neighbors we are opening ourselves to further conversion through a friendship graced by God. Friendship outside of God is not possible for Francis, because everything friendship is for is directed to giving thanks to Christ, the "Friend of my heart," and "the Friend of friends."¹²⁹

¹²⁵ McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 387.

¹²⁶ De Sales, *Oeuvres...ltr* CCCLII, cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 429.

¹²⁷ De Sales, *Oeuvres...ltr* CCXXIII, cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle* 429.

¹²⁸ De Sales, *Oeuvres* IV Ch 22, 163 cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 430 where de Sales concludes : "la charité est le soleil qui orne tout, eschauffe tout et vivifie tout."

¹²⁹ De Sales, *Oeuvres* V 19 cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 431. "O Dieu, vous êtes le seul un et la seule unité nécessaire a mon ame! Hélas, cher Ami de mon Cœur, unisses ma pauvre unique ame a votre tres unique bonté." Also: "O Dieu, c'est de l'Ami des amis, et ses conseils sont plus aimables que le miel: l'ami c'est le Sauveur, ses conseils sont pour le salut." *Oeuvres....* V, 85.

As an example, at one point in 1615, after Jane and Francis had already founded one house for the new Sisters of the Visitation, Jane left for a several week journey to found the second Visitation house. Francis sent with one of her companions a packet of letters, one for Jane to open at the end of each day of the trip. They are full of praise, encouragement in her sense of apostolic mission, and the reminder to rejoice each day in the work she did for God, even if he is shaken by the thought that "his heart can no longer find 'its soul' there where it is accustomed to find it [at the original convent]." Similarly, even though the separation is painful, he is delighted in the work they do, the spirit they share, and the unity with her that remains within him, no matter how distant geographically they might be.¹³⁰ He continues to find the joy that resides in their relationship through Christ, even though Jane is not physically present.

Once one has such joy, de Sales would pronounce, they have a basis for true friendship. One who befriends God advances in charity and virtue, therefore, making them most able to be true friends because they have learned to love as God has loved them. This ability stems from the sacred love which is intrinsic to all virtues, and which is renewed daily through the choice for friendship with God. Once one has experienced God's love even through imperfections, the mercy of God's love can be embraced. This in turn causes gratitude, which one seeks to return with generosity to one's fellow people.¹³¹

This means that in striving to be perfect, one must love in one's friends, and one's neighbors, their imperfections as well as their beauty, just as God does in us. Of course we must be willing to deal with our own faults as well. "We must suffer our own

¹³⁰ De Sales, for example *Oeuvres*.... ltr MXXXVI cited in McGoldrick *Struggle*, 189.

¹³¹ Consider for example, "Man's approach to man is the true image of celestial love of man's approach to God." De Sales, *Oeuvres* V p 205 cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 432.

imperfection in order to have perfection; I say, suffer with patience, and not to love or to caress: humility is nourished in this suffering.”¹³²

This humble gratitude for God’s love, this humility, is the most particular effect of friendship with God. The gifts of such friendship therefore are compassion, easy forgiveness, gratitude, and passion for one’s friends, as well as humility and the realization of one’s faults. Francis, one of the great champions of humility, wrote that “perfection does not consist in having no faults, but in having only good, holy and sacred friendships.”¹³³

We can, if we so allow it, experience a profound resonance in our nature with God’s love; however the loves we share here and now in this world are simply “signs of the future union between my beloved and me.”¹³⁴ Aristotle first wrote that “Friendship is communion!”¹³⁵ Love naturally seeks union, and the goal of intimacy aims to unite two who are similar but different. Friends communicate not only love, but themselves, they become one heart, united in participation in the one love of the Trinity. Union is the unique end of love; all communication tends to union when it is the expression of benevolence in friendship. Aristotle may not have been speaking of union with the divine, but for De Sales, friendship also infers union with God and is an instrument of grace and personal development.¹³⁶ It is “the medicine of the soul.”¹³⁷

Francis would agree with Augustine that the love of God, of self, and of others is a kind of pyramid which gradually became one as one approaches the summit. This unites

¹³² De Sales, *Oeuvres*... letter CXC cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 434

¹³³ De Sales, *Oeuvres* III p.202 cited in McGoldrick *Struggle*, 435. These friendships, he would add, flow from one’s friendship with God.

¹³⁴ De Sales, *Oeuvres*, IV 189 cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle* 32.

¹³⁵ Aristotle, *NE VIII*.

¹³⁶ McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 33

¹³⁷ De Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, (New York: Doubleday, 1989) III, 24.

all in one common love and leads to greater understanding and trust. The union of friends has a definite purpose and is meant for pursuing common work and for mutual perfection. As he once tells Jane, "God has given them similar hearts, feeling the same 'violent inspirations' for perfection. This 'unity of inspiration' is proof for him that God wishes them to be one soul."¹³⁸ In their case, their common work is the creation of the Visitation order. When Jane has to return to Dijon for several months to put the affairs of her family in order at the death of her father-in-law, Francis corresponds with her concerning the incredible union he feels they share. He mentions that he believes God never has her heart desire to pursue perfection without also giving him the same desire. He explicates this by writing that this is a sign that "we might know that [God] wants us to be one same soul, for the pursuit of one same work."¹³⁹ This theme of union is essential to the understanding of de Sales's thoughts on friendship and is integral to his concept of the heart. The heart is the sum and total of the person. Union thus concerns not only common interests, or a love of God, or even a union of the dreams, inspirations, or desires of persons. One heart formed from one soul in two bodies is for him the perfection of love, and by transference, that of friendship. "To say 'one soul' for the Doctor of love is to mean one heart, which is manifested by a common movement...stirred by the mystery of grace. This is the *telos* of everything in friendship."¹⁴⁰

Although "the friendship that could cease was never truly a friendship," sin can most definitely destroy friendship.¹⁴¹ If one of the friends might turn from God, or turn from

¹³⁸ De Sales, *Oeuvres*... ltr DCCXII, cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 196.

¹³⁹ De Sales, *Oeuvres*ltr DCCXIII cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 194.

¹⁴⁰ McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 79

¹⁴¹ De Sales, *Oeuvres*... ltr DCCXI cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 23.

the bonds of charity between the friends, the communication of friendship may not continue. An orientation to eternity will thus give to friendship certain wisdom, as well as a detachment from the things of power, wealth, and acclaim that can destroy friendship.

Equally, it is important, discerned de Sales, that one never become a slave to one's friends. We are to love our friends, "Not less nor more than we love ourselves."¹⁴² This is important, for benevolence and friendship's love are not rooted in nature, nor virtue, but instead in love of God. Still, as mentioned above, we often fail in this. Francis was frequently frustrated by the impossibility of ever being able to share his innermost self with his friends; in some way, he apprehended, every heart is a world closed to others. Only in heaven will no misunderstandings occur, only in eternity will there be no need for words, no miscommunications, and true peace and intimacy. Recognizing this in himself, he wrote to Jane de Chantal, "There is always something to say, for I make mistakes by ignorance and weakness because I don't always know how to express my good will."¹⁴³

Bishop de Sales was criticized regularly during his lifetime for his friendships with women. In fact at one point, Jane's convent was vandalized with a sign proclaiming it as the home of Bishop de Sales "harem." He admitted to Jane that he was often tempted by various women, who most likely found his sensitivity, warm personality, and ability to listen quite compelling. However, he apparently worked ferociously to keep his love pure and to remove all carnal impulses from his mind. His need factor was perhaps overshadowed by an appreciation of those women as children of God, and the realization

¹⁴² McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 25.

¹⁴³ De Sales, *Oeuvres*....ltr CCCXXVIII cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 91.

that love through God gave strength was perhaps the most significant factor in keeping his friendships noble, true and spiritual in nature.

He both accepted the sensuality of human life and recognized that it had a place in human perfection. He wrote to Jane that "Perfection does not consist in the absence but in the ordering of the passions."¹⁴⁴ One must be aware though that passionate sensuality could too easily carry one away from a spiritual love, weakening it greatly. "Love is a delicate flame" he argued, not a raging storm, which well summarizes his thoughts on the proper place of passion.¹⁴⁵ Later, in this same volume, he comments that "Sacred love touches our passions and removes their terrestrial intent, giving them a celestial one."¹⁴⁶ Friends must always pursue a spiritual love, which can certainly be difficult to maintain, considering the various means by which human love can go wrong.

This, then, is why prayer is so very important within a friendship. For de Sales prayer does not require a monastery or a convent. Just as a person in love lives and breathes their beloved, so too the friend of God "breathes and aspires" for Him, to the point that "everything in the world speaks to them of their love; everything provokes good thoughts, from which strength, surges and aspirations in God are born."¹⁴⁷ Almost every letter he wrote to Jane and his other friends ends with the plea "Pray for Me!"

Conclusion

What then, can one conclude thus far about this interpretation of Christian friendship as found at the beginning of the 17th century? The first supposition must be

¹⁴⁴ De Sales, *Oeuvres ...Sermons* VIII, p355 cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 314. See also pp 28-34 in *On the Love of God*, where Francis further develops this idea.

¹⁴⁵ De Sales, *Oeuvres...*IV 61 cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 341.

¹⁴⁶ De Sales, *Oeuvres...*IV 312-314 cited in McGoldrick, *Struggle*, 342.

¹⁴⁷ De Sales, *Oeuvres* III 96, cited in McGoldrick, 346.

the concept of grace, that of God willing such a friendship for us. For example, from the initiation of their relationship, Francis tells Jane de Chantal more than once that he is convinced the affection he feels for her is a precious gift from God, which grows daily. It is a donation that has been given to them by God for their advancement in perfection. "A love like this can only be a free and special gift of God Himself."¹⁴⁸ As Augustine stressed, love was not just a romantic or sentimental feeling, but action following a decision. It involves movement. True friendship might be a gift of grace, but human energy must cooperate with that bequest in the daily exercise of love. It is the decisions of the friends involved to collaborate in having that good will grows, and it is not unanticipated then that when they do so their charity increases via that friendship.

Additionally, it can be recognized that camaraderie of this sort often passes through several identifiable stages. The first is the recognition of the grace given by the other, as discussed above. However, as all the writers surveyed in this chapter emphasize, it is essential that first resemblance, the recognition of common interests and affection, somehow be mutually communicated and expressed. It must be shown that it is not merely based on some physical pleasure, but that it is indeed spiritual and seeks the good of each person in God. The intended benevolence of the relationship needs to be frankly stated and then proven through action showing that each is open to the strengths and faults of the other. At this point the friends reciprocally begin to communicate their inner lives to each other, participate in each other's qualities, spend time together, and mutually support and console each other. Francis called this second stage the "gentle struggle of friendship," for this is when the quality of that love first declared must be proven. Communication at this point might be expressed through love, through a

¹⁴⁸ De Sales, *Oeuvres* ltr DLXXXVIII., cited in McGoldrick, 124.

common state in life such as marriage, religious commitments, a particular spiritual work, or a joint mission. The final stage of friendship is that of unity in diversity. Through participation in each other's innermost qualities, and by communicating every aspect of themselves over time, they become one of heart and soul. Their bond is considered something sacred, given them by God for their perfection, a friendship to be nourished and, over time, returned back to God. As will be more fully expressed in later chapters, the growth of the friendship is not merely into intimacy, it is also oriented outside the relationship. God draws them together and presses them both onwards, and outwards, offering them a union of friendship with God's own self through the Trinitarian relationship. Each friend thus becomes more themselves through this friendship, and together they are able to accomplish far more for God's glory than they might ever have done on their own.

The following chapter argues that as a result of the Enlightenment, much of this interpretation of spiritual, or Christian friendship, was for the most part lost or rewritten. The resultant interpretation, rather than focusing on the spiritual aspects of the relationship, as did the writers just discussed, tended to emphasize an individualistic, utilitarian focus for friendship, if not for love; this focus remained the paradigm until well into the twentieth century.

CHAPTER 2

PSYCHOLOGICAL, SOCIOLOGICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECTS OF FRIENDSHIP

As this chapter argues, although a quite complete and nuanced understanding of spiritual friendship was thought out by the early 16th century, for several hundred years following the Enlightenment theologians generally neglected friendship as a topic. When it was discussed, it was treated in a trivialized and reductionist manner by key thinkers. Friendship in general became privatized, sentimentalized, and detached from the spiritual. Even the young social sciences of the late 19th century tended to ignore the nuances, the particularities, and the mysteries of friendship, and to instead consider it simply as a social construct achievable via some instinctual, systematic process.

However, as was already explicated in the first chapter of this work, friendship was not always so neglected. For example, according to Cicero writing in 44 B.C. the "one thing in human experience about whose advantage all men with one voice agree, is friendship....Some men hold virtue in contempt, others disdain riches or political honors, but 'concerning friendship all, to a man, think the same thing... that without friendship life is not life at all.'"¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ Cicero, *Laelius on Friendship*, trans W.A. Falconer, Loeb Classical Library, vol XX (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press), 1923, xxxiii.86 cited in "Friendship," Janet Martin Soskice. *Fields of Faith: Theology and Religious Studies for the Twenty-First Century*. Eds David F. Ford, Ben Quash and Janet Martin Soskice. (London: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 167. This essay is about the friendship between Gaius Laelius Sapiens and Publius Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus Africanus Minor. It is also a celebration of the friendship between Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 BC) and Titus Pomponius Atticus.

Western Christian writers, as well as western secular philosophers, are heavily indebted to Cicero concerning the topic of friendship. Cicero himself was greatly influenced by the Greeks. Indeed, as already mentioned, Augustine finds that Cicero's definition of friendship cannot be improved, and Aelred, eight centuries after Augustine, quotes Cicero's definition almost literally that "Friendship is mutual accord on all things human and divine, joined with good will and affection."¹⁵⁰ Both Augustine and Aelred would have preferred, actually, to create a distinctly Christian definition of friendship, and Aelred believed that "Cicero was unacquainted with the virtue of true friendship, since he was completely unaware of its beginning and end, Christ." Regardless, neither wanders far from Cicero's own natural theology or philosophy concerning this topic, perhaps because his definition continues by concluding that "I am inclined to think that with the exception of wisdom no better thing has been given to man by the immortal gods."¹⁵¹ Aelred was one among many who accepted this statement, changing only the word "gods" to "God."¹⁵²

What is quite fascinating is that many of the questions surrounding friendship which we still deal with today, Cicero addressed in his own ruminations on the topic. Although he created a definition of a sort, Cicero recognized even then that different forms of friendship, and therefore different definitions, exist. In addition, he understood that any characterization of friendship must address the question of just why it is so important to humanity. This chapter will argue that the truth of his statement has again been taken more seriously and with a new vigor in the theology of the twentieth century.

¹⁵⁰ John Reisman, *Anatomy of Friendship*, (New York: Irvington Publishers, Inc., 1979), 37.

¹⁵¹ Cicero, cited in Soskice, "Friendship," 168.

¹⁵² Soskice, 168.

The same has occurred in more recent philosophy, psychology and sociology. As philosopher Neera Kapur Badhwar wrote in 1993, "After a long eclipse, the years since about 1970 have seen a remarkable resurgence of philosophical interest in friendship."¹⁵³ It appears quite probable therefore, that recent work in the social sciences and philosophy may have something to add to the theological conversation concerning our definition of friendship.

This chapter will begin with a consideration of the treatment of friendship by four key thinkers whose views are associated with modernity: Montaigne, Emerson, Freud and William James. Next is examined a range of twentieth century thinkers whose approaches strive to include dimensions of friendship and of the transcendent that have tended to be excluded from modern thought.

Finally, we will consider some current questions that have facets that incline one to draw simultaneously upon what tradition and the social sciences may have to offer. One might question, for example, just what the motivation is behind such relationships, and is the kind of friendship Cicero espoused actually possible in contemporary society? In addition, both Augustine and Aelred were two thinkers, mentioned earlier in this paper, who discussed the difficulties of particular friendships, such as those espoused by Cicero, in opposition to a more generalized Christian charity. To which is it that we are to aspire? Cicero did not mention gender when discussing friendship, as women were simply not considered in terms of such matters during his lifetime. However, in our contemporary society, the possibility of intergender friendship arises with a new import. How is this to be addressed? Within the lenses of the contemporary social sciences and of

¹⁵³ Neera Kapur Badhwar, ed., *Friendship: A Philosophical Reader* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), ix.

spiritual friendship, this chapter will attempt to address these questions. These inquiries are hardly exhaustive of this topic, nor are the conclusions reached in this chapter definitive, but perhaps they will lend further directions to the role friendship might play in the contemporary church as well as the larger society.

Philosophical, psychological and sociological descriptions

The warmth with which Cicero approached the topic of friendship continues to resound through the ages. Few contemporary philosophers or social scientists surveyed for this paper would disagree that "Friendship thrives among like minded people. 'When a man thinks of a true friend he is looking at himself in the mirror.'"¹⁵⁴ As was mentioned in the previous chapter Aquinas was one among a multitude of later thinkers and writers who would, like Cicero, also call a friend "another self." But do all friendships, both contemporary and historical, fall within this category? Does this imply other types of friendships are not valid, or should not be pursued?

It is not easy to find serious attempts that take in spiritual dimensions to answer the question of just what friendship is, or where, or how it might be found, much less to justify those answers. During and after the Enlightenment friendship is most often treated by modernity's central thinkers as a natural subject apart from consideration of God. As this paper has already suggested, our language offers few ideas for distinguishing among friendships, as the word friend is used to refer to a wide range of relationships – with varying kinds of closeness and distance. "We have friends, and we have 'just' friends; we have good friends, and we have best friends." But the word

¹⁵⁴ Roy Porter and Sylvana Tomaselli, eds. *Dialectics of Friendship*, (London: Routledge, 1989), 3.

“friend” is very elusive in meaning.¹⁵⁵ Friendship, therefore, “far from being a common, ordinary, and simple relationship that we all understand, is an unplumbed mystery we believe we understand until we begin thinking about it”¹⁵⁶

A consideration of how friendship has specifically been defined or described since the time of the Enlightenment by various philosophers, psychologists, and social scientists will contribute to this study both by revealing modern obstacles and by gleaning elements that will be of positive use. In particular, this might enable us to understand how the idea of friendship, often absent a spiritual dimension, was skewed and then subsumed into other areas over the past several centuries, and thus almost disappeared – or at least as something other than either a sentimentalized, romantic notion or a reductionist, universalized principle.

The authors selected for examination in this chapter are those most often discussed in secondary literature on the history of friendship. These authors characterize well not only the trend I am attempting to establish in this chapter, but soundly represent the opinions of their times.

Enlightenment philosophical views

One late Renaissance philosopher who exemplifies the changing situation concerning the mystery and importance of friendship was Michel Eyquem de Montaigne.¹⁵⁷ Late in the 16th century Montaigne wrote quite passionately about “personal friendships,” by which he meant intimate relationships based upon intense

¹⁵⁵ Lilian Rubin, *Just Friends: The Role of Friendship in our Lives* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), 7.

¹⁵⁶ Jules Toner, *Love and Friendship* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1993), 184.

¹⁵⁷ Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592) was one of the most influential writers of the French Renaissance. Montaigne is known for popularizing the essay as a literary genre. Montaigne had a direct influence on writers the world over, from William Shakespeare to Ralph Waldo Emerson, from Friedrich Nietzsche to Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In his own time, Montaigne was admired more as a statesman than as an author. His lifetime was concurrent with that of Francis de Sales.

communication and communion, as well as the opportunity to exchange ideas with someone who understands and appreciates oneself. According to Montaigne, such a friendship was so rare, perfect, and singular, that "it is a lot if fortune can do it once in three centuries."¹⁵⁸ Indeed, in a manner analogous to Aristotle's thought on the subject, only a single loving friend was possible at a time, for friendship was so demanding and emotionally draining, how could anyone possibly handle more than one such relationship?

...this perfect friendship of which I speak is indivisible, each gives himself so entirely to his friend that he has nothing to dispose of elsewhere; on the contrary, he is grieved that he is not double, triple or quadruple, and that he has not several souls and several wills to bestow them all on that object. ...the friendship that possesses the soul and rules over it in full sovereignty – cannot possibly be doubled.¹⁵⁹

As any intimate association with women was necessarily of a sexual or romantic nature, friendship between the genders was inconceivable.¹⁶⁰ Indeed, Montaigne did not believe women even capable of friendship as they were too fickle and lacked the necessary intellectual abilities for discussion.¹⁶¹ His version of friendship was therefore gender biased, highly personal, and highly mysterious, even fateful, in nature. "If you press me to tell why I loved him, I feel that this cannot be expressed."¹⁶² Montaigne appeared to have no idea as to why friendship actually happened, nor was he even much

¹⁵⁸ Montaigne, "Of Friendship," cited in *The Complete Works of Montaigne: Essays* trans. Donald Frame, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1948), 136.

¹⁵⁹ Montaigne, *Works*, 141

¹⁶⁰ "To compare this brotherly affection with affection for women, even though it is the result of our choice – it cannot be done; nor can we put love with or for women in the same category." Montaigne, *Works*, 137.

¹⁶¹ "The ordinary capacity of women is inadequate for that communion and fellowship which is the nurse of this sacred bond....by the common agreement of the ancient schools [this sex] is excluded from it," Montaigne, *Works*, 138.

¹⁶² He continues on to write: "Beyond all my understanding, beyond what I can say about this in particular, there was I know not what inexplicable and fateful force that was the mediator of this union." Montaigne, *Works*, 139.

interested in why it might do so. It simply, like all mysteries, occurred. The role of God in such a thing was not a question in which he was much interested.

A little more than two hundred years later at the beginning of the 19th century, a further transition in the definition and purpose of friendship, away from the sacred and divinely inspired, is clear. Ralph Waldo Emerson, the quintessential American transcendentalist, was a spokesperson for the individualism and self-reliance of the newly created United States of America.¹⁶³ His overarching concern about friendship was that friends should primarily foster one's own personal growth. One might perfect one's self by drawing upon the imagination, intelligence, and vision of one's friends. The purpose of friendship, therefore, was to stir the imagination and intellect in order to inspire the best in each other. It was certainly a quite important concept, "for all men regard friendship as attractive, fascinating, noble. It is supremely pleasant in this life, when ... [one] goes out to explore the abyss with a kindred spirit and does not roam alone thro' worlds of strangers."¹⁶⁴

However, unlike for Aelred or Frances de Sales, according to Emerson one's own identity was easily threatened by the intimacy of friendship.¹⁶⁵ Instead, a distance should always be maintained, even between good friends. One who shares one's secrets with a friend encourages disgust of the other.¹⁶⁶ The endpoint of such a relationship was instead

¹⁶³ Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882) was an American essayist, poet, and leader of the Transcendentalist movement in the early nineteenth century. He was, in 1835, one of the founding members of the Transcendental club, and was a great orator of his time. He admitted being greatly influenced by Montaigne.

¹⁶⁴ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Vol II, 1822–1826. Ed. William H. Gilman et al. (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961), 199.

¹⁶⁵ One might also read the exposition of the work of many of the contemporary theologians in the chapter following this to see yet a further disjunction regarding this point, and a recovery of earlier beliefs.

¹⁶⁶ This is so for "these erred in fancying that friendship would pardon infirmities & that a just confidence demanded that the last door(s) of the heart should be unclosed." Emerson, *Journals*, 228.

the opportunity to develop and expound one's own considered position on a subject. In return, a friend should admire the other's thoughts, not challenge or test them.¹⁶⁷ For, "it is a higher & godlike virtue to have the perfect mastery of all the passions...to be the slave of a base passion is to be most humbly degraded."¹⁶⁸

In comparison with earlier descriptions of friendship, therefore, Emerson's appears utilitarian in nature. Friends are to encourage each other, to share their skills and thoughts; men are to have friends to avoid being considered selfish, and thus to appear more "unsoured and pure, with one's name as a result "unstained in the public eye."¹⁶⁹ In addition, as with Montaigne, rather than as a God-bestowed virtue or gift, friendship "is an eternal practical triumph over all forms of malignant philosophy."¹⁷⁰ It is neither rare, nor the product of any religious attitude or occurrence, but simply an anticipated result of human nature within an ultimately pantheistic vision of the universe. One could hardly claim that the *telos* of such a relationship is eschatological in nature.

Early Psychological Views

Along the same continuum, but several decades later in the 19th century, Sigmund Freud was not in the least interested in the mystery *qua* mystery of friendship.¹⁷¹ This particularly applied to friendship as a divine, spiritual mystery. Indeed, friendship barely appeared in Freud's writings, and he considered it far inferior to the other passions. Freud

¹⁶⁷ John R. Scudder, Jr., and Anne H. Bishop, *Beyond Friendship and Eros: Unrecognized Relationships between Men and Women*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001), 79.

¹⁶⁸ In addition: "He that loosely forgets himself here & lets his friend by privy to the words & acts which base desires extort from him has forfeited like a fool the love he prized." Emerson, *Journals*, 204.

¹⁶⁹ Emerson, *Journals*, 199.

¹⁷⁰ Emerson, *Journals*, 193.

¹⁷¹ Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), was a Jewish-Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist who co-founded the psychoanalytic school of psychology. Freud is best known for his theories of the unconscious mind, especially involving the mechanism of repression; his redefinition of sexual desire as directed towards a wide variety of objects; and his therapeutic techniques, especially his understanding of transference, and the presumed value of dreams as sources of insight into unconscious desires.

instead believed that one's choices of friends were totally psychological in nature. We might choose to be friends with someone if that person reminds us of who we once were, or if another person embodies qualities we ourselves would like to possess. Also, we may love someone as a friend if that person was once a part of ourselves, such as a child, or a member of former group to which we belonged.¹⁷²

Freud did not intend to downplay the importance of conscious choice, as he recognized that people may select friends perhaps for gain, for intellectual stimulation, for the skills they possessed.¹⁷³ Unlike Montaigne however, he believed that the mystery concerning why certain friendships form and why some might persist or rupture was quite solvable if only one dug deeply enough into the psyche. In Freud's reasoning each relation of friendship somehow had sexual connotations, but sexual meanings that generally were constrained and unconscious. For, "the nucleus of what we mean by love naturally consists in sexual love with sexual union as its aim. But we do not separate from this...friendship and love for humanity...all these tendencies are an expression of the same instinctual impulses."¹⁷⁴ This then was a possible danger in friendships. The fondness and affection were not totally innocuous, but represented an intensity of feeling which could easily include sexual gratification. Thus, not only was friendship no longer a mystery, or in any way connected with the divine, but it was instead a dim substitute of the most primeval of passions.

¹⁷²Reisman, *Anatomy of Friendship*, 49.

¹⁷³ This is especially well delineated in Sigmund Freud, "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Vol XVIII. 1920 - 1922*. Trans. James Strachey and Anna Freud. London: The Hogarth Press, 1955. 105-110.

¹⁷⁴ The end of the quote comments that: "in relations between the sexes these impulses force their way towards sexual union, but in other circumstances they are diverted from this aim." Freud, *Complete Works*, 90.

For William James, American psychologist, physician and philosopher of the same era, friendship was not a mystery, but instead instinctual.¹⁷⁵ Although he actually wrote little about this type of relationship, his thoughts point us toward some predominant beliefs of the early 20th century. As he saw it, humanity had an “innate propensity” to seek company, or to gain the favorable attention of others. The harshest punishment would instead consist of being alone, totally ignored by the remainder of society. Friendly relationships are required in order to move about, and even to exist somewhat successfully within any social order. No mystery is involved then, just again, human nature driven by instinct and utilitarian rationality.

Similarly, James saw no mystery as to why friendships ended. Unlike Augustine or de Sales, he expressed no concern over the idea that they might end. Instead, that inevitable transition always had something to do with the human instinct towards aggression. In addition, James believed people naturally sought personal isolation and independence within relationships, due to an understandable revulsion at the idea of sexual intercourse, particularly with persons of one’s own gender. The possibility of such a happening necessarily, because of human nature, was involved in any type of creaturely association. This followed from his conviction, similarly to Freud’s, that friendship inevitably was wrapped up in sexual attraction of some sort.¹⁷⁶ Friendships, again, were very seldom not of a utilitarian variety.

¹⁷⁵ William James (1842–1910) was a pioneering American psychologist and philosopher. He wrote influential books on the science of psychology, educational psychology, the psychology of religious experience and mysticism, and the philosophy of pragmatism. He was the brother of novelist Henry James. He interacted with a wide variety of scholars and writers throughout his life, including John Dewey, Sigmund Freud, and Carl Jung.

¹⁷⁶ William James, *Principles of Psychology Vol II*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1890), 445 in Reisman, *Anatomy of Friendship*, 46.

Thus, by the early 20th century, those humanists, social scientists, and philosophers most associated with the Enlightenment and modernity had fairly well relegated the topic of friendship to a rationalistic, utilitarian framework. The particular love for another that Augustine, Aquinas and Aelred pursued through spiritual friendship had no role in such a definition. One might even contend that by this age such an idea was inherently trivialized. Friendship had about as little to do with love, as we have seen, as it had to do with God, theology or church.

Twentieth Century Changes

A change began to appear, however, following the First World War, as a result of an increasing disillusionment in the efficacy of the sciences and rationality as sufficient and necessary. This modification is well exemplified in the work of two early mid-century philosophers, Martin Buber and C.S. Lewis. Buber, a devout German Jew, determined that most human relationships consisted of what he termed "I-It" associations, wherein one responded only categorically to the other person.¹⁷⁷ For instance, because the other is a fellow student known from childhood, one responds in a manner learned through the years since childhood, but conditioned by that initial relationship. The other falls into the category of 'school friend.' Similarly, if the other is better educated or more learned, perhaps a medical doctor, one might respond primarily based upon those categories. The worth of the other person becomes determined by the value of that person to society, or by one's own particular relationship.¹⁷⁸ The categorical relationship is thus

¹⁷⁷Martin Buber (1878-1965) was an Austrian-Jewish philosopher and educator, whose work centered on religious consciousness, interpersonal relations, and community. Buber's major themes include the retelling of Hasidic tales, Biblical commentary, and metaphysical dialogue. A cultural Zionist, Buber was active in the Jewish and educational communities of Germany and Israel. He was particularly influential in the fields of social psychology, social philosophy, and religious existentialism.

¹⁷⁸ Scudder and Bishop, *Beyond Friendship*, 42-49.

for the most part defined by society. Such relationships are certainly necessary for societal living; it is after all important to know how to respond to police officers, or waitresses, for example, in an appropriate manner. However, Buber believed that if one lived only with I-It relationships, it was impossible to become a fully developed human being. Instead, it was the relationships he termed 'I-Thou' that transformed human beings.

In an "I-Thou" relationship the other person is known personally and directly, in a mutually responsive association wherein each member is truly present to the other, is turned toward the other.¹⁷⁹ These types of relationships continually develop over time, and move beyond socially defined categories.¹⁸⁰ Each person in such a relationship has their own worth, built upon the realization that the other is an evolving, growing person. "Only when two say to one another with all that they are, 'It is *Thou*,' is the indwelling of the Present Being between them."¹⁸¹ Such a relationship is obviously not possible at all times. It could be contended, however, that the type of friendship of which Aelred, Francis de Sales and Aquinas speak is only possible in such circumstances. Here, finally again, do we spot glimpses of the divine present in relationship, as well as love, reciprocity, and the transformation possible by such friendship.

The British Christian writer C.S. Lewis, also of the early to mid-twentieth century, was convinced that people overvalue love, particularly romantic love, and undervalue friendship.¹⁸² He did not understand why the modern world had no

¹⁷⁹ Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man*, (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1965), 22. Also see Scudder and Bishop, *Beyond Friendship*, 92.

¹⁸⁰ Scudder and Bishop, *Beyond Friendship*, 94.

¹⁸¹ Buber, *Between Man and Man*, 30.

¹⁸² Clive Staples Lewis (1898–1963), commonly referred to as C. S. Lewis, was an Irish author and scholar. Lewis is known for his work on medieval literature, Christian apologetics, literary criticism and fiction. He is best known today for his series *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Lewis was a close friend of J. R. R. Tolkien,

interpretation of friendship that would elevate it to the level of love, or would interpret it as love. He thought that perhaps even, as the ancients stated, friendship was the "most fully human of all loves," for it was the love that was truly freely chosen, as it was the least instinctive, organic, biological or necessary; it was, therefore, the least natural of relationships.¹⁸³ This was a relationship that was arbitrary, unnecessary, not bound by claims of duty or responsibility. For Lewis, this implied it was the most blessed and glorious, and the relationship that most resembled those of Heaven.¹⁸⁴

However, he also believed that perhaps few persons valued friendship simply because so few experienced the truth of what friendship might be. In response to many of those thinkers who had discussed the topic in the previous few centuries, Lewis wrote, speaking perhaps directly against Freud and William James, that "those who cannot conceive friendship as a substantive love but only as a disguise or elaboration of Eros betray the fact that they have never had a Friend."¹⁸⁵ Nothing was less like friendship than a typical modern love-affair, he felt, for lovers live face to face, absorbed in each other, while friends exist side by side, supporting each other while facing out to also encounter the world. Unlike eros, friendship he saw as the least jealous of loves, open to the possibility of expansion to others. "Two friends delight to be joined by a third, and three by a fourth if only the newcomer is qualified to become a real friend," for in friendship, "to love is not to divide."¹⁸⁶

the author of *The Lord of the Rings*. Both authors were leading figures in the English faculty at Oxford University. Due in part to Tolkien's influence, Lewis converted to Christianity. Late in life he met and married his wife Joy, his truly "best friend," who died of bone cancer at the age of 45.

¹⁸³ C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World Inc., 1960), 87.

¹⁸⁴ Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 92.

¹⁸⁵ Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 88.

¹⁸⁶ Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 92.

For Lewis, similarly to Aristotle's and Emerson's view, friendship arises out of companionship, which he defines as gregariousness, "talking shop," cooperation. Yet his definition of friendship is much more than this companionship, which is itself just barely within the matrix of friendship. Friendship instead bases itself on the realization shared between two or more persons that an insight or an interest is held in common. Lewis describes it as the "What? You too? I thought I was the only one," phenomenon.¹⁸⁷

Lewis agrees with the ancient and medieval thinkers of the first chapter, therefore, that friendship is something that raises us above our "natural" humanity. As an outgrowth of his Christian beliefs, he saw it as of a spiritual nature, free from jealousy, without qualifications or utilitarianism. Friendship tends towards the divine, inviting humility within those who are participants, towards their shared relationship. Since it is transcendental in nature, Lewis believed that societal authority tended to frown on friendship, believing it to be a subtle form of rebellion against societal norms. As to endorsing this form of relationship between God and humanity, Lewis didn't believe that even Scripture would agree to such a thought. Because of the aforementioned threats he also understood that friendship required divine protection to remain directed for the good of each. Friendship, he wrote,

Is the instrument by which God reveals to each the beauty of the others. They are no greater than the beauties of a thousand other people, by friendship God opens our eyes to them. They are, like all beauties, derived from him, and then, in a good friendship, increased by Him through the friendship itself.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷ Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 96.

¹⁸⁸ Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 126.

Contemporary Thought

With the thought of Buber and Lewis on this subject, one can see an initial return to the work of early church theologians and philosophers. Just as did Aristotle and Aquinas, contemporary American psychologist John Reisman recognized in 1979 two inferior, but very common forms of friendship. One is a friendship of receptivity, in which one, or perhaps both parties are willing to accept adulation and favors from the other, yet little affection exists between the two. This leads to a relationship of imbalance and inequality, rather than the equality necessarily inherent in true friendship. No mutuality actually exists in the relationship. Additionally, one most likely has associative friendships, which Reisman believes is, for nearly everyone, the most common meaning of the word "friend." Again, little or no affection exists in such a connection. Instead, these relationships consist of one's neighbors, classmates, committee members and fellow staff or faculty. All constitute a group of what might potentially be true friends, but are more likely what could be termed "fair weather friends," or circumscribed and limited duration friendships.¹⁸⁹ Certainly, such links are necessary and make life more pleasant. They might be considered the equivalent of Buber's "I-It" relationships. These are indeed the types of relationships that might in the end give friendship a bad name, when the expectation of one of the participants in such a relationship exceeds that of the other.

By contrast, Reisman proposes reciprocal friendship, in which the friends see each other as equals, and in which a healthy frankness, *sans* cruelty or threat, exists. This form of relationship, one of 'true' or 'real' friends, is the most desirable form of human association as Reisman perceives it; such a friendship is in continuity with the thought of Aristotle, Aquinas, Aelred, and Buber.

¹⁸⁹ Reisman, *Anatomy*, 31. For example, as long as you sit at the desk next to me, we might as well be friends, or associates. Once one of us moves on, however, so does the "friendship."

British social historians Roy Porter and Sylvana Tomaselli, in a work from 1989 entitled *The Dialectics of Friendship*, summarized some of the contemporary characteristics of friendships.¹⁹⁰ First, they see friendships as typically non-sexual in nature, and generally, although not always, between those of the same gender. Also, friendships tend to develop between those who are not related to each other, although if relatives do become friends, this is in addition to the familial relationship. A friendship relationship is characterized by its egalitarian, reciprocal nature. Those involved are usually about the same age and social status, joined by loyalty and faithfulness, mutual liking, and, as C.S. Lewis stressed, similar interests. The relationship is non-conflictual and supportive in nature, based upon no ulterior motives or utilitarianism.

In much the same manner, P. Wilmott then from the Policy Studies Institute in London, wrote in 1987 that "Relationships with friends have the following distinctive features: they are voluntary (by contrast, for example, with relationships with neighbors except when these are also friends), they are intimate in the way that relationships with acquaintances are not; they are not based on ties of kinship or legal responsibility."¹⁹¹ The necessary conditions for the formation of friendship include opportunity, mutual attraction, and attaining the necessary social skills to achieve and maintain friendships. Porter and Tomaselli contend that friendship, at least at the time of their writing, was most significant to middle-class people. For working class persons friendship was even more likely to be segregated along gender lines. For all economic classes, friendships stress specific activities such as childcare, assistance with shopping, house maintenance,

¹⁹⁰ Roy Porter and Sylvana Tomaselli, *The Dialectics of Friendship*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 114.

¹⁹¹ P. Wilmott, *Friendship Networks and Social Support*, (London: London: Policy Studies Institute, 1987), cited in Porter and Tomaselli, *Dialectics*, 130.

and care during times of illness, as well as confidences and entertainment. For 29% of those surveyed a friend is someone to whom you turn for help; 21% imply the most important role of friendship is to have someone with whom you can talk; and 18% simply enjoy each other's company.¹⁹² Another interesting fact out of their study was that those who are more highly educated tend to have more friends, perhaps simply because they have greater opportunity to meet more people, in addition to having extended geographic mobility.

The contemporary Jesuit philosopher Jules Toner, who wrote extensively on love and friendship, suggests that the continuing use of Aristotle's schema for this topic points to "the scarcity of original philosophical reflection on the nature of friendship during the centuries since he [Aristotle] wrote."¹⁹³ In his book *Love and Friendship*, Toner qualified the essentials of personal friendship as the following: 1) a mutual personal love exists in that desire for the relationship, not the desire for personal gain, motivates the friendship; 2) the lives of those involved are mutually shared; 3) all parties have a commitment to the relationship with a voluntary intention of fidelity and desire to persevere in truthful love; 4) each person believes and trusts in the other's commitment; and 5) each recognizes the virtue of friendship and realizes that the growth of such takes time, and can occur even during long separations.¹⁹⁴

Toner stresses that those people who are friends will somehow find some way to lessen any inequality in the relationship that does exist. Also, if the above conditions can

¹⁹² Tomaselli and Porter, *Beyond Friendship*, 134.

¹⁹³ Jules Toner S.J., *Love and Friendship*, 217. According to Dr. Stephen Post, himself an ethicist and president of the Institute for Research on Unlimited Love, "there was no greater American phenomenologist of love than the Jesuit Jules Toner, whose writings established an important school of thought in the last three decades of the 20th century." Father Toner died in June, 2001.

¹⁹⁴ Toner, *Love and Friendship*, 226.

be met, then some form of equality already exists. To share lives implies physically being present to each other, or at least sharing via some form of mutual intimate self-revelation what occurs in one's life. Augustine, for example, commented on how his friends wanted "to talk together; to perform kindnesses for each other; to read charming discourses together; to make jokes or hold serious discussion; now and then to disagree without ill feeling, as one does with oneself."¹⁹⁵ The love that exists as a result of, but also as a prerequisite to, this form of friendship lends itself to mutual revelation and knowledge of each other's inward lives. The more that friendship grows, Toner asserts, the more easily friends communicate in this fashion. For him the surest sign of deep friendship is the desire to participate in even the other's suffering, simply as a means of uniting with the friend as completely as possible.

Toner, quite like Aquinas, considers friendship as a form of radical love, or charity, in which the other person becomes as another self. As contemporary theologian Paul Wadell put it, "To be someone's friend, Aquinas knows, is to be 'another self' to them, to be so alike not just in tastes and interests, but in character, in goodness and virtue, that they come to look upon us as a reflection of themselves."¹⁹⁶ For such to occur, beyond congenial personalities and common interests, a communion of personal love must be in place and be possible. This is a rather different stress from that of Emerson's individuation. Such radical love is intentionally creative of the one loved, encouraging them in their uniqueness, confirming their existence, strengthening each one

¹⁹⁵ Augustine, *Confessions*, book 4, chapter 8.

¹⁹⁶ Wadell, *Friendship and the Moral Life*, 137.

for the trials of life. This, Toner asserts, as would Francis de Sales, is the 'center' of the experience of any kind of love, including friendship.¹⁹⁷

Philip Mooney, a contemporary American sociologist, in his book *Belonging Always: Exercises in Uniqueness*, agrees that only in friendship do we treat each other as the unique people we truly are. Even as people grow together in friendship-love they each become more endowed with the qualities that form them as the persons they are meant to be. The opportunity for union, therefore, leads to further opportunity for individual growth. However, this growth can only occur in response to the invitation for friendship. Friendship, Mooney reminds us, as did Lewis, is freely chosen. One cannot force another to be a friend; instead the other alone can let me be his or her friend, and this only occurs through self-revelation and mutuality.¹⁹⁸ What is reiterated here again is that this revelation of the self needs to be reciprocal, and is the only way to knowledge of this particular friend.¹⁹⁹ This, as many of these authors would argue, is not just "like" love, it is love.

By the end of the 20th century therefore, after a segue into the instinctual, sexual, and rational, reciprocal love is again determined to be at the heart of friendship. Such a love, as Mooney stresses, is not utilitarian in nature, for what we love most is the unique, precious, center of the personal spirit of the other. For the Christian, this is the center in which God dwells. Therefore, to encounter this center, as did Augustine, Francis and

¹⁹⁷ Toner, *Love and Friendship*, 195.

¹⁹⁸ Philip Mooney, *Belonging Always: Reflections on Uniqueness* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1987), 52.

¹⁹⁹ "We reveal ourselves only to those whom we would love, and like love, this disclosure of our deep-down dreams and hidden longings is spontaneous and pressure-free." Mooney, *Belonging*, 53.

Jane, one starts with prayer, and a willingness to listen to the other, for "love is first of all an exercise of prayer, and prayer, an exercise of silence."²⁰⁰

Concerning Motivation for Friendship

Why might such an encounter be important today? What benefits - psychological, emotional, and physical - are accrued via friendship?²⁰¹ Consider that in the past few years the California State Department of Health has created billboards promoting "Make a friend for your health!" This action in itself illustrates how ambiguous the value of friendship is yet in our society, that one must be reminded or encouraged by a billboard to actually follow through in this endeavor.²⁰² Friendship remains our neglected relationship, and yet friends are crucial to our well-being. One is also reminded of the paradox that, although friendship is best conceived of as nonutilitarian, it is also something that addresses and fulfills some of the deepest human needs. An awareness of this paradox can help one to integrate the insights of the social scientists with concerns for the transcendent dimensions of this type of relationship.

Research in psychosomatic medicine, Tomaselli and Porter tell us, indicates that a deprivation of close relationships causes sleep disorders, anxiety, depression, headaches, and a greater susceptibility to various illnesses.²⁰³ American psychologist Steven Duck, writing in *Friends for Life* in 1991, asserted that, in addition to providing a sense of belonging, friendships act as a source of physical and emotional support, as well as

²⁰⁰ Saint Francis Xavier, cited in Mooney, *Belonging*, 54.

²⁰¹ Of course even with this question the argument might be made that I am venturing very close to viewing friendship within a utilitarian, rather than a reciprocal, mutual context of love. This is certainly one of the tensions always present within a relationship such a friendship. Even Aelred questioned how well we might know our own minds when it comes to understanding our reasons for pursuing relationships of this type.

²⁰² Rubin, *Just Friends*, 11. Dr. Rubin is a senior researcher at the Institute for the Study of Social Change at the University of California, Berkeley.

²⁰³ Porter and Tomaselli, *Dialectics*, 130.

enhancing self-esteem via a reassurance of one's self-worth. They also increase stability in life by bolstering one's attitudes, beliefs, and opinions. They are, therefore, crucial for healthy self-esteem and mental well-being.²⁰⁴

The psychologist Lillian Rubin, writing in *Just Friends*, also explores the idea that friends ease the shifts we experience at various life stages. Friends share our experiences, thoughts, fears, and joys; in addition, current friendships help to heal past wounds as corrective emotional experiences. When, for example, family relationships are difficult or problematic, and charged with 'issues,' chosen friends offer different viewpoints and attitudes, thus creating a balance in our life. Friends therefore help us like ourselves better, and allow us to test the various parts of ourselves; they assist us in finding our hidden strengths, even as they accept our darker sides.²⁰⁵ The self, according to Rubin, is best understood as participating in an ongoing process of development. During this process the various aspects of the self are more or less accessible to us, depending both on the roles we are to play, and the friends active in our lives at any one time. Real friends, simply through the process of friendship, through listening and affirming, encourage the positive, unrealized parts of our lives. They encourage our development as a person. As a young mother and active, vowed member of a lay religious group explained:

When you feel yourself marked off from the world around you, you absolutely need that kind of closeness with similar people. Being different is an important impetus for developing very close, tight bonds with people who share the same experience. The shared status in itself creates a kind of group identification that brings people together. That sense of belonging to a very different kind of life, where you share values, beliefs, a way of life that set you apart in a positive way...yeah, its one of the

²⁰⁴ Steven Duck, *Friends, for Life: The Psychology of Close Relationships* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1991). See especially chapters 1-2.

²⁰⁵ Rubin, *Just Friends*, 40.

highs. It can also be one of the more difficult parts of belonging to such an organization, of being committed like this...I desperately need friends who understand, who love me even if they wouldn't phrase it that way, who are willing to encourage me to be more, to do more, to develop those parts of myself that resist and balk at giving more, at being more than what I now am. Yet, they and I both realize it's so crucial that I, that we, do become more.²⁰⁶

As Rubin would phrase it, this interview with this woman exemplifies the idea that by allowing ourselves to be seen in the mirror of affection, friends help to affirm our self-image, to validate our identity, and encourage us to keep growing.²⁰⁷ In addition, friendship involves a commitment to the public welfare, as friends, linked via a shared set of social, political or personal values, determine to change for the better some aspect of public life. As Laura implied in the above quote, friends are needed because they serve as developmental imperatives at every stage, particularly during turning points and transitions.²⁰⁸

Priest and sociologist Andrew Greeley quotes George Mead as stating that we perceive who we are, and what we will become, by seeing ourselves reflected in the reactions of others to what we do.²⁰⁹ Self-revelation, therefore, is essential to friendship. As, over time, our friend sees the good within us, we become that good. Through reinforcement of the good and the possibilities of the beloved, the friend creates their beloved.

Greeley believes that "one of the major cultural events of our era is the determination of many men/women to build a new world in which friendship replaces

²⁰⁶ LL, Taped interview with author, March, 2005.

²⁰⁷ Rubin, *Just Friends*, 54

²⁰⁸ Rubin, *Just Friends*, 198.

²⁰⁹ Andrew Greeley, *The Friendship Game* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Inc., 1971), 41. Andrew Greeley is an American priest, sociologist and author associated both with the University of Chicago and the University of Arizona. George Mead (1863-1931), primarily affiliated with the University of Chicago, was a philosopher, sociologist and one of the founders of social psychology.

fear and force as the fabric of human society.”²¹⁰ This, he proclaims, is the best, the most perfect way in which we might come to see the riches of our own unique possibilities. It is in friendship that we are forced to be ourselves, because we are forced to live up to the promise to our friend of our possibilities. “Friendship, indeed, seduces us into being ourselves.”²¹¹ It acts as a stimulant, rooted in our love for each other. It is a bursting out, a breaking of chains.²¹²

One might also consider friendship as a means of countering the impersonal atmosphere of a contemporary life dominated by the efficient rationality of machines. Mooney writes that as the dominant model for modern-day organizations, “the cold, impersonal machine with its relentless cogs and ‘bits’ has displaced the warm, sensitive interplay” of the various members of the Body of Christ.²¹³ Emmanuel Mounier in 1962 commented, in *Be Not Afraid*, that the machine is a “product of intellectual abstraction and the impersonality of things, [therefore] it accustoms us to ways of feeling, thought and experience that are ready-made and impoverished.”²¹⁴ The utilitarian mindset created by a society based upon machines shields us from anything that has to do with suffering; by consequence our sensitivity gets anesthetized, and we overlook the grandeur of our fellow human beings, as well as their dignity.²¹⁵ Friendship thus becomes a way to recover that way of “seeing” their dignity, of recapturing interplay and reciprocity.

Friendship is, of course, one mission in life impossible to accomplish on our own. It is neither abstract nor impersonal. It fosters not independence but interdependence via

²¹⁰ Greeley, *Friendship Game*, 14.

²¹¹ Greeley, *Friendship Game*, 111.

²¹² “Friendship produces ecstasy in us precisely because its love challenges our faith and our hope to the ultimate.” Greeley, *Friendship Game*, 113.

²¹³ Mooney, *Belonging*, 34.

²¹⁴ Emmanuel Mounier, *Be Not Afraid: Studies in Personalist Sociology*, trans. Cynthia Rowland (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1962), 59 cited in Mooney, *Belonging*, 34.

²¹⁵ Mooney, *Belonging*, 35.

its mutuality. As philosopher John MacMurray wrote, "Since the 'You and I' relation constitutes both the 'You' and the 'I' persons, the relation to "You' becomes necessary for my personal existence."²¹⁶

In the presence of a real friend therefore, one can truly be completely one's self. The French writer Saint-Exupery explained, "I know you are willing to take me just as I am. What do I have to do with a friend who judges me...My friend, I need you like the mountain-top where one breathes again."²¹⁷ Therefore, by allowing ourselves to be seen through this affection, friends affirm our self-image and validate our identity. "The depth of a friendship....depends, at least in part, upon how many parts of ourselves a friend sees, shares and validates. For what a friend sees and reflects back to us is at once important in affirming and validating the various parts of self as well as the whole gestalt we call a self."²¹⁸

Friendship, therefore, is for contemporary psychologists, sociologists and philosophers an essential aspect of a healthy, whole life. It encourages personal growth, an increase in self-identity and self-affirmation, counters the impersonal aspects of present-day society, and fosters mutual interdependence. All these in turn aid in creating healthy communities.

²¹⁶ Macmurray, *Persons in Relation* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, Intl, 1996), 74. John Macmurray (1891-1976) Scottish moral philosopher, became in 1928 Department Head of the Philosophical Faculty at University College, London. He caused a considerable stir with his 1929 speech at the Liverpool Quadrennial of the Student Christian Movement, entitled 'Ye Are My Friends', drawing on Jesus' characterization of discipleship in John 15. This principle of Friendship became the key to his philosophy of the Personal. Macmurray's training in the Scottish tradition at Glasgow instilled in him the belief that philosophy should address itself to the broader human situation and should be practiced in a wider cultural context than simply that of professional academia. Macmurray insisted that his, and indeed all, philosophy was 'in history.' He died in Edinburgh in 1976.

²¹⁷ Antoine de Saint-Exupery, *Letter to a Hostage* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1943), 68-69, cited in Mooney, *Belonging*, 46.

²¹⁸ Rubin, *Just Friends*, 54-56.

Universal Friendship vs. Personal Friendships

It appears then that most contemporary "experts" would concur that in today's world, friendship is not optional. We have to learn to love one another in this manner.²¹⁹ If for no other reason, we need people with whom we can be "at home," upon whom we can depend. It is important to recognize that none of us are self-sufficient; very few can manage without the love of our fellow humans conveying to us in turn the love of God.

This conclusion, however, raises again the age-old question frequently posed in various forms in Christianity. Do preferential relationships between two people somehow fall short of Christian love?²²⁰ Traditional thinkers often excelled in considering the particular. Many modern thinkers are biased toward the universal. The perennial tension between the particular and the universal calls for some type of balance, even within this topic of friendship. Consider this quote of James Boswell, that "All friendship is preferring the interest of a friend, to the neglect, or perhaps, against the interest of others..... Now Christianity recommends universal benevolence, to consider all men as our brethren; which is contrary to the virtue of friendship, as described by the ancient philosophers."²²¹

Should we not therefore engage in this more generalized form of "neighbor-love," or what has traditionally fallen under the heading of *agape*? *Agape* is one of three typically delineated forms of love, the other two demarcated as *philia*, or friendship-love, and *eros*. *Eros* is that which the contemporary Jesuit priest Edward Vacek explains "springs from and is directed to fulfilling the interests...of the self. Eros affirms the other

²¹⁹ Greeley, *Friendship Game*, 164.

²²⁰ Mooney, *Belonging*, 31.

²²¹ James Boswell, *Life of Johnson* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), 945 ff. cited in Porter and Tomaselli, *Dialectics of Friendship*, 33.

in view of the benefits the lover receives.”²²² As will be seen, the boundaries between these are quite permeable; numerous philosophers and theologians have battled for millennia in attempts to explicate just what the commandment “Love your neighbor as yourself,” might concretely mean in daily living.

Søren Kierkegaard, an early 19th century Danish philosopher, was one who asserted that in contrasting friendship with *agape*, or general Christian charity, friendship comes up quite short. It is instead a form of self-love, or of *eros*, an indulgence of our own personal feelings. To relate to a friend as another self or an ‘other I’ is actually a way of loving one’s own self, and thus generates an exclusive and selfish love.²²³ In a continuation of this idea, Anders Nygren, a Swedish theologian and bishop of the mid-20th century, in many ways set the tone for the current century’s discussion around this topic. According to Nygren:

The commandment of self-love is alien to the New Testament commandment of love, and has grown up out of a wholly different soil...if there were not a desire on other grounds to include self-love among the ethical demands of Christianity, no one would be able to find in the commandment of love any reason for doing so. Self-love is man’s natural condition, and also the reason for the perversity of his will.²²⁴

Jules Toner argues, however, that the mutual personal love at the core of real friendship is not selfish, perhaps because to participate in such a love is not necessarily the natural condition of humankind. He, like Montaigne and Augustine, finds it instead a rare event. “The ideal toward which the maturation of personal friendship tends is one

²²² Edward Vacek, *Love, Human and Divine: The Heart of Christian Ethics*. (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1994), 247.

²²³ “The more closely the two I’s cling together to form one I, the more this united self selfishly excludes all others.” Søren Kierkegaard *Works of Love*, trans. David Swenson and Lillian Marvin Swenson. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), 47. See pages 37-50 for a more detailed comments on this matter. Also Wadell, *Friendship and The Moral Life*, 1989, pages 137-140 has a good explanation of Kierkegaard’s thought.

²²⁴ Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 100-101.

life constituted by two lives so interpenetrated that each friend experiences the other's whole life as hers in the other, and experiences the whole of her own life as the other's in her."²²⁵ This then speaks not to self-love, or self-indulgence, but to a reciprocal mutuality benefiting both persons.

Porter and Tomaselli remind us of Aquinas' thoughts considering *caritas*, which are in contrast to those of both Nygren and Kierkegaard. *Caritas*, what we now translate as "charity," Aquinas believed to be the most perfect form of *philia*, or "friendship." *Caritas* could be rendered in meaning as "of the heart," or "dearness." A friend, therefore, is one "dear to the heart."²²⁶ It appears therefore, the authors conclude, that something has gone wrong, when charity, as a form of friendship, is experienced as a way of keeping personal human relationships at arms-length. Instead, friendship should be considered simply a natural matter of preferring some people to others.²²⁷

In contrast to *philia* and *agape*, *eros* might be considered as the soul's desire for God, the longing for physical passion or union with God. This form of love seeks the good of the beloved, as it simultaneously seeks the beloved for one's self.²²⁸ Yet, even if one must conclude that some self-love is involved in all forms of love, including friendship, perhaps still some reassurance might be derived from this quote by Steven Post:

Love is an abiding affirmation of the value and even sacredness of the other's existence, and leads to attentive understanding, compassion, care, communication, empowerment, celebration, communion, and forgiveness. At core, love is an affirmation that acknowledges for the other the absolutely full significance that, because of egoism, we otherwise

²²⁵ Toner, *Love and Friendship*, 254.

²²⁶ Porter and Tomaselli, *Dialectics*, 31.

²²⁷ Porter and Tomaselli, *Dialectics*, 33.

²²⁸ Porter and Tomaselli, *Dialectics*, 33.

acknowledge only for ourselves. This migration at the center of our being to the other is the core element in all forms of love.²²⁹

At some level, therefore, love can be, and true friendship-love must therefore be, the transformation of self-love into something beyond mere egoism.

Although it is not the purpose of this thesis to examine in detail the history, nor the theological or philosophical minutiae concerning these terms of *eros*, *agape* and *philia*, as can be observed, their perimeters are quite fluid. It becomes impossible to separate out these three forms of love one from another, and thus to label only one, or parts of more than one, as Christian in nature.

However, regarding the issue of particular versus universal friendship, and the interplay of this friendship with love, what this brief overview does give to us is a sense of the timelessness of this question. In examining the topic, one returns yet again to Aristotle defining his three levels of friendship, wherein each level depends upon the intention of the lover. More than two millennia later, as an example, Edward Vacek devotes numerous chapters in his book on love to examining yet again what those various intentions might be, and how they relate to friendship as *agape* as opposed to *philia* or *eros*.²³⁰ Obviously this question remains to be settled.

Therefore, one response to this might best be Saint Augustine's quote that "All people are to be loved equally. But since you cannot do good to all, you are to pay special regard to those who, by the accidents of time, or place, or circumstance, are

²²⁹Steven Post, "Unlimited Love, Part 2," retrieved from http://www.metanexus.net/metanexus_online/show_article2.asp?id=3879, June, 2006. Stephen Post, Ph.D., is a Professor and Associate Director for Educational Programs at the Center for Biomedical Ethics, School of Medicine, Case Western Reserve University.

²³⁰Vacek, *Love, Human and Divine*. I refer especially to his chapter 5 "Agape," chapter 7 "Self-Love, and Chapter 8 "Philia," pp. 157-312.

brought into closer connection with you.”²³¹ This axiom is echoed by Thomas Aquinas many centuries later, in his discussion in the *Summa Theologiae* on the hierarchy of love.²³² As was discussed earlier in this thesis, Aquinas concludes that those who are physically and familiarly closest to us are those whom we naturally and properly love best.

Whether or not Scripture commands us on a practical level to love all, as opposed to just a few, the question remains as to whether it is even possible to make a substantial and sustained emotional commitment to more than a few people? Or is the issue sufficiently summarized as either a matter of 1) offering concern and care to those in our vicinity; or 2) of maintaining an openness to relationships of confidence, reciprocal as can be expected, universally to all of humanity?

Andrew Greeley, for one, emphasizes that the joy of love found in friendship, if it is truly that which extends beyond self-love, must overflow. It cannot be kept just between two friends, or it will dry up. It must affect, and be affected by, the surrounding world.²³³ Such friendship is necessary for today's society; such friendship communities represent a step forward in human culture.²³⁴

If friendship can be kept to the two partners, he decrees, one must conclude it is not real friendship, but one of Aristotle's false versions:

It is not a question of friends expressing their gratitude to the universe of the joy of friendship by trying to bring happiness to others. Rather, the confidence and faith in themselves, the happiness that self-possession has brought to them, the secret that they have discovered, must be expressed to

²³¹ Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* 1:28 in Mooney, *Belonging*, 35. See also Meilander, *Friendship*, 19.

²³² See especially ST II-II 26. As already mentioned, Augustine speaks of the same topic.

²³³ Greeley, *Friendship Game*, 152.

²³⁴ Greeley, *Friendship Game*, 12.

others because confidence, joy, and ecstasy, by their very natures, cannot be concealed.²³⁵

But, still the difficulty remains. Does the drive to human union extend beyond two persons? If so, can this impulse possibly stop short of universal personal friendship? That is the question with which Jules Toner was much occupied.²³⁶ What is this universal friendship which he attempts to describe? Are we again referring to some aspect of Christian *agape*, implying a general attitude of kindness or benevolence among all persons in the world? If so, must this attitude necessarily exclude the suggestion that any person knows and loves all persons intimately?

Toner builds upon Macmurray's work in perceiving an inherent tendency toward a "universal personal community" and a "universal communion of persons."²³⁷ This obviously would involve a transformed world, the potential "kingdom of God."²³⁸ Within such a communion each person would know the others in the fulfillment of their potentialities toward a mature personal friendship. This implies a movement toward a world in which all persons are mature – religiously, morally, emotionally, and intellectually. Such a universal personal friendship would only be attainable by those capable of a quite perfect communion of love and sharing of life.²³⁹

Whether or not such a communion is feasible now, Toner contends that the prospect says something about the possibilities and constitution of humankind, especially concerning how we might grow and relate to each other in the future. Perhaps the act of reaching universal friendship is presently impossible, but this does not necessarily signify

²³⁵ Greeley, *Friendship Game*, 152.

²³⁶ Toner, *Love and Friendship*. In particular, see page 290.

²³⁷ Toner, *Love and Friendship*, 159-165.

²³⁸ Toner, *Love and Friendship*, 299.

²³⁹ Toner, *Love and Friendship*, see especially chapter II "Dynamism to Universal Personal Friendship," 290 – 302.

it is inherently impossible. "Personal friendship with every other person is necessary if any friendship between two persons is to realize the fullness of life which is intrinsically possible for it."²⁴⁰ The dynamism within each person, he contends, reaches out toward a personal relationship with each other person. Uncovering this displays some of the potential glory hidden in the human heart and mind. In Gilbert Meilander's words, this potential form of relationship offers "hope for more than political communities can ever offer...for a day when no one would call another person 'citizen' or 'comrade' but each would call the other 'friend'"²⁴¹ Both Toner and Meilander, however, would argue that such a relationship is possible only from within the Christian tradition.²⁴² They conclude that such a drive toward union with other human persons must actually be a desire for union with God.²⁴³ Thus even the dilemma of particular versus universal friendship points contemporary thinkers toward an emphasis on friendship's transcendent and eschatological dimensions.

Intergender Friendship

With increasing frequency in the contemporary world, this desire for union through personal friendship involves close relationships between the genders. Traditional sources had little to say about intergender friendship. Freud and some other Enlightenment thinkers tended to reduce friendship of all types to the pursuit of fulfilling underlying subconscious sexual needs. The presumptions concerning intergender friendships, therefore, were that such relationships consisted of something other than the

²⁴⁰ Toner, *Love and Friendship*, 301.

²⁴¹ Meilander, *Friendship*, 85.

²⁴² Toner, *Love and Friendship*, see especially chapter 12, "Dynamism to Personal Friendship with God," 303-318, and Meilander, *Friendship*, 80-92.

²⁴³ Which, might be noted, returns us to Vacek's definition of *eros*!

friendship-love of *philia*. Such a relationship either was either a Platonized version of *agape*, implying basic Christian fellowship, or the partners were involved in an erotic sexual affair.²⁴⁴ Considering that interaction between the genders continues to increase, due to both career and community involvement, it does appear foolish to presuppose that either preferential friendship love or universal friendship must be restricted to one's own gender. However, it is also possibly fatuous to assume, taking into account the nature of such friendship, that it might be without its own collection of concerns and issues. Some contemporary thinkers are thus striving to address intergender friendships and the issues that accompany them in a way that acknowledge sexuality without modern reductionisms.

Regardless of whether such relationships should exist, friendship between the genders, even more so than intragender friendship, is not codified. Not only do few if any written rules exist, it is not celebrated, nor even often recognized as friendship. Yet this form of association offers an alternative to the "romantic love game,"²⁴⁵ and a chance to explore other versions of love. Gradually, within the last twenty years, philosophers and those within the social sciences have increasingly reexamined the implications of and points surrounding this version of friendship.²⁴⁶

Following World War II, yet before the cultural turmoil of the 1960's, the philosopher John Macmurray also examined the phenomenon of friendship. He however, unlike C.S. Lewis, believed that friendship was quite possible between the genders.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁴ Scudder and Bishop's entire book *Beyond Friendship* deals with this issue, but see especially pp. 1-15.

²⁴⁵ Rubin, *Just Friends*, 153.

²⁴⁶ See, by way of example, beyond Scudder and Bishop's book; Rubin, *Just Friends* especially pages 135-170; Kathy Werking, *We're Just Good Friends: Men and Women in Nonromantic Relationships*, (New York: The Guilford Press, 1997); Mark Vernon, *The Philosophy of Friendship* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), especially chapter 2, pp. 29-49.

²⁴⁷ Unlike Lewis, at least, in the early part of his life before his friendship and marriage to wife, Joy.

He was concerned that the societal categories of gender roles, marriage, and romantic love inhibit personal relationships between men and women. This in turn fosters emotional dishonesty and denies the equality of the genders. As does Lewis, he suggests that persons break out of societal roles, and thus refuse to restrict personal relationships to those of companionship, "just" friends, or courtship and marriage roles. He contends that "there is only one proper ground of relationship between two human beings, and that is mutual friendship. Difference of sex may make the friendship easier or more difficult...but it cannot make any difference in principle."²⁴⁸ In addition, "Men and women must meet and enter into relationships on the personal level – not just as male and female, but as human beings."²⁴⁹

One reason Macmurray might have so urged such associations is that "opposite-sex friendship calls upon a part of the self that's usually less readily accessible when relating to same-sex friends."²⁵⁰ Sociologist Lillian Rubin tells us that for men, a woman friend allows him the freedom to reach his more emotional side, to experience his vulnerability. For a woman, it is the converse. She is given permission to take out and examine her tougher side, the harder, perhaps more intellectual edge that's kept under wraps in relationships with women.²⁵¹ A man friend, also, helps her to better establish her place in the world outside the relationship sphere, to recreate and affirm her boundaries and separateness.

These cross-gender friendships serve as "special purpose friendships," and have their own built-in limitations. For one, differences do exist in the ways men and women

²⁴⁸ John Macmurray *Reason and Emotion*, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1935), 119.

²⁴⁹ Scudder and Bishop, *Beyond Friendship*, 134.

²⁵⁰ Rubin, *Just Friends*, 174.

²⁵¹ Rubin, *Just Friends*, 174.

approach these friendships; which extends beyond them to one's work life and family. Among women, "friends are necessary even when the work life is important...among men, for whom work lies at the heart of life...relationships are of secondary concern."²⁵² Women tend to search in general for more nurturance and intimacy in friendships. Their friendships with men beyond their spouses are used to fill the gaps in the marriage relationship; these allow the spouses to appreciate those gifts the husband might possess, rather than focusing on what he does not.²⁵³ As one fifty-something women told me in an interview, "Just like there isn't a perfect friend, there isn't a perfect husband. This is why we need both. How could any good marriage survive without good friends of either sex?!"²⁵⁴

For Caroline Simon, the development of intergender friendships, as of any friendship, is more than worthwhile. If, as she writes, "friendship...is based on endorsing a person's vision of himself or herself as relatively fitting to his or her destiny and committing oneself to helping the friend attain that vision," then why should the gender of the friends involved make a significant difference?²⁵⁵ Friends encourage each other in pursuit of their own destiny, but it is quite possible for "my friends' plans and projects to become my own." When this thus happens, my own horizons expand. Friendship therefore contributes to our personal growth, but this is not in itself its intended end. "The aim of friendship is befriending: Encouraging and helping others in fulfilling their conceptions of their destinies."²⁵⁶ Again, therefore, as was discussed above, Simon is

²⁵² Rubin, *Just Friends*, 142.

²⁵³ Rubin, *Just Friends*, 141.

²⁵⁴ JH, Taped interview with author of 3/15/2005.

²⁵⁵ Caroline Simon, *The Disciplined Heart: Love, Destiny & Imagination*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 102.

²⁵⁶ Simon, *Disciplined Heart*, 104.

emphasizing that friends are those who encourage us to become more fully ourselves, and who validate all the various aspects of our identity. If friends of the opposite gender support growth in areas and forms different from that of same-sex friends, it appears critical that these types of relationships flourish.

This said, however, later writers would contend that Rubin, as well as others, tends toward one of the two primary infringements possible in examining intergender friendship – that of overly dichotomizing the roles of the genders.²⁵⁷ She, as did so many of this time, attempts to assign complementary and perhaps stereotypical roles to men and women, where men specialize in individuality or intellect, and women in unity and emotion. Such stark divisions however, stunt both genders.²⁵⁸

The second infringement involves Western society's emphasis upon romance and sex as the only proper venue for intergender sharing. Most studies of intergender relationships outside of marriage take place in a socio-cultural context that assumes normal relationships are developed around a gender basis. What results is an almost exclusive emphasis upon courtship and marriage based on romance and sex, with other relationships delegated to what several of these authors term "just" friendship, but which can be identified by readers of this thesis as examples of Aristotle's associative friendships. As a result, the possibility of really rich personal relationships between the genders has been overlooked.²⁵⁹ Yet, as the philosopher Scudder and social scientist Bishop argue, "no one who has experienced the 'abundant being' that can come from a deep personal relationship with a person of the opposite sex would ever speak of our

²⁵⁷ As was already mentioned, C.S. Lewis, along with Montaigne, Thomas Aquinas and numerous other early writers could also be included in this criticism.

²⁵⁸ Scudder and Bishop, *Beyond Friendship*, 18.

²⁵⁹ Scudder and Bishop, *Beyond Friendship*, 4; see also Rubin, *Just Friends*; and the majority of Werking's *We're Just Good Friends*.

relationship as 'just.' [This] trivializes the relationship in a way that seems like sacrilege.”²⁶⁰

Instead, Scudder and Bishop describe a form of friendship they describe as “dialogical love,” which is defined as a love growing out of the personal interactions of the two involved, initiated by the presence of the other, and responding directly to that presence.²⁶¹ This they place in contrast with “love” in which persons use each other to meet their own personal and sexual needs, or in which cultural prescriptions are employed to dictate the relationship between the genders.²⁶² Dialogical love, therefore, becomes a challenge to the traditional ways of relating between men and women. “In a dialogical love relationship, you become more fully yourself than you could ever have imagined being.”²⁶³

Still the question remains of how to handle possible sexual desire between those involved in such a relationship. Scudder and Bishop maintain that society attempts to manage personal relationships between men and women by romanticizing love and controlling sexual desire through marriage. Very seldom are close intimate relationships between women and men, outside of a sexual relationship, recognized in our society.²⁶⁴ It is supposed that one must choose between being lovers and “just” friends, and that the lover relationship is the preferred type of association. When the affection a man and woman express for each other can not be contained within a “just” friends, associative style of friendship, it is assumed they are involved in a physical love relationship..

²⁶⁰ Scudder and Bishop, *Beyond Friendship*, 4.

²⁶¹ Scudder and Bishop, *Beyond Friendship*, 1.

²⁶² Sounds a great deal like Aquinas' concupiscence! This paragraph however, hopefully hints at a solution to the aforementioned difficulty of utilitarianism in friendship. Perhaps this is best circumvented by quite self-consciously remaining aware of the *telos* of the relationship. Within a Christian relationship, that *telos* is quite necessarily God.

²⁶³ Scudder and Bishop, *Beyond Friendship*, 28.

²⁶⁴ Scudder and Bishop, *Beyond Friendship*, 22.

In contrast, Scudder and Bishop believe that "the deepest love relationships are not sexual or romantic, but personal."²⁶⁵ In their estimation, many women and men are searching for something deeper in their friendships than what society suggests is possible. Their solution is what they term "dialogic love." Such a deeper love is seldom recognized in our culture, and therefore often confused for romantic, sexual love.

Psychologist Rollo May approaches the concerns surrounding sexual desire by separating *eros*, as desire, from the sexual physiological drive. The function of sex, he emphasizes, is 'the release of tension,' the drive toward culmination, whereas the function of *eros* is to give "the spirit of life" to relationships, to promote union between two persons.²⁶⁶ Through *eros*, May asserts, one might achieve ethical goodness, as love becomes personal, and spiritual, when it moves from drive or need to desire. Desire "pulls us ahead to new possibilities." In addition, for human beings, "the most powerful contemporary need is not for sex, per se, but for relationship, intimacy, acceptance and affirmation."²⁶⁷

In consideration of this, Scudder and Bishop stress that sexual relationships in general can and should be raised above the level of appetite; this is best accomplished when the personal relationship between two people is transformed into a communion. Such communion consists in an enjoyment of each other, not utilization of each other for gratification.

However, our society also must move beyond the belief that sex is the only expression of this form of communion of love. Instead, ecstatic love is quite possible in all forms of personal love. Ecstasy in personal love, including that of friendship, "comes

²⁶⁵ Scudder and Bishop, *Beyond Friendship*, 23.

²⁶⁶ Rollo May, *Love and Will*, (New York: Norton, 1969), 72-73.

²⁶⁷ Rollo May, *Love and Will*, 72-73.

from being fully in the presence of the person, rather than [just] from being 'in love.'"²⁶⁸

This follows from the recognition that often the experience of being 'in love,' removes the particularity of the other and reduces that person simply to, using Martin Buber's terminology, an 'It,' or object of one's desire.

Our society needs to recognize that usually in the past intergender love has been distinguished from friendship, or in other words friendship has been separated from intergender love, as a means of controlling the relationships between the genders.²⁶⁹ As Simon writes, as a result of this separation of friendship from love, marriage alone became "the appropriate institutional manifestation of *we*," as a friendship couple.²⁷⁰ However, marriage involves a dialectical tension between the destiny of *we*, and the destinies of you and I as individuals. In contrast to this, she thinks, intergender friendship stresses the fulfillment of the unique destiny of each person more than the 'we' destiny. Helping a friend achieve this destiny requires a balance, a sometimes delicate maneuvering, that "speaks the truth through love with concern, but also ensures the friend will write and live their own story."²⁷¹

Each successful friendship, and in particular each longterm successful intergender friendship, will learn how to navigate the tension between union or shared identity and autonomy with individual fulfillment. Such a tension needs to be in balance.²⁷² Just as in a marriage, intergender friends must come to understand how their friendship changes, know each others fears, discuss how to meet the needs of today, and be willing to reorder

²⁶⁸ Scudder and Bishop, *Beyond Friendship*, 114.

²⁶⁹ Scudder and Bishop, *Beyond Friendship*, 115.

²⁷⁰ Simon, *Disciplined Heart*, 123.

²⁷¹ Scudder and Bishop, *Beyond Friendship*, 50.

²⁷² Scudder and Bishop, *Beyond Friendship*, 51.

and rethink the relationship so it is based upon a stable reality, rather than illusions.²⁷³ In particular this balance must be sought in these friendships to avoid allowing any existing sexual undertones or desires within the relationship to impel them toward a union society too often considers inevitable, yet which generally brings its own irreconcilable conflicts.

On the other hand, to attempt to avoid these struggles by being satisfied with "just friend," associative friendships between the genders robs friendship of its potential virility, strength, and vigor. Surely the sexual drive might be transcended in order to provide an opportunity for fulfilling friendships between persons, regardless of gender. All too often however, unless the relationship itself is nurtured and discussed, and potential hazards recognized, for fear of threat to marriages or the perception of others, it is abandoned. Often when this occurs, for those friends involved in a marriage relationship, simultaneously not only is the friendship harmed, but the marriage also suffers.²⁷⁴

Yet, this difficult effort, as mentioned above, to learn how "to be" with one another in a friendship neither often recognized nor sanctioned by society, can be a spur to unique personal growth. Within such an association, the safety of intimacy might be used to develop in the self those pieces yet requiring growth. In this case, what results is an increasingly free, emotionally and spiritually mature friend, prepared to use one's struggle for the good of a community.²⁷⁵ In addition, in friendships based upon Trinitarian communion, does gender really matter?

²⁷³ Rubin, *Just Friends*, 190.

²⁷⁴ As Rubin commented, too often it is the unwillingness to discuss, nor recognize "limits, as opposed to turning outward to fill the gaps with friends, that's a threat to a marriage." Rubin, *Just Friends*, 142.

²⁷⁵ Rubin, *Just Friends*, 198.

Conclusion

The first chapter of this thesis attempted to produce a description of friendship that thoroughly incorporated the spiritual and the transcendent, with its source and eschatological end in God. This chapter has subsequently surveyed the work of several key thinkers in whose work, following the Enlightenment, we can observe these descriptions greatly reduced, sentimentalized, and privatized. These writers, including those in the social sciences, tended to focus on the utilitarian or sexualized aspects of these types of relationships. However, as this chapter has also shown, within the twentieth century a gradual inclination toward, or recovery of, earlier connotations of friendship has occurred.

Also, as did Cicero, we have addressed the questions of why friendship is so important to humanity. A new emphasis is noted in philosophy, sociology and psychology upon the necessity of mutual, reciprocal, supportive and intimate friendship for mental health and personal growth. An understanding now exists that friendship is indeed a form of a mutually shared, committed, trusting, and persevering, personal love that exists for other than personal gain.

Universal and timeless issues concerning such relationships still, and will, continue to exist. These include the issue of the universality versus particularity of friendship, as well as the difficulties of intergender relationships. This chapter argued that just as the dynamism within each person reaches out toward a personal relationship with every other person, each friendship truly of this type turns from the intimate support offered within the relationship outward toward other potential friends. Those friends necessarily may include persons of the other genders. As I have attempted to explain, however, when

such intergender relationships are rooted in God, the potential for successfully negotiating gender differences and sexual tension is greatly increased.

The following chapter will pursue thoughts initially broached here concerning a twentieth century recovery of the theological aspects of spiritual friendship, considered now within a Trinitarian context. The influence of the Second Vatican Council, with its universal call to holiness and to friendship with God, upon numerous selected contemporary theologians who hold a range of theological viewpoints, yet who place friendship near the center of their work, will also be explored. The hope is that the gleanings of wisdom from various sources, the descriptions of friendship thus elucidated, and the issues so far discussed will indeed all lend further direction to the trajectories friendship might play in the contemporary church.

CHAPTER THREE

VATICAN II, *COMMUNIO*, AND TRINITARIAN FRIENDSHIP

The previous chapters of this thesis attempted to show both that from the early days of the church, numerous theologians, saints, and doctors believed that we are indeed all called to be friends of God, as well as friends of each other. Due to various historical developments and events, particularly the Enlightenment and modernity, this vision was in many ways transformed, or treated in a reductionist and trivialized manner by key modern thinkers for a few hundred years. Beginning in the mid-20th century, however, the work of numerous social scientists and theologians paved the way for a fresh understanding of this same concept. At that point the role of relationship in Trinitarian life, as well as the possibilities of the same for the church as a whole, was recovered and reimagined. Many began again to seriously take into account the idea, well expressed by Simone Weil, that "Pure friendship is an image of the original and perfect friendship that belongs to the Trinity, and is the very essence of God."²⁷⁶ These developments impacted the work of the Second Vatican Council, particularly *Lumen Gentium* and *Dei Verbum*, which emphasized the universal call to holiness as well as the concept of *communio*. This chapter claims that to both of these emphases the idea of friendship as described in the previous chapter is integral and constitutive and based upon a renewed understanding of

²⁷⁶ Simone Weil, "Forms of the Implicit Love of God," in *Waiting for God* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1951), 208, n. 12.

the Trinitarian relationships. In support of this claim, in this chapter the call for friendship with God and community in the Vatican II documents will be examined. In addition, the theological underpinnings of Trinitarian friendship as proposed by several contemporary theologians are surveyed as potential models for spiritual or ecclesial friendship.

Friendship and Holiness

First, however, it is necessary to discern just what the affiliation is between friendship, the Trinity, and Vatican II's universal call to holiness. Since Genesis tells us creatures were made *imago Dei*, in the image and likeness of God, consider that if it is possible for one human being to truly experience friendship with another, then this must indicate that theologically these values and ways of being find their deepest roots in God. This means the persons of the Trinity are truly present to each other, discern reciprocally with each other, and experience the desire and the need for community. As Brazilian theologian Leonardo Boff writes, "God has to be absolute openness, supreme presence, total immediacy, eternal transcendence and infinite communion."²⁷⁷ Indeed, throughout biblical history one can detect how God displayed the desire to assimilate humanity to God's self. From the first the covenants between God and humankind expressed God's desire for communion.²⁷⁸ These covenants were to be intimately written on the hearts of God's people in order to turn them into a holy people, a people set aside for God.²⁷⁹ As Exodus 19:6 states, "You shall be to me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation." Israel was to be a nation of friends of God, dwelling in a friendship of mutuality, reciprocity, holiness, and communion, an example for all the nations of the world.

²⁷⁷ Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society*. Trans. Paul Burns. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 131.

²⁷⁸ Genesis 9.

²⁷⁹ See for example Jeremiah 31:33; also Ezekiel 37:26 and Heb 10:16.

The New Testament continues this linkage of communion and holiness. In Ephesians the Pauline author discusses the need for Christians to adopt a new way of life to “put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.”²⁸⁰ The theme is repeated in Colossians, where God’s chosen people, both holy and loved, are to clothe themselves in the virtues of friendship, that is, of kindness, compassion, and patience with one another.²⁸¹ And in I Peter, his congregation is told, “But you are chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”²⁸²

Considering the continual juxtaposition of these themes of holiness and communion, a suggestion could be put forth that another designation for our call to friendship with God, and through God with each other in *communio*, might just be that of “holiness.” These biblical texts, as well as the documents of Vatican II, call Christians not only to *communio*, but to holiness and friendship as understood in Trinitarian terms. What must be considered here, however, is just how friendship is holy, and in particular how it is similar to the relationships among the persons of the Trinity.

Friendship is a special form of love relationship; as several authors would remind us, it is the most unique kind of relationship.²⁸³ True friendships are not a matter of control, but a life adventure, a journey, a transforming process that changes us over time.

²⁸⁰ Ephesians 4:23-25.

²⁸¹ Colossians 3:12.

²⁸² 1 Peter 2:9.

²⁸³ As examples see Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*; also Paul Wadell, *Becoming Friends: Worship, Justice, and the Practice of Christian Friendship*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press. 2003); also Lewis, *The Four Loves*.

As evident in the biblical verses already cited, holiness is also a matter of transformation over time. Holiness, like friendship with God, is a very risky business.

In one of the discussions conducted for purposes of this thesis, an older couple, members of a Benedictine Oblate community, was interviewed. When asked whether they considered themselves friends of God, their immediate reaction was shock. "I don't know if it is possible for us 'normal' people to become friends of God," the husband stated. "Now the monks, yes, they could be." When questioned as to why this is so, the wife answered "Because they [the monks] aren't distracted with all the kinds of things we have to take care of. They can devote their whole life to doing nothing but listening to God and doing what He wants." Does this mean they themselves are not as holy as those monks? "Well, probably not! I don't think we can ever reach the same level of holiness as someone in religious life could. We just have too many other, umm, sins, distractions, that lead us in the opposite directions from God!" her husband replied.²⁸⁴

As additional interviews were conducted, the same vein of answer was received from several other people. Regardless of what these responses say about the successful dissemination of the concept of the universal call to holiness from *Lumen Gentium*, one must question the immediately emphatic answers received. Perhaps we are not naturally friends of God, nor believe we can be, simply because we do not naturally seek the ways of God. We allow ourselves to be "distracted" because we intuitively know that to become friends of God is to agree to accept a risk, to commit ourselves to we know not what precisely, but to something we cannot control, limit, or manipulate as we would

²⁸⁴ GKG, taped interview with author, March 11, 2005.

wish. Instead we would much prefer to exploit God just as we very often exploit each other.²⁸⁵

But such is neither holiness nor communion. Conversely, to live in friendship with God is to will what God wills, to seek what God seeks, to become one with God. We become united with God just as we have seen the potential exists to become one with each other through long-term friendships.²⁸⁶ God seeks nothing less than the reign of God and universal holiness for all God's friends. To be a friend of God requires not only all our time, but all our skills and faculties, our minds as well as our wills. It demands conversion and transformation. The Pastoral Instruction *Aetatis Novae* (On Social Communication) confirms this in stating that the people of the church are called to a kind of presence which nurtures community, and to engage in a special kind of listening, with a heart that is willing to bring about transformation.²⁸⁷ Friendship requires that same special kind of intimate listening.

Jesus is the perfect example of this ideal, as his holy life is truly a bond of love and friendship with the Father. This relation which Jesus shares with God the Father is not exclusive to the two, but opens itself both to the Spirit and into the entire cosmos. Analogously, we have seen every healthy friendship opens the two involved outward towards the world, in order to somehow change the world. In terms of the Trinity, all of creation is ordered from and toward the love made known via the incarnation of God in Jesus.²⁸⁸ All of creation, therefore, has an inherent potential for holiness and friendship.

²⁸⁵ Waddell, *Becoming Friends*, 17.

²⁸⁶ Waddell, *Becoming Friends*, 19.

²⁸⁷ Pontifical Social Communications Council. *Aetatis Novae. Pastoral Instruction on Social Communications*. (March 17, 1992) Retrieved 3/20/2005 from: <http://www.cin.org/vatcong/aetnovae.html> , note 8.

²⁸⁸ David Schindler, *Heart of the World, Center of the Church: Communio Ecclesiology, Liberalism, and Liberation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company. 1996), 204.

This must be so as in the language of the Trinity; when one speaks of God, one necessarily always means the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the presence of one another, in total reciprocity, in the immediacy of a loving relationship, being open to one another, by one another, in one another, and with one another. They share what, as we have already seen, might be defined as true friendship. No divine Person exists alone for its own sake; they are always and eternally in relationship with one another. The three Persons exist as Persons by reason of their eternal friendship with one another.²⁸⁹ This unity of friendship is indicated in John's gospel when Jesus says: "Father, may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you . . . that they may be one as we are one."²⁹⁰

Friendship with God, as does any true friendship, requires discipline, service, and obedience desired out of love for the friend. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews reminds us of just this: "Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness."²⁹¹ These qualities are all factors of holiness and friendship. As Boff and Schindler both argue, Jesus himself is the exemplar *par excellence* of these traits, and they obtain their truest meaning when they are exercised by Christians.²⁹²

Vatican II, *communio*, and Friendship

Two of the documents of Vatican II, *Dei Verbum* and *Lumen Genium*, articulate God's desire for friendship of this sort with humankind. *Dei Verbum*, the Second Vatican

²⁸⁹ Boff, *Trinity*, 133.

²⁹⁰ John 17:21-22.

²⁹¹ Hebrews 12:9-11.

²⁹² Boff, *Trinity*, 133, also Schindler, *Heart*, 208.

Council's *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*, addresses this immediately in the preface, quoting words from the letters of John: "We announce to you the eternal life which dwelt with the Father and was made visible to us. What we have seen and heard we announce to you so that you may have fellowship with us and our common fellowship be with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ."²⁹³ Very shortly thereafter, in Chapter I on "Revelation Itself," the document discusses God revealing God's self through Christ as Word made flesh. Because of the work of the Spirit, humankind has the opportunity to have access to the Father and thus share in the divine, Trinitarian nature of God. "Through this revelation, therefore, the invisible God out of the abundance of His love speaks to men as friends (*amicos*) and lives among them that he may invite and take them into fellowship with Himself."²⁹⁴ Here is an emphasis upon a Trinitarian relationship of friendship and love extended to all humankind in *communio* from within the life of Christ.

Post-Reformation Catholic ecclesiology, used "communion" to refer to the church as a visible society, and the emphasis was placed on the differences separating Catholicism from other churches; in contrast, Vatican II shifted to the concept of a communion more spiritual and historical in nature. Communion now was constituted first of all by a joint participation in the Trinitarian mystery of God; it built a holy people of God who shared a communion of life, friendship, and truth. This union was not exclusionary but open and dialogical, linking the church to other Christian communities

²⁹³ 1 John 1:2-3.

²⁹⁴ Vatican II. *Dei Verbum. Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*. (Vatican, 1965. Retrieved 3/4/2005 from: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html), 1.

and also to other religions. It refocused the purpose of the church from “self-referential maintenance” to being a sacrament of *communio* and of friendship.²⁹⁵

Lumen Gentium, the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, is replete with images that can be connected with friendship between God and human persons, as well as among humankind itself. This emphasis on friendship begins immediately within the first chapter, which discusses the priority of the unity between the people of the Church with God, as indicative of the desired unity of the entire human race. God the Father, it states, intended to raise humankind to a full participation in the divine life through the creation of the Church. All persons are called to this union in Christ and through Christ, aided by the Holy Spirit. The Church therefore is seen as “A people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”²⁹⁶ The shared heritage of the church is the inherent dignity and freedom of all as children of God, the heart of life is love, and the goal is to bring the reign of God into all of the earth’s creation. The church is to be a visible sign of the Trinitarian unity and also therefore anticipates not only friendship with God, but a universal communion incorporating the traits of holiness and, hence, one might say, spiritual friendship.

As Susan Wood writes, *communio* has both a vertical and horizontal nature; a vertical communion modeled after the communion of the immanent Trinity, in addition to the horizontal communion within the ecclesial community.²⁹⁷ One way in which both are manifested is through the metaphors of the People of God or the Body of Christ.

²⁹⁵ Elizabeth Johnson *Friends of God and Prophets: A Feminist Theological Reading of the Communion of Saints*. (New York: Continuum Publishing, 2003), 115.

²⁹⁶ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, (Vatican City, 1964, Retrieved 3/4/2005 from: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html), note 4, also LG 9.

²⁹⁷ Susan Wood, “The Church as Communion,” in *The Gift of the Church*, Ed. Peter Phan, (Collegeville, Minn: The Liturgical Press. 2000), 160.

According to *Lumen Gentium*, and as introduced in the works of Paul, the church is formed in the likeness of Christ.²⁹⁸ Through partaking of the body of the Lord in the Eucharist, "we are taken up into communion with Him and with one another. 'Because the bread is one, we though many, are one body, all of us who partake of the one bread.'"²⁹⁹ It is the Spirit that urges love among believers, creating friends through Christ, in order to be the holy people, the friends of God.

Lumen Gentium is quite adamant in numerous places about the idea that all persons are called to belong to the new people of God.³⁰⁰ This new people of God, although one people in union with God, are each called to perfect holiness in their own way. All the faithful, scattered though they might be throughout the world, people of every race, nation, and culture, are in communion with each other through the working of the Spirit.³⁰¹ It is chapter five of *Lumen Gentium* that truly exemplifies this shift from the institutional, juridical, and hierarchical emphasis of the past to *communio*. Again the focus upon the varying, inclusive, and necessary gifts of each member of the Trinity provides a template for the life of human beings within the church. The fullness of the life of grace is rooted in the inclusiveness of God's love, in Jesus' preaching which excluded no one from the possibilities of discipleship, and in the transformational gifts of the Spirit fostering the kingdom of God. American ecclesialogist Joseph Komonchak wrote in 1995 that "The challenge today is to recognize that the very *communio* constitutive of the Church and defining its identity requires the cognition of a larger *communio* both as reality already at work in the world and as eschatological goal, which,

²⁹⁸ Romans 12.

²⁹⁹ LG, 7.

³⁰⁰ LG, 13.

³⁰¹ LG, 13.

confessed in faith and yearned for in hope, serves even now as a measure of its love.”³⁰²

As *Lumen Gentium* puts it, forming communion with one another in mutual love and recognizing the communion that already exists is the ‘deepest vocation’ of the church and a foretaste of the eschatological joy to come.³⁰³ In a similar fashion, John Paul II in *Novo Millennio Ineunte* also wrote about a spirituality of communion, which begins with the contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling within each of us. The results of this contemplation, though, must then be shared with those around us in practical and everyday ways, including, one might propose, in friendship.³⁰⁴

Vatican II and the Call to Holiness

So, in what does this aforementioned universal call to holiness consist? *Lumen Gentium* Chapter V, “On the Universal Call to Holiness,” states unequivocally that it is found first and foremost in the call of everyone to love, or charity. Through baptism in the faith, all Christians are sharers in the divine nature; they are justified through the grace of Christ in the Spirit and thus are made, in Trinitarian fashion, truly holy.³⁰⁵ This holiness is not implying a moral perfection but instead participation in the glory and love of God, given freely. Contrary to what some of those interviewed for this thesis might articulate, different types of holiness do not exist; there is not one for lay persons and another for those in religious life or ordained ministry. “The vocation of being friends of

³⁰² Joseph Komonchak “Concepts of Communion, Past and Present,” *Cristianesimo nella storia* 16 (1995): 339-340.

³⁰³ *LG*, 51.

³⁰⁴ John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 2000. retrieved from http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_20010106_novo-millennio-ineunte_en.html. This Apostolic Letter was written at the close of the Jubilee Year 2000. See especially sections 42-45 on “A Spirituality of Communion.”

³⁰⁵ *LG*, 40.

God and prophets shapes the life of everyone in the community.”³⁰⁶ Also, “In the various types and duties of life, *one and the same holiness* is cultivated by all who are moved by the Spirit of God.”³⁰⁷ The gifts of the Spirit may differ for each, but everyone receives the same essential holiness.

It is necessary, however, to hold onto and complete this holiness received at Baptism. How does one implement this task in a practical fashion? *Lumen Gentium* demarcates this requirement by proclaiming this is best accomplished both by seeking the will of God the Father in all things and through service to neighbor.³⁰⁸ To seek the will of the Father implies subsequent obedience to that will, rather than an attempt, as mentioned earlier, to put oneself in control of the relationship. Obedience and service are trademarks of discipline as well as the foundational underpinnings of spiritual friendship. Indeed it is love of God and the love of one’s neighbor in friendship, in service and discipline, which points to the true disciple of Christ.³⁰⁹ As *Lumen Gentium* consistently stresses, this love is to be patterned on Trinitarian love, exemplified by the love poured into our hearts through the Spirit. The life of holiness is rooted in the universality and inclusive nature of God’s love, in Jesus’ preaching which excluded no one from a life of discipleship and friendship, and in the boundless transforming gift of the Spirit.³¹⁰ Obedience therefore is fostered by this love, and flows from this love, rather than existing as a fear of reprisal or punishment. The book of Exodus first states that God will bestow mercy on “those who love me and keep my commandments.”³¹¹ The emphasis is not

³⁰⁶ Johnson, *Friends*, 222.

³⁰⁷ *LG*, 4. Italics mine.

³⁰⁸ *LG*, 40.

³⁰⁹ *LG*, 42.

³¹⁰ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 117.

³¹¹ Exodus 20:6.

simply on following the commandments, but on being willing out of and through love, to follow in a disciplined fashion the way of God. This thought is repeated in the book of Romans in the New Testament, where Paul reiterates that it is through love that we fulfill the law of the commandments, in reference to the desired friendship-love of neighbor and God.³¹²

Various contemporary theologians, partly as a result of the Second Vatican Council and its documents, have examined in great detail the links between the Trinitarian relationships, *communio*, and the call to holiness. Some have even considered the rubric of friendship as fundamental to the same. The remainder of this paper will examine in particular the work of John Zizioulas, David Schindler, Mary Timothy Prokes, Leonardo Boff, Elizabeth Johnson, and Miroslav Volf as exemplars of various aspects of these issues. Although these theologians may vary widely concerning their beliefs on other various issues, one quickly realizes they understand friendship as a constitutive part of the Trinitarian relationships, and consequently, of *communio* in the church. These particular writers were chosen both for this reason, and because each also approaches this idea from distinct angles, which will shortly be explored.³¹³ Even amidst their differences however, the congruity of their thoughts concerning the role of Trinitarian friendship is striking.

Leonardo Boff

This section of the thesis begins with a discussion of the work of Leonardo Boff, both because he well exemplifies a social Trinitarian and because he stands at one end of

³¹² Romans 13:8.

³¹³ Certainly other contemporary theologians may have been chosen. The names Paul Wadell, Joseph Ratzinger, and Roberto Goizueta quickly come to mind. What is immediately striking, however, and will hopefully become apparent, is the degree of overlap among all of these theologians concerning descriptions of spiritual friendship.

this specific continuum of authors.³¹⁴ Boff, as do all the selected theologians, firmly stresses the communion of the Trinity, and the egalitarian, outward turned, mutual relationships of the three-in-one. In a manner unique to those surveyed here, however, he writes as well about the historical development of these same concepts.

In *Trinity and Society* Boff argues that within the context of friendship and *communio* the rationale for faith in the specifically three persons in the Trinity lies in the inference that monotheism implies a God faced with the solitude of the only One, alone for eternity. If such were the case, all other beings would be subordinate to and contingent upon that one. Any kind of communion would thus be inherently unequal. The possibility of two persons in one God, however, implies both unity and diversity in one Mystery. This manifests the opportunity for separation (as one is distinct from the other) and exclusion (one not being the other) between the two. Three persons avoids all such difficulties,,overcoming separation and exclusion even as it overcomes solitude. The third person conveys communion, and is inclusive because it unites what is separated and excluded.³¹⁵

Boff stresses the personhood of these members of the Trinity, for unity exists only between persons, as "only persons are open to others, exist with others and are one for one another."³¹⁶ He thus sees communion as an expression of both love and life. Communion becomes a permanent interpenetration, a self-surrender of each person to the others in union, what is generally termed *perichoresis*, or a type of dancing together.³¹⁷

³¹⁴ Leonardo Boff is a Brazilian theologian born in 1938 and well known for his work concerning liberation theology.

³¹⁵ Boff, *Trinity*, 3.

³¹⁶ Boff, *Trinity*, 5.

³¹⁷ *Perichoresis* is defined as each person containing the other two, each one penetrating the others and being penetrated by them, one living in the other and vice versa, a "dancing together."

Boff believes Jesus describes this in the Gospel of John when he tells us "The Father and I are one."³¹⁸ This oneness was not meant in a numerical fashion Boff argues, but as in multiple persons moving, living, existing, together.³¹⁹ Similarly, in 10:38 John depicts Jesus as saying "The Father is in me and I am in the Father."³²⁰ Boff believes this union of the two does not blot out the difference and individuality of each; instead union presupposes differentiation. Through love and reciprocal communion, as well as communication, they are one single being. This union-communion opens outwardly, toward humans and the universe as an invitation into the divine life, best explicated in another verse from John: "May they be one in us...that they may be one as we are one"³²¹

These thoughts lead Boff to a conclusion unique among the six theologians surveyed: "The Trinity can be seen as a model for any just, egalitarian (while respecting differences) social organization. On the basis of their faith in the triune God, Christians might postulate a society that can be the image and likeness of the Trinity."³²² This society though, to be symbolic of the Trinity, must be a human community built on relationships of participation and communion. Just as "God is not a solitary power, but an infinite love opening out to create other companions in love,"³²³ such a community gathered to bring forward the Kingdom of God, would be characterized by a sharing of power, by dialogue, by openness to all charisms given to society members, by inclusiveness, friendship, and consensus.³²⁴

³¹⁸ John 10:30.

³¹⁹ Boff, *Trinity*, 5.

³²⁰ John 10:38.

³²¹ John 17:21-22.

³²² Boff, *Trinity*, 11.

³²³ Boff, *Trinity* 22.

³²⁴ Boff, *Trinity*, 23.

Within his book *Trinity and Society*, Boff briefly reviews the historical development of the doctrines of the Trinity. He mentions St. Irenaeus of the second century, who perceived the "Son and Spirit as the two hands of the Father, touching us and moulding us to his image and likeness."³²⁵ Both persons were sent into the world to take on our human condition in order to save us and bring us into communion with the Trinity. Perhaps, one might claim, they were sent to bring us into the friendship of the Trinity. They are an absolute revelation of God, communicating themselves completely.³²⁶

Origen (185-254 CE), by contrast, saw the Trinity as an "eternal dynamism of communication,"³²⁷ involved in a process of everlasting realization. God is One, but not alone. Just as light gives off brightness, "so the Father originates the Son, and Father and Son together originate the Holy Spirit."³²⁸ Origen's view of the Trinity was of an occurrence of relationships and communications based on three distinct Persons. His emphasis upon the distinction of the three Persons avoided the pitfalls of modalism, but unfortunately his understanding of the dynamism at work in the Trinity produced a strong tendency toward subordinationism.³²⁹ Within this heresy the Son remains subordinate to

³²⁵ Boff, *Trinity*, 26.

³²⁶ Boff, *Trinity*, 26.

³²⁷ Boff, *Trinity*, 52.

³²⁸ Boff, *Trinity*, 52.

³²⁹ Modalism is defined by the *Catholic Encyclopedia* as "The error that there is only one person in the Godhead who manifests himself in three forms or manners: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." Subordinationism concerns the difficulty of proclaiming our faith in one God, and yet at the same time proclaiming Jesus as God. What results is the belief that due veneration should be shown Jesus, but not to the point of equating him with God, since that in turn would destroy the true meaning of a monotheistic God. Jesus can only be somehow subordinate to God the Father, like God (*homoiousios*) but never equal to God (*homoousios*). He is the first creature, the archetype of all creatures, but never God. Instead, to make contact with the world, God, the absolutely one, indecipherable and transcendent mystery, made use of a mediator, Jesus, who is the Word. This Word is not God, though it belongs to the sphere of the divine. Jesus is therefore a perfect human being, filled with the Holy Spirit.

the Father because he was created by the Father. Jesus the Christ is the most like the Father as one can conceive, without actually achieving equality with the Father.

In response to the heresy of subordinationism, particularly as propagated by Arius, the Council of Nicaea defined that Jesus is from the being of the Father, begotten not made, one in being (*homoousios*) with the Father. "God could no longer be thought of as the solitude of the eternal One."³³⁰ The unity of God is that of a unity of Persons ever interacting with each other. A lordship of God in the Trinity no longer means a heavenly monarchy. It is not seen as in the domination of one over others, but as a communion, a friendship of one with the others in mutuality, freedom, and giving.³³¹

Tertullian, an ecclesiastical writer of the second and third centuries, also significantly contributed to the doctrine of the Trinity, conceiving much of the language of Trinitarian orthodoxy while avoiding the aforementioned heresy. His belief was that God is not just single, but one.³³² However, "God is not an entity closed in on God's self, but a reality in process, a self-distribution constituting second and third persons who form part of God's substance."³³³ This is an eternal process, as the Father is continuously creating the Son out of himself; the same Father through the Son also eternally generates the Holy Spirit. The unity of God is thus always a unity of Persons in diversity. The eternal communication of God maintains communion and unity via these diverse communications.

This process of both unity and diversity is reflected in all of the cosmos, as the Word is incarnated in our own flesh, and the Spirit gives life to creation. But both lead

³³⁰ Boff, *Trinity*, 49.

³³¹ Boff, *Trinity*, 49.

³³² "Unitas ex semetipsa derivans Trinitatem: the Trinity derives from unity in itself." Tertullian, *Adv. Prax* 2:CCL 2, 1161 in Boff, *Trinity*, 53.

³³³ Boff, *Trinity*, 53.

all entities back to the Trinity, and when this unfolds eschatologically, God will truly be all in all.

Although Tertullian was concerned with the unity of God, he did not reflect on the relationship between the three divine persons. That was left to the Cappadocian Fathers of the fourth century, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory Naziansen to consider. These three took the unity not of the divine nature, but of the three divine Persons as their starting point. They believed this unity that forms the essence of the Persons springs from the relationship of communion between them. The peculiarity of each Person is always defined in relation to the others, thus avoiding any risk of tritheism. "The communion between the three is full, since the Father does everything by the Word in the Holy Spirit. The Trinity therefore can only be conceived of as an interplay of mutual relations of truth and love."³³⁴

As a summary of these thoughts then, Boff contends it is not enough to assert that three Persons exist. One must believe one God has being because there is eternal communion and unity among these three Persons, that each Person is fully and completely in the others and involved in the act of *perichoresis*. Such an exchange of love flows between the three Persons that the communion between them is so infinite. They form a union: "The three possess one will, one understanding, one love."³³⁵ The Trinity then does not consist of three individuals who come together and unite in communion, for this leads to tritheism. It cannot even be said they establish relationships among themselves, but instead that they exist as persons precisely because of this mutual, reciprocal bestowal of life, love, and friendship. "This eternal perichoresis of love and

³³⁴ Gregory of Nyssa in Boff, *Trinity*, 54.

³³⁵ Boff, *Trinity*, 84.

life between Father, Son and Holy Spirit forms the original pattern of all love, life and communion in creation."³³⁶ One might say, therefore, that friendship is intrinsic not just to the Trinity, but to all of creation.

Similarly, Boff writes, society is not just the sum total of the individuals who make it up, but is woven out of the relationships which together create the social community. So it follows that human society is a pointer on the road to the mystery of the Trinity. Conversely, the mystery of the Trinity is a pointer toward social life. Human society is thus a *vestigium Trinitatis*, a pathway to the Trinity.³³⁷ The idea of the Trinity as a supreme, model society has been elaborated by a number of theologians.³³⁸ Indeed, Boff believes the Trinitarian relationship of perichoresis displays a paradigmatic coexistence between the personal and the social. These are the relationships which underlie all community and social life and which are informed and encouraged by the communion of the Trinity.

When social relationships, including friendships, are patterned upon the Trinity, unity and diversity blend into communion in God. This form of vision forestalls any totalitarianism based on monotheism, as well as any paternalism based on the monarchy of the Father implying shades of subordinationism. Instead, Boff writes, the domination model is replaced by the communion model. As has already been shown, he believes that the Trinity understood in human terms lays the foundation for a society of friends, of brothers and sisters, of equals, a society which emphasizes dialogue and consensus.³³⁹

³³⁶ Boff, *Trinity*, 84.

³³⁷ Boff, *Trinity*, 119.

³³⁸ One might consider the work of Matthias Joseph Scheeben, Taymans d'Eypernon, and, Jurgen Moltmann among others.

³³⁹ Boff, 120.

Every human person therefore should be viewed as an image of the Trinity, broken only by sin. Society is willed by God to be the Trinitarian community in history, through participation in communion and community. Boff identifies the process of communion, 'communing,' as consisting of several steps. These include:

1. *Presence* to one another – facing each other, being open;
2. *Reciprocity* – the act of two presences relating to each other in mutuality. This implies a certain attraction to one another, and the greater this attraction, the more perfect the communion
3. A sense of *immediacy* – a relationship without intermediaries, implying intimacy
4. *Community* – which is the product of relationships of communion, in which the individuality of everyone is valued, yet formalities are spurned, and communal practices favored.³⁴⁰

When compared to the description of friendship developed in the prior chapter, one observes quite quickly that these practices of communion are indeed the practices of spiritual friendship as described by Aelred, Augustine, and Frances de Sales. Therefore it appears it can be determined that theologically Boff supposes that, since creatures are made in the image and likeness of God, the God of communion, the God of communing practices of friendship, then God must be absolute openness, supreme presence, total immediacy, eternal transcendence, and infinite communion. God must indeed be a God of friendship.

Elizabeth Johnson

In her books *She Who Is* and *Friends of God and Prophets*, theologian Elizabeth Johnson, C.S.J of Fordham University follows the trajectory of her sense that "The love of friendship is the very essence of God" and that the "Hidden Abyss, Word and Spirit mutually indwell in a companionable communion."³⁴¹ She wishes to explore the idea that friendship is one alternative to the exclusive male imagery of God as Trinity, implying

³⁴⁰ Boff, *Trinity*, 130.

³⁴¹ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 218.

the hierarchical pattern of relationship that can accompany such, and against which we have seen, Boff also argues. As she explains, "To see God and the world existing in a relationship of friendship, each indwelling the other, has deep affinity with women's experience."³⁴²

She does this work, however, in a way that is true to the spirit of feminist theology, in the desire to make such experiences available to all peoples, regardless of gender, race, age or nationality. In so doing she builds upon the effort of Sallie McFague, who also explores the idea of God as friend. McFague, in her use of this model, realizes that the particular mystery of friendship with God points to a beneficial relationship with the whole cosmos; this relationship, as also discussed previously in regard to Boff, creates an ethic of human companionship toward all creatures, even beyond humankind.³⁴³ As Johnson puts it, "The eternal friendship that is the triune mystery of Sophia opens to encompass the whole broken world through awakening friends of God to the praxis of compassion and freedom."³⁴⁴

What is unique in Johnson among the surveyed authors is her emphasis upon the role of the Spirit in creating friendship and communion. Johnson explores the theme of wisdom as metaphor for God as Spirit and Friend, beginning her book *Friends of God and Prophets* with this verse from the book of Wisdom:

Although she is but one, she can do all things,
And while remaining in herself, she renews all things,
In every generation she passes into holy souls
And makes them friends of God, and prophets.³⁴⁵

³⁴² Johnson, *She Who Is*, 235.

³⁴³ Sallie McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press. 1987), 166.

³⁴⁴ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 218.

³⁴⁵ Wisdom 7:27. Johnson discusses this analogy with Wisdom at the beginning of her book *Friends of God and Prophets*.

Johnson believes that the symbol of Wisdom suggests that both friendship and prophecy are fundamental elements of God's own relationship to the cosmos. This concept of Wisdom is also inherent to God's task of cultivating a sense of the self in which relationship to the other is integral, and in fostering "habits of the heart," or practices, that cherish community and tradition.³⁴⁶ Friends of God, according to Johnson, are thus those people who are "freely connected in a reciprocal relationship characterized by deep affection, joy, trust, delight, support in adversity, and the sharing of life; knowing and letting oneself be known in an intimacy that flows into common activities."³⁴⁷ In such a friendship, one heart reflects another, and in the relationship with such a God, one's love flows spontaneously into the world, its people and creatures, as well as its institutions and created works, for all are befriended by divine compassion.

Both McFague and Johnson are also interested in the use of the term "Spirit" as friendship or communion, in opposition to an often amorphous, ethereal description that lacks discrete definition. As Johnson points out, Augustine characterized the Spirit as love, mutual communion, and gift, and Aquinas defined it as a love analogous with mystery.³⁴⁸ In *She Who Is*, Johnson quotes Aquinas as writing "Since by the Holy Spirit we are established as friends of God," so then, she continues, as we do with human friends we can share secrets, goods, and conversation with God.³⁴⁹ She believes that God's power and activity as Spirit show a way of relating that is mutual, reciprocal, full of friendship. She draws upon McFague to assert that friendship is the most free relation known. Friendships, unlike most other kinds of love, do not have to exist. They are

³⁴⁶ Johnson, *Friends of God and Prophets*, 21.

³⁴⁷ Johnson, *Friends of God and Prophets*, 41.

³⁴⁸ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 132.

³⁴⁹ *ST II-II*, 23; cited in Johnson, *She Who Is*, 145.

chosen, and are characterized by mutual trust, responsibility, common interests, and inclusivity. Friendship with God similarly must be freely chosen, and implies such trust and mutual responsibility. The Spirit not only makes human beings friends of God, but herself befriends the world, and so can be named friend.³⁵⁰ She is the “energy of relation,” making everything alive. She is the source of holiness, which means, as was suggested earlier in this chapter, neither more nor less than belonging to God in friendship.³⁵¹ She is, in human terms, as British theologian Nicholas Lash names her, friendship herself.³⁵²

Johnson reminds us that, according to Vatican II, all are called to be holy and to be saints; when this call is even partially realized it shapes the life of everyone in the community. Through our response to God’s grace to grow in holiness, through our response to the Spirit of Wisdom and friendship, we increasingly view ourselves as friends of God, rather than as slaves or irredeemable sinners. Holiness becomes simply “creative fidelity” to God in ordinary, everyday life.³⁵³ It is not so much an accomplishment as simply being on fire with desire, one whose hunger for God is insatiable.³⁵⁴ As a result of this fire, Johnson believes, we are required, compelled even, to go out into the world as compassionate, holy, sacramental friends.³⁵⁵

In consequence of this Vatican II call for universal holiness and its subsequent fire, Johnson observes that new ways of appreciating and becoming holy are being born. These tend to be less associated with patriarchy and more in tune with women’s way,

³⁵⁰ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 145.

³⁵¹ Johnson, *Friends of God and Prophets*, 227.

³⁵² Nicholas Lash, *Believing*, 97.

³⁵³ Johnson, *Friends of God and Prophets*, 229.

³⁵⁴ Theresa Sanders “Seeking a Minor Sun: Saints after the Death of God,” *Horizons: Journal for the College Theology Society* 22 (1995): 183-97.

³⁵⁵ Johnson, *Friends of God and Prophets*, 224.

indeed with the ways of most people, of being in the world. These would involve trying to work out harmonious relationships, in appreciating the gift and task of the everyday, and everyday friendships, which are of course anything but ordinary, and in acknowledging the divine work of grace through the Spirit in our lives and in our communities.

God gives persons a share in the divine life through that grace. This gift is an offer to participate in the very life of the Trinitarian communion; such a communion, Johnson writes, is healing, redeeming, and liberating when it is freely received and responded to.³⁵⁶ Therefore, concerning the relationship of the immanent Trinity, the genuine human friendship of those made *imago Dei* offers a clue. Such friendship is the epitome of freedom, mutuality, and lack of possessiveness, in that mutual trust exists side by side with common interests. True, mature friendship is open to the inclusion of others, and it offers hospitality to all. Some have questioned, Johnson notes, that in such friendship or human *perichoresis* modeled on the Trinitarian, the persons involved might become indistinct and lose differentiation from each other. Instead, genuine human autonomy appears to grow in direct proportion to the degree of mature friendship involved. Adult friendship enhances, indeed encourages, each member's differences and individual gifts. It is at the very heart of human existence; it is the way in which we become truly ourselves.³⁵⁷ The stronger the bond, therefore, the more creative of personhood the relationship becomes. Such a friendship can thus create powerful bonds of mutuality among distinct human beings.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁶ Johnson, *Friends of God and Prophets*, 212.

³⁵⁷ Lash, *Believing*, 97.

³⁵⁸ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 217.

In an analogous fashion, the relationship of the world to God, rather than crushing creation by presence of the divine, sets the world up in its own integrity.³⁵⁹ This friendship creatively contributes to this growing integrity.³⁶⁰ By contrast, if God were in competition with or wished to dominate the world, this gift of grace would wipe out a person's individuality and independence. Instead God wishes to see God's creatures flourish; God's grace is strengthening. In a similar fashion, Karl Rahner wrote: "Nearness to God and genuine human autonomy grow in direct and not inverse proportion."³⁶¹

Johnson would agree with Rahner and Sallie McFague that communion requires distinction, that persons need to retain some aspects of their own individual differences. If somehow all distinctions were to dissolve into oceanic muck, then the conditions that create interrelationship would disappear. However, God instead preserves persons in their own uniqueness in order to continue to make possible eternal communion.³⁶²

Within the work of Elizabeth Johnson one can once again see the intrinsic, crucial role of friendship within the Trinitarian relationship. Expanding that anthropologically, one also observes the importance of that friendship for creation made *imago Dei* in the search for communion and holiness in this world.

Mary Timothy Prokes

Sister and theologian Mary Timothy Prokes' book *Mutuality* begins with a quote from Ewert Cousins which may well summarize the impression of the majority of these

³⁵⁹ Johnson, *Friends of God and Prophets*, 207.

³⁶⁰ This integrity, she tells us, is "The result from living in coherence with rather than against the grain of the true ground of one's being – the one living God." Johnson, *Friends of God and Prophets*, 212.

³⁶¹ Karl Rahner "On the Theology of the Incarnation," *Theological Investigations* 4:117; cited in Johnson, *Friends of God and Prophets*, 212.

³⁶² Johnson, *Friends of God and Prophets*, 213.

authors: "The shift from a spirituality of 'isolationism' or 'rugged individualism' to a community-based spirituality has occurred so fast that theologians have been taken off guard."³⁶³ Her book, in a fashion similar to Boff's, specifically discusses the thesis that the mutual relations among the divine persons might be used as the basis of a contemporary spirituality rooted in interpersonal relations. Sister Mary Timothy's book, however, also references the medieval work of Richard St. Victor on this topic. In what is unique to her view, though, such spirituality focuses on the Christian understanding of mutual self-gift among the persons of the Trinity and then consequently explores the possibility of reciprocal self-gifting as it is embodied in everyday life. Mutuality, she believes, is more than the basis of interpersonal spirituality; it is instead the basis of all reality.³⁶⁴ This mutuality is derived from the concept of *donum* theology, the theology of gift as found in relationships of communion. As this section will explore, *donum* theology addresses the issue of call and response embedded in the concept of mutuality. This paper has previously established mutuality as a necessary part of a description of spiritually based friendship, so Prokes' thoughts have a related contribution to make. If mutuality, an intrinsic part of friendship, is the basis of all reality, one might infer that friendship must also somehow play a primary role in human reality.

Prokes explains that the need for a reemphasis upon the mutuality of the Trinitarian relationships stems from the results of the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, with their scientific and technical achievements accompanied by a strong

³⁶³ Ewert Cousins, "A Theology of Interpersonal Relations," *Thought*, XLV, 176 (Spring 1970), 58 in Prokes. 4. Cousins is a philosopher and expert in medieval monasticism, particularly the work of Richard of St. Victor. Mary Timothy Prokes is a sister of the Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist, and received her PhD in Theology from the Notre Dame Graduate School of Christendom College.

³⁶⁴ Mary Timothy Prokes, *Mutuality: the Human Image of Trinitarian Love*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 5.

emphasis upon the individual, and subsequent glorified personal achievement. The end result of this emphasis however, is far too often not unremitting freedom and possibilities, but human lives determined by inventions and technical intervention.³⁶⁵ The modern age tends toward impersonal manipulation at a distance with its turn from "without" to within, and its technological individualism. Prokes also concludes that it fosters the fragmentation of society as each person seeks their own satisfaction.³⁶⁶

Is any sort of union possible in such a society? Prokes asserts that numerous events occurring within creation prompt contemporary reflection on the universal call to union. Indeed, "The turbulent confluence between individual fulfillment and the desire for union signals a breakthrough point of receptivity to Trinitarian mutuality and its human counterpart."³⁶⁷ This human counterpart, as this paper proposes, is spiritual friendship based on mutuality.

A reexamination of divine mutuality is necessary, Prokes writes, because it is from this divine communion that all human forms of mutuality, friendship, and self-gifting take their meaning. Communion is necessary for keeping the commandments within a spirit of love and is essential in the struggle against the world if the Christian is to bear the desired fruit. Both of these tasks are essential constitutive principles of all Christian life; consequently, communion, both within humankind and with God, is imperative.³⁶⁸ Such communion is not limited to the apostles, nor to mystics, but neither, writes Prokes, is it an automatic possession of Jesus' followers.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁷ Prokes, *Mutuality*, 13.

³⁶⁸ Prokes, *Mutuality*, 17.

³⁶⁹ "Right from the beginning of the Trinitarian revelation Jesus emphasized the challenging human vocation to share divine interpersonal communion, to be a human community in the image of the three-in-one." Prokes, *Mutuality*, 18.

Prokes views the theology of personhood as moving from the Greek emphasis on essence to a twentieth-century existentialism.³⁷⁰ In existentialist terms, the shift was from “what?” to “how?” A “what,” as she explains in the language of the metaphysician Arthur Gibson, maintains its individuality in regards to others, while a “how” is relational. It is difficult to imagine two “whats” interacting; add another and that third simply becomes a satellite. However, the relational “hows” Gibson imagines as open circles, not self-contained or isolated, with their interactions producing immense possibilities of dynamic interchange.³⁷¹ In the existentialist perspective the Father moves out in self-gift to the Son, who does the same to the Father, brought into communion through the Spirit. This relationship is thus both dynamic and interrelational, a pattern for all other relationships.

The 12th century Scottish theologian, mystic, and exegete, Richard of St. Victor, set out to prove that perfect love of any kind required a divine Trinity. He saw, as did Aquinas, charity as perfect but with a basis not of self-love but other-directedness. Charity also implies a plurality of persons, for perfect love requires a third person. St. Victor also stressed the need both for mutuality and equality in perfect love.³⁷² He believed that the deepest human fulfillment comes not from self-love but from transcendent love for another. Such love is both rare and magnificent and presumes that the persons involved are those who are capable of giving and receiving and who would

³⁷⁰ One might consider essence as an emphasis on demarcation, or the sharp edges differentiating one thing from another, while existentialism emphasizes more existence and interaction rather than difference.

³⁷¹ Reverend Arthur Gibson. “Heidegger, Camus, and the film *Jules et Jim*.” (Lecture at University of St. Michael’s College, University of Toronto, winter term, 1974), in Prokes, 20.

³⁷² “Therefore it is necessary that each of those loved supremely and loving supremely should search with equal desire for someone who would be mutually loved and with equal concord willingly possess him. Thus you see how the perfection of charity requires a Trinity of persons.” Richard of St Victor, “Book Three of the Trinity,” *Richard of St Victor*, Trans. Grover A. Zinn, 371-397. *The Classics of Western Spirituality Series* (Mahweh, NJ: Paulist Press, 1979); cited in Prokes, *Mutuality*, 24.

not be threatened by the gifts of others. What he attempted was to "get beneath the surface of isolation and separation to the spiritual depth where persons are intimately united at the core of their being."³⁷³

As to be human is to be *imago Dei*, Prokes sees the summons to human mutuality through the divine exemplar when one describes a Trinity in which: 1) the identity of each divine person is in relationship to the other two; 2) this perfect mutual love requires a third person; 3) their reciprocal love is an indwelling phenomenon; and the 4) basis of their interrelationship is a personal self-gift.³⁷⁴ Jesus discussed his own mission, as well as that of the Holy Spirit, in terms of relationship, reciprocity, and gift, and the Father as the one who sends person-gifts. In the Eucharistic celebration, the paschal mystery itself is spoken of in terms of gift: "Take this all of you and eat of it. This is my body, which is given up for you."³⁷⁵ The New Testament thus tells us that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are sent into the world as gifts who would literally, willingly, enter into those who would receive them as an indwelling presence. What is a quality of the immanent life of the Trinity is also true within human salvation history.

It is especially to the Holy Spirit that the name of "gift" is given. Pope John Paul II writes:

It can be said that in the Holy Spirit the intimate life of the Triune God becomes totally gift, an exchange of mutual love between the divine Persons, and that through the Holy Spirit God exists in the mode of gift. It is the Holy Spirit who is the personal expression of this self-giving, this being-love.³⁷⁶

³⁷³ Prokes, 25.

³⁷⁴ Prokes, *Mutuality*, 34.

³⁷⁵ Luke 22:18-22.

³⁷⁶ John Paul II, *On The Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World*, (Vatican, 1986), 18 within Prokes, 35.

Because the Father and Son are poured out for the sake of humankind, the Holy Spirit is known as gift. It is in the mutual self-giving of the Father and the Son that the Spirit becomes the source of gift giving to all creatures. "The theology of mutuality is then a *Donum* theology, or a theology of gift."³⁷⁷

Prokes points out that *Gaudium et spes* addresses this notion in stating: "There is such a likeness between the divine community and the human community that the human person is precisely that being who can realize himself only by giving himself away. The Council Fathers wrote: 'Man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself.'" (#24,2).³⁷⁸

Prokes, in conjunction with Augustine, Aquinas and De Sales, acknowledges that creaturely mutuality, although deriving from the divine communion, remains partial, lacks completeness, and causes the inexpressible loneliness at the core of personal life. Only eschatologically will our friendships truly be fulfilled. The prayer of St Augustine "Our hearts are made for you, O Lord, and they are restless until they rest in you," remains so very true.³⁷⁹ When human mutuality is genuine though, a reflection of the divine *perichoresis* can be found in those resulting human relationships.

Similarly to what preceding theologians write, Prokes holds that personal identity is therefore realized in faithful relationships of friendship which include a reciprocal giving and receiving, and openness to others. When these traits are lived out in community, such a community of faith becomes a 'sacrament' of divine mutuality, a sacrament of friendship in the world. Many of Prokes' ideas concerning the uses of

³⁷⁷ Prokes, *Mutuality*, 35.

³⁷⁸ Prokes, *Mutuality*, 37.

³⁷⁹ Augustine, *Confessions*, I:1.

mutuality in church communities will be discussed in the subsequent chapter in this thesis concerning possible practices of friendship in the church.

Miroslav Volf

Although Miroslav Volf, a Free Church theologian, does not speak directly of friendship *per se*, he thoroughly discusses several questions essential to the underlying foundations of both communion and friendship in his book *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*.³⁸⁰ He is especially interested in the question raised by Elizabeth Johnson as well as Leonardo Boff, regarding how one might maintain one's own particularity in regards to communion with God, or in communion with any other. Volf claims the answer to this question lies within the Trinitarian relationship itself. The relationship of the Father to the Son and in the Spirit, is not all the same, but rather each person has their own particular relationship to the others. Anthropologically, he argues, this implies each person "is constituted into a person by what in each case is a different relation of God to that human being."³⁸¹ A human becomes a person and comes into existence as a human being because he "is addressed by God equiprimally with regard to both God and to himself, and is called to communion with God."³⁸² Generally God's call to holiness is the same for everyone. However, the call is also specific to each individual. Volf writes that, unless God's relationship with each person is specific in every case, and unless each one is called by name, no person can declare that they were personally

³⁸⁰ Miroslav Volf, originally of Croatia, is presently Director of the Yale Center for Faith and Culture and is Henry B. Wright Professor of Theology at Yale Divinity School.

³⁸¹ Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*. (Grand Rapids, MI : Eerdmans Publishing Company. 1998), 182.

³⁸² Ingolf U. Dalferth and Eberhard Jungel, "Person und Gottebenbildlichkeit." In *Christlicher Glaube in moderner Gesellschaft*, ed. F. Bröckle et al. 30 vols., 24.57-99. (Freiburg: Herder, 1981), 70; cited in Volf, *After our Likeness*, 182.

created by God. It is this individual, unique call of God that makes each individual a unique, distinct person.³⁸³

However, even within this uniqueness no one stands as an individual isolated from others and from their environment. Such a person does not exist. All humanity is instead embedded in a network of relationships of many kinds; we are indeed relational by nature and substance. Every human is conditioned by their relationships with other human beings, within the framework of societal structures and institutions.³⁸⁴

Through the constituting relationship with God the human being as person is kept from dissolving into the multiple relationships of life, and God gives to each person the capacity for freedom in regard both to God and the environment. The person created by these relations is not identical with those relations, but can stand over against, and yet relate to both God and the enveloping environment. In these lie human freedom, independence, and salvation. Salvation thus, believes Volf, consists in humans living in such a way that their encounters are not of opposition to God, nor to their fellow humans or creation, but of standing in communion with the same.³⁸⁵ Salvation consists, one might therefore conclude, in developing the attitudes and skills that allows one to develop relationships of friendship.

In common with Johnson and Prokes, Volf emphasizes the role of the Spirit in this movement toward friendship. He states that it is the role of the Spirit present in Christians to open each of them to the others, and to start them on the path to creative mutuality. In this way each has the possibility of growing in their own unique way, and in finding joy in each other. Volf agrees with Prokes that this voyage of growth ends

³⁸³ Volf, *After our Likeness*, 182.

³⁸⁴ "Without other human beings, even God cannot create a human being!" Volf, *After our Likeness*, 183.

³⁸⁵ Volf, *After our Likeness*, 186.

teleologically in a common eschatological communion with the Trinity. "The Spirit dwelling through faith in the hearts of human beings 'himself issues from his fellowship with the Father and the Son, and the fellowship into which he enters with believers corresponds to his fellowship with the Father and the Son and is therefore a *Trinitarian fellowship*.'" ³⁸⁶

What both Volf, and, as shall shortly be seen, Zizioulas stress, is that just as persons are constituted by God by way of social relationships, so one is also constituted as a Christian through ecclesial relationships. These relationships, however, are not just social, since the initiation is through baptism and the Eucharist.³⁸⁷ They are sacramental in nature. The correspondence between Trinitarian and ecclesial communion is thus grounded in Baptism. Churches are not just images of the Trinity formed by human beings alone, but are concrete experiences of the one communion of the Trinity and God's people. As Boff argued that the Trinity therefore, should be a determining reality of society, Volf believes the Trinity should determine the church. As was previously stated, this correspondence to the Trinity is both a hope and an ongoing task for humankind, to be realized only eschatologically. Relations between Trinity and church are not just formal, and imply more than a certain relationship of love between the one and the many; in addition, the relationships within the church must also reflect the mutual, reciprocal love of the divine triune persons.³⁸⁸ They must, therefore, be mutual, reciprocal, expressions of love freely given.

³⁸⁶ Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: a Universal Affirmation*, trans. Margaret Kohl, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 218 in Volf, *After our Likeness*, 189.

³⁸⁷ Volf, *After our Likeness*, 185.

³⁸⁸ Volf, *After our Likeness*, 195.

Volf questions how one might do this, as no correspondence to the interiority of the divine can exist at the human level. Although human beings might be determined socially and ecclesially by each other, we are not simply communion as is the Trinity, but are always held as one through means of some type of pledge or contract. Similarly, one human being cannot indwell another, but they must always remain external to each other as subjects. One might believe, Volf writes, that the case of mutual love is proof of the opposite. But still, he believes, it is not even really now the Thou who is the subject of the love, but I, the loving self myself. One may, in cases such as this, be able to embrace or “enter empathetically” into the other, but still one cannot indwell that other as a self. Only God does so.³⁸⁹

We are still, however, meant to relate to each other through mutual, reciprocal love both ecclesially and socially. In ecclesial communion, through mutual giving and receiving, we give to others not only ‘something’ but also a piece of ourselves; we give what we have made of ourselves in communion with those others, and we take both ‘something’ and a piece of the other into ourselves. This is, Volf claims, the work of the “mutual internalization of personal characteristics occurring in the church through the Holy Spirit indwelling Christians.”³⁹⁰ They open to each other via the means of the Spirit, allowing them to become truly catholic persons in their uniqueness, not just to each other, but within their entire environment.

This emphasis upon reciprocity and mutuality, self-gift, uniqueness within communion, love and freedom held in tension, are all integral, important elements of spiritual friendship. Although Miroslav Volf’s thoughts originate from a very different

³⁸⁹ Volf, *After our Likeness*, 211.

³⁹⁰ Volf, *After our Likeness*, 211.

faith tradition than some of the other theologians, his development of these concepts and the centrality of the defining characteristics of friendship in his work are striking. Additionally, these are among the common threads in the writing of all thus far surveyed.

John Zizioulas

Writing from within the Eastern Orthodox tradition, John Zizioulas also emphasizes the constitutive quality of friendship through communion in the church.³⁹¹ He stresses in *Being and Communion* that the church above all is a way of being in relationship in the world, and that people can approach God only through God the Father's relationships to the Son and the Spirit.³⁹² Therefore from the very beginning, Zizioulas believes, the church was the result of the Trinitarian relationships. Additionally the fact that persons in the Church are the image of God is due to the acts of the Trinity, in particular the work of Christ and the Spirit in history. This being of persons as *imago Dei* in relationship to each other and to God is the basis of ecclesiology, if not the goal of it.³⁹³

Zizioulas draws heavily upon patristic thought to explain that God's way of being is a way of relationship with the world, which in itself is an "event of communion."³⁹⁴ God therefore can only be known through personal relationships and personal love. Without communion it is not possible to speak of the being of God, for God is totally relational. God's being means life, and life means communion.³⁹⁵ It is unthinkable and impossible to speak of the "one God" before speaking of the God who is communion in

³⁹¹ Bishop John Zizioulas of Pergamon was born in Greece in 1930, and is a theologian, Metropolitan of Pergamon, Greece, under the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, a member of the Academy of Athens, and a former professor at Glasgow University, Scotland. He was consecrated as a bishop in 1986.

³⁹² John Zizioulas, *Being and Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1993), 19.

³⁹³ Zizioulas, *Being*, 19.

³⁹⁴ Zizioulas, *Being*, 15.

³⁹⁵ Zizioulas, *Being*, 16.

the Trinity. The Trinity as communion is thus a primordial ontological concept, not something added on by later thinkers.³⁹⁶

Zizioulas is, however, also quite adamant that not only communion but also freedom is necessary to constitute a human being made in God's image. One must be a free person, one who freely affirms their own being and identity by means of communion with others. No true being in this world is possible therefore without communion, as nothing exists as an individual, conceivable and containable only within its own self. Therefore, communion also becomes an ontological category.

He cautions, therefore, that communion which does not come from a concrete and free person, or *hypostasis*, is not an image of the being of God. Any form of communion that denies or suppresses the person is nonadmissible as an image of God.³⁹⁷ "It thus ultimately becomes evident that the only exercise of freedom in the ontological manner is love. The expression 'God is love' (1 John 4:16) signifies that God 'subsists' as Trinity, that is as person and not as substance. Love is not a property of the substance of God, but is constitutive of his substance."³⁹⁸ Love accordingly ceases to be a qualifying property of being and becomes the ultimate ontological category. It constitutes God's being, and the being of humankind made in God's image, and is identified with ontological freedom. To truly be a person, one loves through relationships in freedom.

The human being as a unique and free hypostasis, loving and being loved, is, according to Zizioulas, the epitome of salvation – the bringing of the Gospel to

³⁹⁶ Zizioulas, *Being*, 17.

³⁹⁷ Zizioulas, *Being*, 18.

³⁹⁸ Zizioulas, *Being*, 46.

mankind.³⁹⁹ This entails participation as a friend of God not in the nature or substance of God, but in God's personal existence.

Similarly, as a friend of God made in God's image, one loves others freely in communion. Zizioulas sees one of the roles of the church as bringing its members into a kind of relationship with the world not determined by the laws of biology.⁴⁰⁰ What Zizioulas is implying by this is that because of the *communio* found within the church the members can love not because obliged to do so by the laws of biology, for example as one loves one's family members or spouses, but unconstrained by the natural laws. A characteristic of the ecclesial hypostasis is the capacity of a person to love without exclusiveness, and to do so not out of conformity with a moral commandment, but out of the fact that the new birth from the womb of the Church has made its members part of a network of relationships which transcends every exclusiveness.⁴⁰¹

Miroslav Volf spoke about the catholicity of the person engaged in ecclesial communion, and Zizioulas' thoughts parallel this. The person as a result of communion is freed from individualism and egocentricity and becomes a supreme expression of community. One could, therefore, engage in a communion of friendship with those quite different from one's self; in fact, one is encouraged by the Spirit to do just that. As members of a church community made in the image of the Trinity, we are obliged to engage in loving relationships that transcend societal and biological boundaries. We are called, one might argue, to be friends.

³⁹⁹ Zizioulas, *Being*, 50.

⁴⁰⁰ Instead, "The Christian through baptism stands over against the world, he exists as a relationship with the world, as a person, in a manner free from the relationship created by this biological identity." Zizioulas, *Being*, 51.

⁴⁰¹ Zizioulas, *Being*, 51.

David Schindler

In accord with the other theologians discussed, David Schindler agrees in *Heart of the World, Center of the Church* that the *communio* ecclesiology Vatican II carries within it is an astonishing shift in the way we understand the world and the Church's mission to the world.⁴⁰² In particular, he thinks, this ecclesiology conveys a "distinctive sense of the world as *imago Dei*."⁴⁰³ Humankind, and all cosmic being in an analogous sense, is consequently created in the image of the Trinitarian God, best manifested in a Christology of Jesus as the purveyor of love and friendship. Schindler, like Zizioulas, argues that it therefore follows that all beings receive their "basic order and meaning from love." What is unique to Schindler and Elizabeth Johnson is their belief that all of being, not just humankind, is consequently called in similar ways to partake in the communion whose actuality in history is the church. The Christian's mission in the world is therefore to assist in summoning into communion all of nature. We are to manifest the beauty, truth, and goodness of being revealed by God in the person-love of Jesus.⁴⁰⁴ "All of created being finds its integrity only in the divine communion of love revealed by the Trinitarian God in Jesus" and through the church.⁴⁰⁵

Schindler understands the concept of *imago Dei* to refer to the creature understood fundamentally as being from, for, and with God and others. In speaking of the communion of love revealed by God, it is necessary to remember that as written in the Gospel of John (1 John 4:10), he believes, such a love was first received gratuitously by us and is not a response to our love. This type of love is analogous to Christ's mission,

⁴⁰² David Schindler is presently the Edouard Cardinal Gagnon Professor of Fundamental Theology at the John Paul II Institute at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

⁴⁰³ Schindler, *Heart*, xi.

⁴⁰⁴ Schindler, *Heart*, xi.

⁴⁰⁵ Schindler, *Heart*, xiii.

anticipated by humankind, yet not commanded by humankind, sent in love, and resonating throughout all of creation.⁴⁰⁶

In what is distinct to his conversation, Schindler discusses the role of service, of action, in this manifestation of love. He writes that, just as the human nature of Jesus is always already in service to the Father, so is all of creation always already in service to the Father in and through Jesus. Nature, through the very act of creation, finds its truth and freedom in obedience, in service to the Father through love. All nature has an inner orientation to the love of the Trinitarian God as revealed in Jesus, just as does the Church through the Holy Spirit. Every created being exhibits an orientation toward and movement from God, and thus images God.⁴⁰⁷ All of humankind, therefore, must be oriented toward and image the communion of love exhibited in a superlative fashion by God. All of creation is formed by a relationship of love, which simultaneously constitutes its very being.

This inner orientation toward obedience, however, toward a relation of service to the Father and toward love of each other, is greatly weakened by a counter movement toward disobedience as a result of original sin. As has been repeatedly argued throughout this paper, Schindler also contends that the deepest meaning of being is to be found in the 'imaging' of the relational activities that are constitutive of community and persons. For him these activities particularly are those of mission, service, obedience, and friendship. Although this emphasis upon service and obedience in the Christological fashion as integral to communion is unique to Schindler, his point is well taken that these are, in some fashion, indeed crucial elements of a relationship of friendship, whether in

⁴⁰⁶ Schindler, *Heart*, 208.

⁴⁰⁷ Schindler, *Heart*, 209.

friendship to the divine or fellow human beings. As was indicated in the previous chapter, numerous church fathers spoke of the need for friends to be of service to each other and to listen to each other as voices of wisdom and discernment. In addition, as justification for this stance, Schindler quotes Swiss theologian Hans Urs Von Balthasar in writing: "for the creature, a love that is whole and undivided cannot be separated from that *glorification of God in service* that is the natural concomitant of its creaturehood. Whatever it may be in itself, the creature has been incorporated into and established in the service of love. This is the fundamental principle of its original state."⁴⁰⁸ One might argue that certainly service to God could be, and should also be directed at one's fellow human beings in friendship. Indeed almost all of what Schindler writes in regard to imaging oneself on Christ, seeking the will of the Father, and devoting oneself to service of neighbor flows directly from Chapter five of *Lumen Gentium* concerning the call to holiness and friendship for all.

Conclusion

As has been exhibited within this chapter, the theological role of relationship in Trinitarian life, as well as the implications of this for the church as a whole, has undergone a great deal of recovery and transformation in the several decades since Vatican II. The council documents, based upon the work of theologians of the early to mid-twentieth century, laid the groundwork for the theological speculation of many subsequent others concerning Trinitarian friendship. Although these others envelop a wide spectrum of theological thought, the continuum on which they operate does converge on the underlying principles of the communion of the Trinity, in which

⁴⁰⁸ Hans Urs Von Balthazar, *The Christian State of Life*, 70 cited in Schindler, 204.

humankind made *imago Dei* also participate in an anthropological fashion through human friendships. In addition, the roles of mutuality, the universal call to holiness, love, obedience, service, unity within diversity and freedom, all of which are intrinsic to the idea of friendship in general, are also shown to each be necessary and integral components of these Trinitarian and human relationships. Several of the writers also stressed the role of the Holy Spirit in fostering this call to friendship and *communio*.

This is a theme that John Paul II also addressed in his apostolic letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* in which he explored the idea that Christian spirituality is a commitment of discipleship involving the conformity of one to Jesus. It is the Holy Spirit through Baptism that forms the believer as a branch onto the vine of Christ, creating yet another member of Christ's mystical body. For this unity to occur however, an assimilation of the disciple in accord with the mind of Christ is required. The Pope writes, additionally, that this ideal of conformation occurs through what might be best described as friendship. As discussed above, however, one might be conformed to another, but that does not imply that one's uniqueness has been lost. Instead we are enabled, through the help of the Spirit, to enter into Christ's life, and to share his feelings, and are encouraged to develop similar habits, as do any true friends, while yet retaining and expanding our own unique personhoods.⁴⁰⁹

The following chapter will consider the practices and forms in which this might occur ecclesially. In particular, how might spiritual friendship concretely be shown in the parish life manifestation of the Mystical Body? Spiritual friendship as a means by which

⁴⁰⁹ John Paul II. *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*. (Vatican City, 2002, Retrieved 4/2/2005 from: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_20021016_rosarium-virginis-mariae_en.html), 15.

to “build up” the church will be considered, as well as the difficulties in so doing. This examination then leads to an explication of the role of small Christian communities in cultivating spiritual relationships, and an in-depth look, via some personal narratives, of experiences within a few of these types of communities.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ECCLESIAL AND PASTORAL IMPLICATIONS OF SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP

When one accepts that the human desire for relationship derives from the Trinitarian relationship of God within God's self, then one opens to the understanding, at least intellectually, that relationships are of primary concern for human beings. This thesis has already discussed the theology behind this connection. Human persons, made in the image of this communion, or *koinonia* of persons, are created for friendship. Historical underpinnings for this theology of communion, as explored in the first chapter of this paper, range from the Greek philosophers through Reformation-era reformers, and have supported the legitimacy of this trajectory. The second chapter discussed the reductionist tendencies of the Enlightenment in regard to spiritual friendship, and the twentieth century rediscovery that friendship is a transcendental, necessary, integral factor in human life. The third chapter in this thesis argued that *communio* was the primary ecclesial issue of Vatican II, and that the call to holiness in *Lumen Gentium* can be interpreted most fruitfully as a call to friendship with God. Few would disagree that communion ecclesiology is currently stressed in ecumenical dialogue, and as has been shown, a discussion of the ontology of communion pervades both recent Vatican documents and contemporary schools of theology.⁴¹⁰ What is rather of more immediate

⁴¹⁰ Consider, for example, Pope Benedict XVI's *Deus Caritas Est*, Dec 25, 2005. Also, the 1985 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops in Rome stated that the Roman Catholic Church has fully assumed its

importance to most persons in the church, however, is how this model is concretely manifested in parishes. For Dominican Paul Philibert in *Priesthood of the Faithful*, “the daunting challenge for contemporary Christians is to find a correlation between these exalted images and their own experience of life, which is so often overshadowed by meaninglessness.”⁴¹¹

This final chapter then will discuss how a most specific form of *koinonia* at the particular, concrete level, what we have called throughout this thesis spiritual friendship, is fostered in parish life, if at all. If we believe that “each baptized person living in the Spirit of Jesus is an instrument whom God has claimed for the work of directing the world and its energies to the glory of God and the joy of God’s friendship,”⁴¹² then it appears that the necessity of channeling such energy towards this *telos* should be a primary goal of each bishop and parish priest. But, is the value of such an aspiration recognized and encouraged? It hardly seems possible to leave such work to the vagaries of chance or the civic political arena. Indeed, it should seem rather apparent that to create programs that foster such friendship is not only theologically sound, but fiscally and administratively intelligent. Simply by observing the effects of consumer society on Christians, and the general lack of interest by society in the difficulties individual families face, it appears that parishes constituted by caring networks of friends are more likely to survive and flourish. As Philibert reports, all too often “when people get caught up in family traumas like separation, divorce, illness or the death of a spouse, and fail to

ecumenical responsibility on the basis of the ecclesiology of communion. To understand the Church as *koinonia* was presented by the Synod as the appropriate way to understand its essential nature. Extraordinary Synod of Bishops, Rome 1985; published as “A Message to the People of God and the Final Report” (Washington: USCCB, 1986), 20-21.

⁴¹¹ Paul Philibert, *The Priesthood of the Faithful* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), 25.

⁴¹² Philibert, *Priesthood*, 4.

find much support from their fellow parishioners, they frequently turn away from the church.”⁴¹³ What theological arguments are or might be used to substantiate the claim that *koinonia* instantiated as spiritual friendships constitute an intrinsic part of any healthy parish community, and thus promote the fostering of these relationships of support?

In addition, one might ask how one distinguishes ‘community,’ or ‘friendliness,’ from actual spiritual friendship? This was partially addressed in our second chapter, but the question now becomes, at an ecclesial level, should parishes even be encouraging particular friendships, or does this extend beyond the scope of their possibilities? Community, what the evangelical brethren might term ‘fellowship,’ or Christian *agape*, is certainly a necessary ingredient in ecclesial life. Is a general *agape*, however, a sufficient description of what ecclesial communities should be working toward? Does a more personal, or particular form of friendship simply engender too many difficulties in parish life? Finally, what already extant parish programs currently exhibit some of these tendencies, what are their histories, and what are the experiences of Catholics who participate, or have participated in these?

This chapter therefore will examine the theology of communion with a specific focus on spiritual friendship within Eucharistic communities, such as parishes, and as pneumatologically derived from sacramental practice. Subsequently in the chapter, spiritual friendship as a means by which to “build up” the church is considered. After a discussion of the difficulties of creating friendship as communion in an individualistic society, we examine what parish or small community-based communion might look like concretely, and whether particular friendships are a necessity or a nuisance in this regard.

⁴¹³ Philibert, *Priesthood*, 10.

Next, the best vehicles by which to foster friendship in a parish are considered. This leads to an explication of the role of small Christian communities in cultivating spiritual relationships and a consideration of a few of the currently successful movements that do so.

Friendships and the Eucharistic community

American theologian Paul Wadell, in his book *Becoming Friends*, asserts that the Church is the distinctive community called to be friends of God through the sacrament of Baptism. To truly live a life of friendship with God in the community of the baptized is a transformative event, and such a way of living creates of the church a community of unmistakable character.⁴¹⁴ The church, therefore, is “the community that lives from, in, and for the friendship of God that comes to us in Christ.”⁴¹⁵

That church is a Eucharistic community, which celebrates not only Baptism, but also the Eucharist together. John Zizoulas brings out how, during the Eucharistic prayer of the Mass, the first transubstantiation of the host is the transformation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, performed through the *epiclesis* prayed by the celebrant in participation with the congregation. The second *epiclesis* invoked by the celebrant during the Eucharistic celebration similarly forms the congregation into sacramental realities, living signs of God alive in human bodies.⁴¹⁶ This second transformation is therefore that of the believers into the Mystical Body of Christ. Over time the behavior of believers can become so imbued with the Spirit’s actions through faith and love that the paschal mystery of Christ becomes part of their frame of reference

⁴¹⁴ Paul Wadell, *Becoming Friends: Worship, Justice, and the Practice of Christian Friendship*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2002), 10 see also Thomas Rausch, *Towards a Truly Catholic Church: An Ecclesiology for the Third Millennium* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 72-73.

⁴¹⁵ Wadell, *Becoming Friends*. 21.

⁴¹⁶ Zizioulas, *Being*, 53-65.

for all that they do and say. It is that community more than anything else that is the visible sign of Christ's presence in the world.⁴¹⁷ The parish family that prays together in this way is thus invoking the outpouring of the Holy Spirit over their relationships and their life together. The Spirit of God makes all things, particularly all those in the congregation, one, by reminding them that they are already actually are first 'one'; they are truly more 'one' than the many fragmented parts of a larger whole. The life of the Spirit thus becomes a force for cohesive unity that can overcome challenge and pain, as well as becoming the source for joy, fulfillment, and intimacy.⁴¹⁸

The church, through the Eucharistic celebration founded in a common baptism, is thus evocative of God's friendship. It becomes a sign of humanity's communion with God, and of the communion of human groups one with the other, at both the local and the universal level. This sign of the catholicity of the church reminds us that life is fragmented and finite, and yet at the same time is a part of a larger entity. We, as humans, long to be one with this wholeness; we need to give ourselves to the other, or at the least are fascinated and attracted by the idea of doing so.⁴¹⁹ Saint Augustine wrote that immense intimacy is possible for Christians simply because of this communion, this joining together in Christ. The greatest harmony possible among humankind is that resulting from this unifying bond with and in Christ.⁴²⁰ This relationship entails an intimacy derived not from physical closeness, but from membership in the body of Christ; it is intimacy as an ecclesial practice, dependant upon Baptism and the subsequent friendship with God. Should this kind of affiliation, between committed and aware

⁴¹⁷ Philibert, *Priesthood*, 51.

⁴¹⁸ Wadell, *Becoming Friends*, 49.

⁴¹⁹ Rohr, *Near Occasions*, 33.

⁴²⁰ Wadell, *Becoming Friends*, 91.

persons, not therefore be an authentic depiction of the contemporary church as originating in our individual parishes? In what better way can human beings overcome the dark forces of violence, chaos, and division in an attempt to live together in community, other than through the formation and development of friendships within parishes?

Just as the Pauline concept of the Body of Christ favors the communal rather than the individual, so are relationships integral to the Christian sacramental life.⁴²¹ Thomas Aquinas himself noted that "alienation and distance from God is the problem with human sinfulness, and reconciliation through intimacy is the solution or 'redemption' of sinners. God's motive is not to exact punishment, but to befriend those who have not yet understood the reality of divine love."⁴²² Christian friendship thereby envisions the reign of God. Friends teach each other not only what it means to love God, but what it means to love *like* God. In this form of friendship, in this redemption of sinners and intimacy with God, friendships are transformed in the love of God. Hence the theological character of intimacy and friendship.⁴²³

Friendship as a 'building up' of the Church

Friendship therefore is intrinsically good and valuable for Christian life. Friendship of the kind under consideration here is an instance of a basic human good, and so is good in itself; it is among the spiritual fruits and gifts meant to be encouraged.⁴²⁴ Friendship also, however, is necessary for the full development and perfection of human

⁴²¹ Philibert, *Priesthood*, 109. Consider, for example, 1 Corinthians 11 and 1 Corinthians 12, among many others.

⁴²² Aquinas, *ST*, III, 31:1; also *ST* III 31:7 ad 3.

⁴²³ Wadell, *Becoming Friends*, 84.

⁴²⁴ Germain Grisez *Living a Christian Life*, Vol. 2. (Quincy IL: Franciscan Press, 1993), 425.

persons, who are created for *koinonia*. Each person, as invited and encouraged to become a dynamic member of the Body of Christ, carries their own unique word which God wishes to express in the stories of our own lives.⁴²⁵ Friendship, therefore, facilitates the Christian apostolate, for members of the church have many opportunities to share their faith with their friends, who as a result of this friendship are more inclined to be receptive, to listen to the stories, to recognize the gifts. As British theologian John Henry Newman remarked in the mid-nineteenth century, "so much holiness is lost to the church because brothers refuse to share the secrets of their hearts one with another."⁴²⁶ Such holiness, Paul Philibert concludes, consists in each person further becoming the irreplaceable human being they are meant to be, whose unique gifts and presence in relationships are unrepeatable.⁴²⁷ These forms of holiness foster the mission of the church in the world, as the members of the Body of Christ support and encourage each other in their unique destinies and vocations.

In regard to this method of the building up of the church, moral theologian Germain Grisez further notes:

Knowing that they are loved for themselves and as the persons they are, friends are in an unusually good position to gain insight from their friends, to accept their advice, to respond well to their admonitions. Moreover, the stability and mutual tolerance characteristic of friendship make it possible for friends to learn by trial and error how best to help and support each other, and so their efforts to do so can grow in effectiveness. Then too, the mutual affection of friends motivates them to please each other by changing in appropriate ways. Therefore, each has a special power, and has a special responsibility to promote the other's moral development....Friends should encourage each other's spiritual growth in other ways, which are equally if not more important.⁴²⁸

⁴²⁵ Philibert, *Priesthood*, 109.

⁴²⁶ As quoted in Richard Rohr, *Near Occasions of Grace*, 46.

⁴²⁷ Philibert, *Priesthood*, 109.

⁴²⁸ Grisez, *Living a Christian Life*, 430-431.

This encouragement, mutuality, and shared world are at the heart of the type of friendship encouraged here. Friends help each other to see the world as it is, and to act fruitfully within it. Good friends share a vision of what is real and true; as already noted in Augustine, they share a course of action and a journey toward what is true and good, namely the friendship of God. Merely "convenient" or "acquaintanceship" friends might hold one or two common interests and might develop a useful relationship for pursuing those interests. This type of relationship also exists as a communal perspective, and a necessary one, although narrower in scope. In contrast, moral theologian David Matzko McCarthy writes in a statement that echoes Aquinas and de Sales, that spiritual friends share "a conception of what is good, work toward it, and risk correcting each other when one or the other strays from the path."⁴²⁹ Spiritual friendship, therefore, requires not only shared interests and warm, mutual regard, but a common ability to see and to judge, and faithfulness to a shared good.

This type of friendship becomes especially important with the recognition, for example, that large numbers of formerly Hispanic Catholics are leaving the church for Protestant denominations, particularly Charismatic movements. The reasons disseminated for this mass exodus are that these former Catholics are "attracted to an active evangelical faith through Bible education, individual invitations into welcoming and strongly personal small communities of worship, and the church's involvement in their family and workplace concerns."⁴³⁰ It would seem, therefore, that if the church

⁴²⁹ David McCarthy *The Good Life: Genuine Christianity for the Middle Class* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2004), 34.

⁴³⁰ Nancy Bedford, "Little Moves Against Destructiveness: Theology and the Practice of Discernment," in Miroslav Volf and Dorothy Bass, eds., *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002) 176 in Philibert, *Priesthood*, 13. Bedford is an American Protestant seminary professor in Argentina, and pastor of a church in Buenos Aires.

wishes to continue to consider itself the Body of Christ, then today support for friendship and faithfulness within this body must be cultivated even more so than in the past.

Communion in a Culture of Individualism

Father Ron Rolheiser, presently President of the Oblate School of Theology, writes that the most pernicious heresies that block us from properly knowing God as communion, and fostering these relationships, are not those derived from formal dogma, but from a culture of individualism. This culture invites us "to believe that we are self-sufficient, that we can have community and family on our own terms, and that we can have God without dealing with each other."⁴³¹ Communion is not, to modernity, necessary nor intrinsic. However, if God as a Trinitarian being is ontologically constituted as community, it appears that only through opening our lives to each other within deep relationships, such as spiritual friendships, will a way out of this world, to the eschatological, be found.⁴³²

In the first half of the twentieth century, French philosopher Jacques Maritain asserted that a true prophetic stance consisted of a heightened sensitivity to the purposes or inspiration of God. A prophet of the God of communion thus has a strong bond of care for the destiny of others, which is the antithesis of the indifference toward the Kingdom of God characteristically typical of consumer culture.⁴³³ This concern, Maritain believed, might best be practiced through the creation of peer communities of depth devoted to perceiving divine communication as filtered through human persons.

⁴³¹ Ron Rolheiser, retrieved from www.ronrolheiser.com/arc0610.html on 9/2/2006. Father Rolheiser is a member of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

⁴³² Zizioulas, *Being*, 17-19.

⁴³³ Philibert, *Priesthood*, 79.

Such communities, as a result of the sharing and communion engendered within, could well contribute to the health and building up of not only parish, but also civic life.

But, by contrast, as sociologist Robert Bellah notes in his book *Habits of the Heart*, most in American culture believe detachment from other persons is required to achieve autonomy, independence, success, and the happiness necessary for successful life in the contemporary society of the United States.⁴³⁴ One might participate in common life, and contribute a good deal to such a life, but such participation must be explained, as most persons do, through a utilitarian outlook reminiscent of Ralph Waldo Emerson. An alternative is to view such involvement as a form of expressive individualism.⁴³⁵ The contemporary "self" is found through an ability to be detached, and we are only to attach ourselves when such connections are advantageous. Friendships, therefore, as well as most relationships or commitments, are impermanent phases, lasting only as long as the personal advantage does.⁴³⁶

In the Franciscan Richard Rohr's view, we have today so accepted the functional and competitive nature of most human relationships that any deep friendship is immediately suspect. All of us, whether admitting of this or not, are affected by this climate of fear. We mistrust both our own motivations and those of others. Usually, the

⁴³⁴ I am reminded here of an informal survey taken in my classroom during the Fall, 2006 semester at UD in which at least 75% of my students initially believed that it was a poor choice to find one's self dependant upon another.

⁴³⁵ By a utilitarian outlook here is meant that which is useful for the growth of the family or the 'self' as individual. For example, it might be expedient for a father to engage himself, and his son, in Boy Scouting as a means of acquiring particular skills or awards for the boy's later good. An expressive individualist experience offers opportunities for self-discovery, for expression of the inner self, or for developing talents. Using the aforementioned example then, a man might agree to become a Scoutmaster in order to achieve community recognition of his various talents. The self, in this outlook, is always considered solely in private or individualistic terms.

⁴³⁶ Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1985), 68-69.

solution to this dilemma is to remain aloof, since seldom does any support exist for traversing these unknown obstacles.⁴³⁷

Friendship as Communion

These considerations bring us back to the opening premises of this chapter. Not only is God communion, God is ineffable, beyond imagery and language, even the best language of theology. God, and God's works, can never be understood or adequately captured in any formula. However, God is indeed able to be known, experienced, and related to in love and friendship. The Trinitarian communion is a flow of relationships experienced, or potentially able to be experienced, in community, family, parish, friendship. Even in just the attempt to live inside these relationships, God lives in communion inside of us, and somehow already, if not yet quite perfectly, we live inside of and within communion with God and each other. It is hardly possible to escape some form of this communion, as it is by nature such an integral aspect of our daily lives.

This necessarily, as Rolheiser reminds us, has significant implications for how we perceive religious experience and parish life. It means, perhaps, that "God is more domestic than monastic."⁴³⁸ God is conceivably found more completely in a church "gathering space," or at a pot-luck dinner, than in the theology classroom. This signifies that, maybe, meeting with others to pray in community, or to participate in communal liturgies and discussions, can give us something that long hours in private meditation and study cannot. Especially, it tells us that if God is inside of community, if God is *communio*, then we should be there also if we truly wish to someday participate fully in

⁴³⁷ Richard Rohr, *Near Occasions*, 46.

⁴³⁸ Ron Rolheiser, from www.ronrolheiser.com/arc0610.html retrieved 11/23/2006.

the divine life of the heavenly eschaton. We should be there, not only as individual persons, but as *communio* ourselves, as friends and parishes:

However, the friendship that occurs as a result of this understanding is by its nature disruptive. It is dangerous, is God's friendship, because it undermines our utilitarian friendships. It destroys our ways of detachment from others, and destabilizes the ways we are attached to the world. It undermines our individual and societal identities and visions of the world.⁴³⁹ We are instead accustomed to that benign friendliness and sociability that make life smooth and steady. Friendliness, as opposed to friendship, is the modern American way of making contact with others without getting closer. Friendliness does not cause trouble – it is instead an easy way of sustaining minimal intimacy with the common “world.” Real friends united in communion, however, are not concerned about maintaining niceties and friendliness with each other, as much as they are focused on that common vision that outsiders might consider elitist, or exclusivist. Real friendship is a “threat” to the orderly workings of a consumerist, individualistic society. Spiritual friends are far more interested in moving forward side by side, seeking a goal that is beyond each on their own, one that is attainable only together, in communion with each other.⁴⁴⁰

Yet, friends of God should be people confident about the promises of God, willing both to envision new possibilities and to fail for the sake of the relationships they have discovered. Too often, in both the local and universal church, however, what is found is caution, timidity, defensiveness, and paralysis, and an overwhelming concern about status and security. This is not only contrary to the example of Jesus' life, but, in

⁴³⁹ McCarthy, *Good Life*, 36. Also Wadell, *Becoming Friends*, 23-24.

⁴⁴⁰ McCarthy, *Good Life*, 37.

terms of relationship, is contrary to the purposes of communion. Instead, those pursuing friendship with God, the Eucharistic communities of God, must "move from the destructively familiar to the creatively strange," in order to discern ways in which spiritual friendship might break through these all too frequent concerns.⁴⁴¹

Are particular friendships in tension with Christian *agape*?

Almost every parish has various programs already in which at least community, if not friendship, is strongly stressed. Perhaps, however, it is apparent that this might be considered community at the general level of Christian *agape*. Quite often, particular friendships between two or more persons involved in such programs in a parish cause distress to pastors, staff, and other parish members. As a pastoral associate once mentioned in an email, "We need to be very careful when friendships start forming in our parishes and on committees. All too often that just leads to cliques and the exclusion of others."⁴⁴² All too obviously, a fear exists in parishes, at least among staff members, that friendship might be a subversive element in parish life. However, it is also evident that the church needs to increase the temperature of the Anglo Catholic parish experience if it is going to enhance its attractiveness to a new generation.⁴⁴³

In a similar vein, a longtime member of a small Christian community commented that, although he appreciated the support often given by other community members, he

⁴⁴¹ Robert E. Webber and Rodney Clapp, *People of the Truth: A Christian Challenge to Contemporary Culture*, (Harrisburg, Pa.: Morehouse, 1988) 61.

⁴⁴² Email to author from M, pastoral associate in a Cincinnati, OH parish, July, 2005.

⁴⁴³ Philibert, *Priesthood*, 15. Philibert is referring here to the exodus of families and younger generations from the Catholic church for those who, used to other cultures in which communal celebration plays a much larger role, are looking for the same type of experience in the U.S. In addition, Tom Rausch notes on page 10 of *Toward a Truly Catholic Church* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), that although at the beginning of the twentieth century eighty percent of the world's Christians were Caucasian, living mostly in the northern hemisphere, by early in this century these account for only twenty percent of Christians. Today more Christians live in Africa than in North America. With such a global switch necessarily comes a difference in how relationships are viewed. As one interviewee remarked "The church needs to warm up!"

was not 'into this specifically to have friends. Sometimes people want to get too close. I just want some people I can pray with, not necessarily to have lunch or celebrate birthdays or even hear about their troubles. My family takes care of those things. I don't need other people who are going to take more time away from them."⁴⁴⁴ His comments point out that even amidst those who participate in communities that might foster friendship, varying levels of the desire for communal experience exist. Some still believe their more intimate relational needs are best fulfilled within the family, and are reluctant to invest time or energy beyond that.

In a related way, in his book *Friendship and the Moral Life*, Paul Wadell questions whether friendship is a love that "shrivels up our world." Wadell's book is actually an argument against this charge, one that been directed against particular friendships for more than a millennium, especially within various religious orders.⁴⁴⁵

Friendship can indeed seem self-indulgent and exclusivist. Søren Kierkegaard believed that "Love of one's neighbor...is self-renouncing love, and self-renunciation casts out all preferential love just as it casts out all self-love – otherwise self-renunciation would also make distinctions and would nourish preference for preference."⁴⁴⁶ Wadell finds this view of friendship exceedingly grim. Kierkegaard, he comments, appears to hold "friendship as a love ruined from the start because its formal quality, preference, is

⁴⁴⁴ JM taped interview with author, 2/12/2005.

⁴⁴⁵ Paul Wadell, *Friendship and the Moral Life*, (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press), 1989, 166. See also Gilbert Meilander, *Friendship: A study in Theological Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1981), in which he struggles to give a theological justification for friendship. Eventually Meilander concludes that friendship is a concession to human limitations, and suggests that it is dangerous to the Christian life, for "if we rest content in friendship we will fail to see both its source and destination in God." Citation from page 103.

⁴⁴⁶ Søren Kierkegaard *Works of Love*, trans. Howard Hong and Edna Hong (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962) 67.

something Christian love can never have."⁴⁴⁷ For Kierkegaard, then, the roots of friendship in preference for a specific "other" make of friendship, even spiritual friendship, nothing more than an elaboration of self-love. "To choose one person over another is to seek a benefit for the self; thus friendship is selfishness."⁴⁴⁸

Wadell, in contrast, argues that "Friendship is the crucible of the moral life, the relationship in which we come to embody the good by sharing it with friends who also delight in the good."⁴⁴⁹ If, as Christians, we know that the good is to live in communion with God, then a true spiritual friendship is one in which the friends each see in the other "the desire that is also their own, and they know the purpose of their friendship is not only to love one another, but in loving one another to love God as well."⁴⁵⁰ In transforming friendship with the friend into communion, we also find communion with God. Perhaps this requires a good deal of spiritual maturity to accomplish, and perhaps it is only fully realized eschatologically. However, even to recognize the possible truth in the preceding statement is hopefully a step in the correct direction.

The German Protestant theologian Jürgen Moltmann, for one, extensively considered the Christological roots of this suggestion in his portrayal of Jesus as a friend of particular persons. Jesus, in his view, became the friend of sinners, and consummated his love for these people through his death in friendship, thus liberating them from servitude, and making of them friends of God. When Christ lived and worked as a

⁴⁴⁷ Wadell, *Friendship and the Moral Life*, 76.

⁴⁴⁸ Kierkegaard, *Works*, 68. The young man with whom I spoke in the preceding interview then, might claim that to take time away from his family with friends, even those from a Christian community, is selfish, regardless of the spiritual and emotional benefits such relationships might produce.

⁴⁴⁹ Wadell, *Friendship and the Moral Life*, xiii.

⁴⁵⁰ Wadell, *Friendship and the Moral Life*, 105.

prophet for the poor, travailed as a prophet of the God of communion for these particular persons, he lived and worked as a friend espousing and creating friendship.⁴⁵¹

Thus, concludes Moltmann, when friendship is located in the Christian story, the distinction between particular friendship and *agape* breaks down.:

We shall suggest that when friends are brought together by a mutual love for God and a desire to follow Christ, their friendship is a relationship in which they learn the ways of God, imitate Christ, and thus learn to embrace those they hitherto ignored. In this context, *agape* is not something other than friendship, but describes a friendship like God's, a love of such generous vision that it looks upon all men and women not as strangers, but as friends."⁴⁵²

Wadell emphasizes that, although spiritual or moral growth is not necessarily the focus of a genuine friendship, growth in the good will be its result.⁴⁵³ As friendship is based on encouraging a person's view of himself or herself as contiguous with his or her destiny, and the subsequent commitment of one's self to helping this friend attain that vision, some of the other's plans become one's own. My care for my friend leads me to love what he or she loves. When a friend is loved for his or her own sake in communion, part of the source of my love for a particular subject is my friend's passion for the same. This expansion of one's self, Wadell argues, is not selfish, even though it might involve shared pleasure. Indeed, the expansion of the self in friendship can be quite costly. A "mature friendship both requires and produces growth in goodness, not as friendship's goal, but in order to equip us for further befriending. Being a friend requires strength of character."⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵¹ Jürgen Moltmann, "Open Friendship: Aristotelian and Christian Conceptions of Friendship," in *The Changing Face of Friendship*, ed. Leroy S. Rouner (ND: ND University Press, 1994), 35-38.

⁴⁵² Wadell, *Friendship and the Moral Life*, 96.

⁴⁵³ Wadell, *Friendship and the Moral Life*, 103.

⁴⁵⁴ Wadell, *Friendship and the Moral Life*, 106.

In part that strength of character is required because friendship through God and with God really cannot be confined to those near or dear to us, such as family and geographically proximate neighbors. If the church is to truly be a community of the friends of God, it, in the guise of those very friends, must also reach out to others in communion. Good friends often join together in a common vision that can be considered elitist, exclusivist, or at least difficult to understand. Far too often close friendships, as do families, become insular in an attempt to protect that which grows between; this is when, as was noted earlier, cliques form and others are "pushed out." As Grisez remarks, "Everyone is tempted to social selfishness: the restriction of love and community by unreasonable partiality to his or her own family, nation or other group. Thus, selfishness, as the contrary of Christian love and justice...is found in the structures, policies, attitudes, practices and activities of various communities."⁴⁵⁵ Friends then might be generous to each other, but selfish in their development of a relationship that allows solely for mutual escapist gratification "at the expense of mutual help in living good lives and growing in holiness." Friends thus, especially in parish settings, need to be very aware of the direction of their relationship, and the form of their interactions with others.⁴⁵⁶

How outsiders are treated depends on the graciousness and the hospitality of the friends involved. Spiritual friendships as fostered in the church community must intentionally become, or remain, as Moltmann advocates, open friendships; these relationships must consist of those willing to face out towards the world, not inward in insularity and fear.

⁴⁵⁵ Grisez, *Living a Christian Life*, 420.

⁴⁵⁶ As remarked several times earlier, what must especially be recalled is the source and the *telos* of these friendships. They are formed from, and for, further friendship with God.

Yet, even when confronted with a hospitably open group of potential friends, subconsciously we recognize the potentially inherent difficulties. One understands that within such ecclesial friendships, "their constant openness to others, their intensive friendship threatens to subvert other 'common visions' and 'common worlds.' They will try to befriend me, and if I join the circle of friends ...new and enlivening friendships may threaten our own world."⁴⁵⁷ These forms of friendships then are disruptive even as, and because, they invite people in. "They begin to form a place in the world together that is deeper and richer than it is when each goes about his or her business alone. They seek a goal that is beyond each and attainable together." In the way of the prophet, as espoused earlier by Maritain, they "are able to imagine a different kind of world, and together they are able to act in it."⁴⁵⁸

For many parish pastors, staff members, and parishioners, learning to cope with spiritual friendships in the face of modernity will take time and patience on the part of those espousing such communion. One might consider, however, the observation of Jerome Murphy O'Connor, a Pauline scholar, who notes that all the vices named by Paul are failings against the communal life.⁴⁵⁹ By contrast, the virtues are those relational behaviors that perfect the Body of Christ.⁴⁶⁰

Communities of Friends

Within parishes, perhaps the best method of encouraging spiritual friendships occurs within small, intentionally formed communities of friends. The Vatican II

⁴⁵⁷ McCarthy, *Good Life*, 35.

⁴⁵⁸ McCarthy, *Good Life*, 37.

⁴⁵⁹ Consider, for example, Romans 12; also, 1 Corinthians 5: 11; 1 Corinthians 8:12; 1 Corinthians 11:17-22; and 1 Corinthians 13:1-13.

⁴⁶⁰ Jerome Murphy O'Connor, as cited in Bernard Lee, *Habits for the Journey: A Mystical and Political Spirituality for Small Christian Communities*, (Dayton, OH: North American Center for Marianist Studies, 2000), 6.

document, *Apostolicam actuositatem*, "The Decree on the Laity," emphasized that families need to join together to help one another understand their sacramental potential as disciples and witnesses to Christ. "One might go so far as to say that without some sort of group support it is hard to see how families could ever hope to thrive in their Christian faith and witness...no one can be expected to live the Christian life without help from other members of the Body of Christ."⁴⁶¹ Similarly, the U.S. Catholic Bishop's Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation, *Our Hearts were Burning Within Us*, urged the development of small groups in order to accomplish this. The recognition is that the smaller size of such an intermediary organization allows for more personal and intense mutual interactions than those possible in the normal parish assemblies. The pastoral plan comments: "Small communities are powerful vehicles for adult faith formation, providing opportunities for learning, prayer, friendship and the shared experience of Christian living and service to the church and society. Ecclesial movements and associations that are part of the vibrant life of the church make great contributions here."⁴⁶²

Many parishes already sponsor some form of small Christian community, which may meet at least monthly, for prayer, study, and friendship. Some of these communities are truly parish-based and focus on Scripture study or sacramental preparation. Others are local incarnations of national movements, such as the Cursillo, Renew, or JustFaith movements. Still others, although consisting of perhaps a dozen parishioners, are lay affiliates of various religious orders, for example lay Benedictine Oblates, lay Marianist sodalities, or Third Order Franciscans. In the latter case, although still holding ties to

⁴⁶¹ *Apostolicam actuositatem*, November 18, 1965, Cited in Philibert, *Priesthood*, 100.

⁴⁶² *Our Hearts were Burning Within us: A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1999), §106.

specific parishes, and perhaps exhibiting intense involvement in parish activities, loyalty also extends through these small communities to a more universal population.

Due to the emphasis within the Vatican and Bishops' documents on this subject matter, this paper will first briefly examine in general the concept of a small Christian community, its role in cultivating spiritual friendships, and the potential difficulties in its subsistence, before concentrating in more detail on the Cursillo and JustFaith movements. The Cursillo is an established international movement that has, over forty years time, successfully joined friends together in spiritual relationships and evangelical activity. JustFaith is a fairly new, yet rapidly growing movement within the Catholic Church that creates spiritual friendships as an adjunct to learning and social action. Although the means by which relationships are achieved may vary between these two, interestingly enough both stress education, continuing intimate interaction between group members, and community outreach, as well as prayer and worship, as integral for realizing the movements' purposes.

Koinonia and Small Christian Communities

The U.S. Catholic Bishop's Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation mentioned above comments that, "Monthly meetings for prayer, study and friendship offer a form of social and church experience that is as special for its relationships as for its educational or faith components."⁴⁶³ As affirmation of this statement, a young mother who participates in weekly "Life in the Spirit" meetings mentioned in an interview with the author that "the energy of the spiritual friendship that comes from these meetings is as important in

⁴⁶³*Our Hearts were Burning Within us: A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1999), §106.

strengthening my faith, and the faith of the others there [at the meetings], as are learning various concepts. We are living the Body of Christ in these relationships.”⁴⁶⁴

What might this form of community friendship look like? At its core must rest the concept of *koinonia*, including mutual spiritual friendship, as discussed previously in this paper. Those persons involved should have an active commitment to each other and to the practice of Christian love and communion; willingness must exist to build each other up in recognition of a mutual friendship with God, as well as with the other. This style of friendship “requires companions committed to the same adventure of faith to which we have committed ourselves.”⁴⁶⁵ This commitment necessarily implies also an assurance of time and geographical proximity. Although email is a wonderful tool, physicality and actual presence are greatly important to the development of relationships.⁴⁶⁶

John Kavanaugh, a Jesuit professor of ethics at St. Louis University, in *Still Following Christ in a Consumer Society*, suggests that what is required is adherence to a “personal form of life,” which is at heart characterized by a recognition of the irreplaceable uniqueness and dignity of every individual. In addition, friends need to hold the belief that each person is called to a covenantal relationship with God and with others. In this form of friendship, each makes a gift of his or her own self to the others. Such a covenant is fulfilled through generous, committed, and mutual love. Simply put, the

⁴⁶⁴ AA, taped interview with author 4/ 4/2005.

⁴⁶⁵ Wadell, *Becoming Friends*, 37.

⁴⁶⁶ Bernard Lee, S.M. *The Catholic Experience of Small Christian Communities* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2000). he notes on page 82 that 72% of the small Christian communities he surveyed meet together either weekly or biweekly. Certainly a great example of commitment. Noted JH, a member of a charismatic community, “One of the great things about belonging to this community is how I see the members and their families grow and change throughout the year. When you spend so much time with people, if not every day, you can really notice with practice how God is touching them and guiding their lives.” Taped interview with author 4/4/2005.

relationships must be valued and priority attached to them. Within such a paradigm, churches therefore become communities in which people respect each other, support, challenge, encourage, love each other, and share a hopeful vision of life.⁴⁶⁷ They rest in communion with each other, in body and emotions, as well as spirit. They truly become friends.

Spiritual friendship of this kind, whether it takes place in community or not, might be considered a joint life of discipleship. The idea is to help one another imitate Christ and to grow in the gospel virtues.⁴⁶⁸ This is how parish members can actually practice their baptismal promises, for churches are meant to become communities where people help one another, together, overcome the barriers to holiness, and thus to grow in Christ-like love.

Although parishes might be considered "safe places" within which to create these types of relationships, friendships and communities like these are still rare in that setting. Perhaps parishes tend to be considered "safe" simply because they tend to thrive on superficial relationships. How free do parish members today really feel to speak and live the truth – even the Christian truth, to either their acquaintance-friends or pastoral staff? How often are the spiritual and emotional benefits of friendship discussed within a parish gathering? Instead, all too often parishioners enter and leave church gatherings, including Eucharistic celebrations, as strangers to one another.

⁴⁶⁷ John Kavanuagh, *Still Following Christ in a Consumer Society* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992), 65; also Susan Muto and Adiran Van Kaam, *Commitment: Key to Christian Maturity* (New York: Paulist Press 1989).

⁴⁶⁸ Wadell, *Becoming Friends*, 108.

In his response to this issue, Patrick Brennan, S.J. comments on the difference between the terms *ecclesia* and *koinonia*.⁴⁶⁹ He uses the term *ecclesia* specifically to refer to large gatherings of the faithful, but he cautions that this conception is also what can make of parishioners anonymous consumers or observers. Such a model of parish life is inadequate, he believes, for living any spirituality or ecclesiology other than what might be termed "traditionalistic," meaning hierarchical or pastor-centered. Pursuant to this, the Eucharist becomes solely a gathering of strangers, and references to the parish as a "community" or group of "friends" are often just jargon. The pastor alone bears the truth. On the other hand, *ecclesia* wedded to *koinonia* can be a truly heartfelt experience. In this instance, smaller units of the larger parish body gather around needs, or in friendship to pray, share, and discuss Scripture.⁴⁷⁰ They attempt to discern 'truth' together.

The healing, purification, and interior transformation required for this form of friendship to develop takes time, both within individuals and organizations. In a society fixated on efficiency, establishing the structures and altering expectations to allow this evolution is perhaps the most difficult of the tasks required. Or perhaps, rather, it is the second most difficult, beyond understanding why spiritual friendship is so very necessary and important in the first place. Parish pastoral staffs and lay councils need to recognize that coffee and donuts every month, although a good beginning, is not sufficient to allow communion at this level to happen. Time and focused practices are obligatory in order to

⁴⁶⁹ Patrick Brennan, *Re-Imagining The Parish: Base Communities, Adulthood and Family Consciousness*. (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1990), 44.

⁴⁷⁰ Lee, *The Catholic Experience of Small Christian Communities*, comments on page 82 that for general Christian Communities, 92% have prayer, 83% participate in faith sharing, 78% discuss or read scripture, 30% have some time for group silence, and 24% do some theological reflection at every meeting.

develop contemplative ways of seeing, which is what this form of friendship requires.⁴⁷¹

Additionally, such communities need not necessarily be established or overseen by staff members or pastors. Most often the laity are quite delighted to have the opportunity, with a minimum of training, to make these attempts. Very often the resultant groups not only rotate leadership, but they move from house to house in order to share planning and facilitation.⁴⁷²

Any community of friends that claims to also be friends of God must necessarily strive for the justice of God, with a willingness to work for the well-being of others, even through conflict.⁴⁷³ The capacity to speak the truth in such relationships is engendered in a life of friendship, with each other and God, through liturgy, worship, the sacraments, Scripture, and ongoing communal support. Such a community is a sign of hope in the world, and shows that God's promises of friendship are real, for such groups of friends in the church keep us from getting stuck in the all too frequent desolation of contemporary life.

A life of friendship with and in God is therefore a life of furthering the mission of Jesus. As friends we try to live God's reign right now. Without this extension into mission, such an understanding of church as the friends of God risks becoming elitist and self-absorbed.⁴⁷⁴ A life of friendship, as has already been stated, should never be insular.

⁴⁷¹ Wadell, *Becoming Friends*, 53.

⁴⁷² Lee, *The Catholic Experience of Small Christian Communities*, 99. "We meet in different houses each month, with a different leader and prayer planner. That way, the entire group shares in the burden – as well as a bit more of each other's lives." JM, Taped interview with author, 2/12/2005.

⁴⁷³ Wadell, *Becoming Friends*, 152.

⁴⁷⁴ In regards to this comment consider, beyond the JustFaith movement started by Jack Jezreel to be discussed later in this paper, the several Marianist communities in the eastern United States, whose entire mission is centered around social justice. In particular the Dayton Area Micah Marianist lay community, not only regularly discusses Catholic social teaching, participates in local social justice/activist events every year. The tension within these communities remains, however, whether they are to pursue justice activities together as a community, or support each other in pursuing individual justice projects. "One of

The same is true with friendship communities. These should never turn the church away from the world, toward sectarianism, but should instruct the church in how to deal with, and serve, the world. "The friends of God do not flee or abandon the world, but sometimes are called to contradict it in ways that are full of hope."⁴⁷⁵ Similarly, these communities of friends are not to flee the parish, but turn back towards it in order to further enrich it. Living through these small communities, and thinking of "church as the people of God, requires us to take more responsibility individually for being church, and for our relationships with God and other church members."⁴⁷⁶ Numerous interviewed participants in these types of communities mentioned how their participation not only encouraged them to stay in their own parish, but prompted their increased involvement in parish activities.⁴⁷⁷

This conception of spiritual friendship within parishes forms of it what Robert E. Webber and Rodney Clapp call a "diacritical community," a collection of friends whose way of life very often is in contrast to that of the surrounding culture.⁴⁷⁸ These types of communities contradict and challenge some of the values and practices of society, not only to call attention to aspects that might be false, but also to point beyond to something more promising and hopeful. Such a community delights in the possibilities, and perceives the promises of the eschatological, rather than existing solely in the historical.

the most important things we can do together is to work side by side on some justice project, like Habitat for Humanity. But, with everyone's schedules, that's really hard, I know. I wish we could do more." Quote by JB, member Dayton Micah Marianist community, in taped interview with author, 3/10/2005. See also Lee's *The Catholic Experience of Small Christian Communities*, 106.

⁴⁷⁵ Wadell, *Becoming Friends*, 28.

⁴⁷⁶ Lee, *The Catholic Experience of Small Christian Communities*, 130.

⁴⁷⁷ "I don't know that I would have ever returned to parish life after our conflicts with the previous pastor if I had not had the support of, and example of, other community members. They showed me how, even if we are not perfect, at least our parish members try to truly live as Christ's body together." RE, in taped Interview with author, 1/4/2005. See also remarks by Lee, *The Catholic Experience of Small Christian Communities*, 130-131.

⁴⁷⁸ Robert E. Webber and Rodney Clapp, *People of the Truth*, 56.

The diacritic goes one step beyond the critic in offering an alternative, in presenting another, distinctive identity and vision, rooted in communion with God and friendship with others.⁴⁷⁹

In summary, a Christian community based in friendship is different from a family, or regular "social" groups, in at least four ways.⁴⁸⁰ First, each committed member of the community must be willingly open to the Christological and pneumatological possibilities of such a relationship. They are open to receiving and pursuing their Christian mission as given by the Holy Spirit. Second, a small Christian community has ecclesial, Biblical standards for friendship as an ideal. It is not only a support, prayer, or study group. In a community, one attempts to truly live spiritual friendship with God and each other. The hope is that the friends involved will so identify with each other that if one suffers, all suffer, and if one is honored, all rejoice.

Third, a small Christian friendship community is rather similar to an extended family.⁴⁸¹ The community very often includes single people, single parents and their children, godparents, relatives, neighbors, or anyone called to share in family life.

Finally, this form of community is an "intentional" community. These groups of friends purposely live a life of friendship with God that also incorporates various

⁴⁷⁹ Consider, for example, the comments by a 16-year-old boy who was introduced to a teen small Christian parish based community by his girlfriend. "I was really getting into some nasty stuff. Not too bad, you know, but bad for me. I didn't know what else to do – it seemed that that was the thing, you know? But she kept trying to talk me into coming here, and finally one day I said, hey, what the hell. So I came. And it was like amazing. All these people, and these adults, who really listened. I got hooked. Now I can't do that other stuff. It's just really stupid. But my old friends, they don't get it. They can't see how this is so much better, even though my grades are way higher and my parents are happy and I get to do all this cool stuff to help other people and the others here every week." J, taped interview with author at Ascension parish. 3/16/2005.

⁴⁸⁰ Retrieved from <http://www.presentationministries.com/brochures/IntroCommunity.asp> 10/4/2006.

⁴⁸¹ Presentation Ministries suggests that generally about one to two dozen adults are an ideal maximum number before the community branches off to form a second community. This size community is small enough to be personal and large enough to have many varied gifts. Not all members must live under one roof, but all the members should make it a priority to share regularly God's word, the Eucharist, prayer, time, talents, and meals with at least some of the community's members.

leadership structures. It is these structures that create more of an impact on the surrounding society and larger church community.

The remainder of this chapter will consider, in detail, two well-known forms of intentional communities. The first is the Cursillo movement, which is a movement of the Roman Catholic Church that focuses on the dynamic role of the laity through the work of small communities of friends.⁴⁸² The second vehicle for the creation of friendship communities is the JustFaith movement, which attempts to form the lay apostolate in social justice through intense spiritual relationships with each other. Numerous other forms of community might have been examined here, including Marriage Encounter, Christ Renews his Parish, and the Life in the Spirit movement. However, these two appear to sufficiently and ably exemplify the various facets of the formation of ecclesial friendships we wish to address in this thesis.

Cursillo

"To *be* a Christian, rather than to do Christian things" is what it means to be part of the Cursillo Movement, according to a recently interviewed Cursillista.⁴⁸³ Cursillo began in Spain in the early 1940s when the leaders of a young men's branch of Catholic Action decided it was important to bring the young to know Christ better." They prayed

⁴⁸² As of 2001 the Cursillo Movement claimed seven million participants in fifty-seven countries and is part of the International Catholic Organizations of the Pontifical Council for the laity in Rome. Statistic from Linda Busetti "Cursillo: 'Friends Making Christ Their Friend'" cited in <http://www.catholicherald.com/articles/01articles/cursillo614.htm> from the 6/14/01 issue . The Episcopalian church offers a program very similar to Cursillo, entitled the "Emmaus Walk."

⁴⁸³ RE, taped interview with author, 1/4/2005.

and worked together, "sharing their thoughts about the state of the world and the effectiveness of their efforts to bring the light of Christ to it."⁴⁸⁴

The first Cursillo Weekend in the United States took place in Waco, Texas, in 1957.⁴⁸⁵ A National Secretariat was formed in 1965, with a link to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, indicating both the vast interest in, and the rapid growth of the movement. In 1966, Pope Paul VI told the participants in the movement that the "permanent task of the layman will continue to be the infusion of Christianity into life through the encounter and personal friendship with God, and in communion with His Brothers."⁴⁸⁶

The Cursillo Movement is open by invitation to all mature Catholics, ages twenty-five to fifty-five, who exhibit a potential for leadership in the church. This implies that some degree of faith already exists within the participant, and that the invited are baptized members of the Church who intend to remain in the Church. The initiation begins with the three day weekend, and then extends into the Fourth Day communities of friends. Marcene Marcoux, a religious historian with a vast interest in the movement, notes that most who attend the weekend are ready for a spiritual change, whether consciously or unconsciously.

Cursillo extends far beyond existing simply as a single weekend retreat, however. Cursillistas agree to pursue a specific "Rule of Life," which is a personal spiritual journey

⁴⁸⁴ Buseti, "Cursillo". A pilgrimage to the shrine of St. James at *Santiago de Compostela*, initially postponed due to the Spanish Civil War, awakened the participants to their dissatisfaction with spiritual lukewarmness, and emphasized the need to practice *ultreya*, the Spanish for "onward." The first Cursillo, or "short course of Christianity," was given in the late 1940s and the modern three-day Cursillo Weekend still follows that original form.

⁴⁸⁵ The movement expanded throughout Texas and to Phoenix, Arizona, and for quite a while all weekends were conducted in Spanish. Rather rapidly Cursillo spread to Ohio, New York, California, Michigan, Florida, Boston and Washington State, and the first English language weekend took place in 1961.

⁴⁸⁶ Buseti, "Cursillo."

including piety, study, and apostolic action. They also are strongly encouraged to participate in a regular Group Reunion, which is usually a weekly, or biweekly gathering of a small Christian community dedicated to support of the Cursillo lifestyle. This is a group of friends who hold each other accountable for their spiritual journey.⁴⁸⁷

Monthly an area-wide Ultreya takes place; this is a periodic "reunion of reunions" that provides support and builds community by sharing communal experiences. Finally, cursillistas are encouraged to attend spiritual direction in order to deepen one's own personal friendship with God. The district-wide Cursillo organization does have professional spiritual directors available.

Marcoux notes that those who might value a more individualistic and private religious mode may indeed find the Cursillo too threatening. A great deal of disclosure, intense personal sharing, witnessing, and communal celebration mark the weekend itself, as well as its aftermath. Likewise, those who approach their religion from a more rational perspective may be taken aback by the emotional level of the Cursillo, considering its methods too demonstrative and reminiscent of Protestant revival meetings.⁴⁸⁸ The Cursillo is based on shared Christianity and, if this is not personally valued, then the format of initiation will cause some persons to remain guarded, if not antagonistic.⁴⁸⁹ The weekend definitely catapults the initiates into a highly reflective state of mind.

⁴⁸⁷ Marcoux notes: "As individuals share what they term their religious failures and successes, strong bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood are fostered." Marcene Marcoux, *Cursillo: Anatomy of a Movement* (New York: Lambeth Press, 1982); 120.

⁴⁸⁸ Marcoux, *Cursillo*, 16.

⁴⁸⁹ Marcoux, *Cursillo*, 116.

Cursillo is a "gentle way of evangelization," according to another member of a local *ultraya*. It begins with "sharing your story" and "making a friend," then continues in "helping each other to grow in God's grace...when friendship is raised to a holy level by grace, we not only have great friends, we have the best way to achieve Christian community."⁴⁹⁰ In fact, the motto for the movement is "Make a friend; Be a friend; Bring your friend to Christ."⁴⁹¹ The Cursillo movement appears then to be an ideal structure within which both to develop and foster spiritual friendship. At the same time, it can be argued that it builds up the church and encourages activity within the world.

JustFaith

The final manifestation of communion within a parish to be considered in this paper directly addresses the formation of the apostolate in the direction of social justice. When Jack Jezreel accepted a position as social ministry coordinator in a Louisville parish, it was a concession. Experience had taught him that, while attending to the poor was integral to Christian values, social action remained peripheral to ordinary parish life.⁴⁹² Although the Gospel dictated compassion, most parishioners seemed uninterested when opportunities for social ministry arose; social action committees commanded little attention. In addition, beyond the merely superficial niceties, little interest in addressing immediate parish social issues at the personal level was evinced by parishioners.

Driven by the dismal turnout for social action meetings, Jezreel looked to the Gospel. Jesus, he figured, was the premier among the many prophets who had to stir the

⁴⁹⁰ MP, Taped interview with author, 1/3/2005.

⁴⁹¹ See for example, <http://www.diopa.org/ministries/other/cursillo> among other sources.

⁴⁹² Irene M. Lagan "JustFaith," Catholic Herald, 1/22/04. Retrieved from www.catholicherald.com/articles/04articles/justfaith.htm on October 10, 2006.

hearts of their followers to action. "Demonstrating compassion for the impoverished and marginalized was the result of a change of mind and heart that came from conversion."

Jezreel was inspired by the Catholic Worker movement, as well as the RCIA program, both of which demonstrated that adults were interested in action, learning, and community support. Jezreel thus developed the JustFaith program in 1989 for his parish, in order to teach Catholic Social Justice principles. The present thirty-week curriculum includes a series of readings, videos, discussions, prayer and hands-on experiences.⁴⁹³ The weekly commitment and intense interaction amidst the group members attract people eager to put their faith into action, and to share their experiences. Presently the JustFaith formation program is sponsored by Catholic Charities, USA⁴⁹⁴

Jezreel remains amazed that the same thing happens year after year, as JustFaith is experienced by other groups of parishioners in other parishes. People change, become enthused about their capacity to do good in the world, and truly connect with each other in the process. "Not only were participants changed, so too were their families and, in many cases, their friends. And as important as the changes were in the parish, what was just as heartening was the great work being done by the parish. It was a great time to be Church."⁴⁹⁵ Obviously, Jezreel writes, his parish had stumbled upon something that many were "downright hungry for." Not only had they increased the ranks of social ministers, but also, parish life was subsequently much more vital, the liturgy more

⁴⁹³ While topics range amongst scripture, the preferential option for the poor, causes of hunger, nonviolence, consumerism, and third-world issues, the primary focus of JustFaith is linked with domestic and global poverty and the call to compassion.

⁴⁹⁴ In 2004 the JustFaith program was offered in 70 dioceses at 250 parishes throughout the country. Since 2001 more than 7,000 people have participated in this program. Cited in http://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/news/content_displays.cfm?fuseaction=display_document&id=534&location=6

⁴⁹⁵ Jack Jezreel, <http://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/justfaith/what/history.cfm> retrieved 10/4/2006.

compelling, Christian community more heartfelt and life-giving. Friends were working together not only to share their faith, but to live their faith in a very concrete manner.

“To live as Jesus lived was indeed new life!”

One recent graduate of the program admits that at the beginning she was worried about the program, and its impact, “because of the length of time and involvement required.” However, after completing the course, she commented,

I’m positive this is about the best investment a parish and/or parishioner can make. It truly changed my life. Not only do I make different choices about almost everything, based on my transformed social values, but I relate to people so very differently. It’s like I really *see* them for the first time, their God-given dignity, their possibilities. I really look at them with love, I guess... I trust people, of all backgrounds, much more, and I recognize our commonalities. That’s pretty wild, and not at all what I expected going in. And that effect has lasted for more than a year now, so I think it will continue.....I think this is a result not only of the study and the physical labor we did together, but of sharing my feelings and thoughts with the rest of the JustFaith community. We connected at a level that I don’t know I ever have with another group.... Is it friendship? Yes...but a very different kind of friendship than you usually find anywhere, even in parishes, although I wish you could!⁴⁹⁶

The intense community atmosphere of the JustFaith program, it would thus appear, is able to foster, in a way ‘normal’ ecclesial worship and gatherings are not, spiritual friendship of the type discussed earlier in this paper. The intimacy, shared experiences, and emphasis upon mission predicated through support from within the community, all aid in nurturing and sustaining these friendships.

Conclusion

This final chapter in this thesis considered the ecclesial practices that might concretely manifest spiritual friendship, particularly in parishes. It reiterated the thoughts

⁴⁹⁶ MM, Taped interview with author, 2/12/2005.

of Vatican II that the church truly is called to be friends of God, and that a community of friends is thus a sign of Christ's presence. As was already discussed several times in this thesis, one reason this is so is because friends united spiritually do teach each other to love as God loves, and such friendship is a good. It is meant to be encouraged, and is necessary for the full development of persons. Such friendship "builds up" the church, at the same time it "builds up" the friends. Through such a process of faith, Philibert assures us, we can, as a church community, come to believe that "our destiny is to live in friendship with God as our beloved, and our entire life can be invested with significance...in the light of that relationship. The light of Christ therefore shines on the whole of life for those who live in Christian faith."⁴⁹⁷

As I stressed above, within our modern, individualized and privatized society, spiritual friendship is difficult, no doubt. Detachment, and distance from others, is the preferred, safe mode, even in our churches. In a Christian context, however, the prophetic, countercultural work spiritual friendship does in developing a strong bond of Christ-like care for others, a bond that is perhaps best fostered through peer communities, is critical. It has incredibly important implications for parish life in a church that is rapidly seeing its demographics and structures changing.

Within this chapter the recent Vatican and United States bishops' emphasis on these forms of small Christian communities, as essential for parish life, was also discussed. At the core of such communities is a mutual spiritual friendship, one with an active commitment, a willingness to support, to share, to help each grow closer in friendship to God. This is truly, as Kavanaugh suggests, a "personal form of life," a joint

⁴⁹⁷ Philibert, *Priesthood*, 35.

life of discipleship. In this way, just as the apostles bonded together in the upper room, so small communities share, learn, rest, and play in communion with each other.

Communities such as these can be disruptive, or at least might appear as disruptive. Whereas "friendliness" seldom causes trouble, communion manifested as spiritual friendship can. One concern may be that such friendship "shrivels up" our world, closing it off from the "outside," from the "others" who do not belong to our community. But true Christian community instead turns us outward toward the world, strengthened by the spiritual bonds of grace nurtured in the midst of that integral friendship. It causes expansion of the persons involved, increasing maturity and declining selfishness, as it extends beyond family and immediate neighbors to embrace those "others" through a common vision of faith and shared life in Christ.

What is necessary, however, as this thesis has argued, is not just that structures be present for such communities, or for programs such as Cursillo or JustFaith. These alone are not sufficient. In the end, what we are again left with is the realization that the relationship of friendship between the Christian community and God is ultimate. That relationship is analogously expressed and discerned within particular friendships, and within small communities of friends. When properly understood, nurtured, and appreciated, it can provide not only a paradigm for the church, but an example for our society as well.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has attempted to describe spiritual friendship, or friendship of a mutual, reciprocal type, based upon love, and centered on God, and to place it within an ecclesial and theological context. Such friendship is intimate, nonutilitarian, and modeled upon the Trinitarian relationship. I argue that it is necessary for the growth of all human persons, and, if at times rare, is certainly not impossible.

When one considers the concept of friendship in our contemporary society, one tends to assume that deep and satisfying friendships are widely found and easily experienced. Yet, study after study of the psychological and sociological type indicate that this for which we long so intensely is very seldom actually experienced. Friendships of the associative, or "useful" sort are much more common, yet seldom fulfill our relational needs. Few would disagree that deep, long-lasting, friendships are crucial to both emotional and spiritual development. We do learn to become fully human persons, in part, through our relationships. As discussed in this thesis, friends offer a "mirror" in which we can view our feelings, thoughts, and actions, while also receiving feedback and correction. Friendship also invites us to rejoice in the particularity, the uniqueness, and the specialness of the friend. We learn how to grow in love as we reach toward that other, or ultimately, toward God. So, in turn, particular friendships lead us in the direction that enables us to better love everyone and encourage the growth of community. This thesis argued that in the context of the Christian community, this means that the fostering of friendship could have immense implications for the church itself.

One of the main goals of this thesis was the development of a theological concept of friendship adequate for Christian practice today. In order to accomplish this, classical, traditional, and contemporary, theological sources were gleaned for useful elements; major obstacles to understanding and practicing friendship were identified. Additionally, a consideration was given to contributions from the social sciences, including motivating factors regarding the practice of friendship.

Chapter One, in particular, examined the development of the concept of friendship through scriptural, classical, and theological sources up to the time of the Enlightenment. After examining the works of Aristotle, Augustine, Aelred, Aquinas, and Francis de Sales, a description of spiritual friendship was compiled. In summary, such a friendship is based upon grace, or God willing such a relationship for us. This type of love is not romantic or sentimental, but involves decisions, action, and movement. True friendship might be a gift of grace, but human persons must be willing to assist with that gift through concrete, embodied practices of love.

As friendship defined in this way is a form of love, it is as a result mutual, benevolent, and desired on the part of all the friends involved. It rests upon the recognition of common interests and affection, somehow mutually communicated and expressed. The friends reciprocally begin to communicate their inner lives to each other, participate in each other's qualities, spend time together, support and console each other.

Spiritual friends become a sign of mercy to each other, for they accept each other's faults and imperfections, even as they encourage the other to growth in God. As that growth occurs, unity between the friends also increases. Yet, it is a unity in diversity. Through participation in each other's innermost qualities, and by

communicating every aspect of themselves over time, they become one of heart and soul. Yet this is not a melding, but a type of growth together that also encourages the God-given uniqueness of each.

This friendship bond is recognized as a sacred gift, a relationship to be nourished and, over time, returned back to God. The growth of the friendship is not merely into intimacy; it is also oriented outside the relationship. God draws the friends together and presses them both onwards and outwards toward the larger ecclesial and civic society, while offering them a union of friendship with God's own self. Each friend thus becomes more themselves through this relationship. At the same time, unified in this bond, they are able to accomplish more than they might ever have achieved individually.

The second chapter argued that, as a result of the Enlightenment, much of this interpretation of spiritual, or Christian friendship, was for the most part lost or rewritten. The resultant interpretation, rather than focusing on the spiritual aspects of the relationship, as did the writers in chapter one, tended to emphasize an individualistic, utilitarian focus for friendship. For the most part, this particular focus remained normative in many academic and social circles until well into the twentieth century. Within the last century, however, a recovery of the spiritual aspects of friendship began. This chapter explained in what manner many of these changes occurred, using examples from the work of several selected philosophers and social scientists, including Montaigne, Ralph Waldo Emerson, William James, Martin Buber, C.S. Lewis, and Jules Toner. This chapter concluded with an examination of some of the issues surrounding the psychological and social needs of human beings for friendship, including the question of particular versus universal friendship, as well as intergender friendship.

Chapter Three considered the impact of the Second Vatican Council upon the theological concept of friendship and its potential links to holiness and *communio*. An examination was undertaken of contemporary thought regarding the theological role of relationship in Trinitarian life, as well as the implications of this for the church as a whole. As was determined, the council documents, based upon the work of theologians of the early to mid-twentieth century, laid the groundwork for the theological speculation of many subsequent others concerning Trinitarian friendship. Those whose work was examined included Leonardo Boff, Elizabeth Johnson, Mary Timothy Prokes, John Zizioulas, Miroslav Volf, and David Schindler. Although deep divisions do exist in aspects of their writing, they converge on the underlying principles of the communion of the Trinity, in which humankind made *imago Dei* also participate in an anthropological fashion through human friendships grounded in Christ. In addition, within this chapter the roles of mutuality, the universal call to holiness, love, obedience, service, unity within diversity and freedom, all of which are intrinsic to the idea of friendship in general, were shown to each be necessary and integral components of Trinitarian and human relationships.

The final chapter attempted to construct an ecclesial model of spiritual friendship; it considered the ecclesial practices that might concretely manifest spiritual friendship, particularly in parishes. Emphasizing the thoughts of Vatican II that the Church truly is called to be friends of God, I concluded that a community of friends is thus a sign of Christ's presence in the world, for friends united spiritually do teach each other to love as God loves. This form of friendship-love "builds up" and encourages the Church, at the same time as it "builds up" the friends. However, this final chapter also stressed that

probably detachment, and distance from others, is the most often preferred, safe mode, even in our ecclesial communities. As I stressed above, within our modern, individualized and privatized society, spiritual friendship is difficult, no doubt. The prophetic, countercultural work spiritual friendship does, however, is truly critical, particularly today, in an overly privatized, individualistic modern world and in a church whose demographics are rapidly changing.

Within this chapter the recent Vatican and United States bishops' emphasis on these forms of small Christian communities was also discussed. At the core of such communities, such as Cursillo and JustFaith, is a mutual spiritual friendship, one with an active commitment, a willingness to support, to share, to help each grow closer in friendship to God. At the same time, true Christian community turns us outward toward the world, strengthened by the spiritual bonds of grace nurtured in the midst of that integral friendship, extending beyond family and immediate neighbors to embrace those "others" through a common vision of faith and shared life in Christ.

What is essential, however, as this thesis has argued, is not just that structures be present which encourage such communities. In the end, at the ontological core, is the realization that the relationship of friendship between the Christian community and God is ultimate. We are called, not just, or even primarily as individuals, but as relational creatures, to be friends with God. That relationship is analogously expressed and discerned within particular friendships, as well as within small communities of friends. As this thesis has attempted to elucidate, when such friendships are truly understood, nurtured, and appreciated, they can provide not only a paradigm for the Church, but an example for our society as well.

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