Thomas More as Theologian in his *Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation*

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This paper argues for the fundamentally theological character of Thomas More's *Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*. An understanding of theology based on Thomas Aquinas is used to bring out important elements of the conceptual structure of the work through the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity.
Keywords: Thomas More, theology, Thomas Aquinas, *Dialogue of Comfort*, theological virtues.

Cet article souhaite démontrer le caractère fondamentalement théologique du Dialogue du réconfort dans les tribulations *de Thomas More. Une compréhension de la théologie basée sur Thomas d'Aquin est utilisée pour mettre en évidence des éléments importants de la structure conceptuelle de l'œuvre autour des vertus théologiques de la foi, l'espoir et la charité*
Mots-clés : Thomas More, théologie, Thomas d'Aquin,* Dialogue du réconfort*, vertus théologiques.

En este trabajo se aborda la naturaleza fundamentalmente teológica del *Diálogo del Consuelo contra la Tribulación* de Thomas More. Así, desde un planteamiento de la teología según santo Tomás de Aquino, pondremos de manifiesto algunos elementos importantes en la estructura conceptual de este trabajo, siguiendo las virtudes teologales fe, esperanza y caridad.
Palabras clave: Thomas More, teología, Tomás de Aquino, *Dialogue of Comfort*, virtudes teológicas.

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Thomas More had no formal training in theology as far as we know, but I would like to propose that he is nonetheless a theologian. He certainly dealt with religious topics both spiritually and controversially in his writings. We know he cared deeply about matters of faith. None of this necessarily means he is a theologian. Does the title even really matter? I propose it does. The point is not that he is a very smart man who cares about his faith and who can defend its articles when enemies arise, as true as that may be, but rather, that in his understanding and treating of these topics he manifests an essentially theological habit of mind. That theological habit of mind gives the foundation and deep intelligibility to his religious writings, whether spiritual or controversial. To see the theological character of his mind and of his writings is to appreciate more profoundly the character and genius of these works.

In this essay, I propose to put forward what I mean by theology in such a way that I would not think foreign to Sir Thomas. I will then consider briefly one of his works, the masterpiece of the Tower writings, his *Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation* and suggest how it is a theological work and how this illuminates what More is doing in it.

What do I mean by theology? By theology I mean a habit or discipline of mind that studies God and all other things as they are related to God and as understood in the light of revelation.[1] Thus, theology has a particular object of its study, and that first and

[1] The description of theology is drawn in its contours from Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Part I, questions 1-10. Subsequence citations as *ST* followed by part, question, and, where relevant, article. For Thomas More and Thomas Aquinas, see below.

foremost is God. But God can be considered in a variety of ways; the way proper to the theologian is from the vantage point of revelation. Thus, the philosopher, for example, might well demonstrate the existence of God and indeed particular attributes of God, but his vantage point is not that of the theologian who is also interested in God's existence and attributes but as revealed in Christ to His Church. Because of what has been revealed about God, the theologian has other objects of study; indeed, he is interested in all things, but he is interested in them precisely in their relation to God from the vantage point of revelation.

Not every thought about God is a matter of theology. Theology is more than good and faithful reflection on God; it is a science, indeed a wisdom, that is, it is a discipline, or habit of mind. To say that theology is a science is to say not only that it has a particular object of study, but that it has a way of studying that object. That way is by way of causality. The ultimate understanding of things is in their causes. The more one understands something in its causes, the more one understands the thing itself. To understand what constitutes it (the formal and material causes), to understand the external causes that brought it into being (the efficient causes) and to understand its purpose (the final cause, the cause of causes) is to grow in understanding the thing. To consider the two external causes—efficient and final—is to see that thing in relation to other things. Indeed, it is to realize that one's understanding of this thing is ultimately dependent upon one's understanding of other things, on an understanding of the causal order of things. In turn, in understanding a thing, one comes to understand the causality it exercises, and this opens up another set of relations among things. This is true of any science.

So too theology.[2] The theologian articulates the causal interrelationships between the things studied in that science. In theology, what is being studied are revealed truths of the faith. The theologian draws out the causal connections because in so doing he brings out more clearly the very intelligibility of the things revealed, for things are better known as they are known in their causes. Thomas gives as an example St. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians who teaches that because Christ has risen, so too all shall rise.[3] Apparently some in Corinth had doubted the universal resurrection of the dead. St. Paul argues, in his usual truncated way, that there must be a universal resurrection of the dead because Jesus Christ has risen from the dead. What Aquinas sees in St. Paul is the articulation of the causality of the resurrection. If one truly understands the Resurrection of Christ, one understands, in part at least, its causality, which includes the resurrection of the dead at the end of time. Both the Resurrection of Christ and the universal resurrection of the dead are revealed truths. St. Paul is not creating new truth; he is not deducing something new from revelation. He is bringing out the causal relationship between two revealed realities. Such is the work of the theologian.

Theology is also a wisdom. The wise man is the man who establishes order; and things are best disposed, best ordered, when they are ordered fittingly according to their end or goal.[4] One can be wise within a particular area of life, for example, the wise general. The wise general is able to order his troops, his supplies, the terrain, to the end of victory. Wisdom, however, in its most proper sense does not pertain to a particular area of life but to the whole of life. The name of wise, *simpliciter*, that is, without qualification, is

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[2] For much of what follows see James A. Weisheipl, "The Meaning of *Sacra Doctrina* in *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 1," *The Thomist* 38 (1974): 49-80.

[3] *ST* I.1.8.resp.; I Cor 15:12-22.

[4] For the wise man, see Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles*, I.1.

reserved for that man who considers the end of the whole of the universe. And because the end of the universe is also its principle and beginning, Aristotle teaches that the wise man considers the highest causes. He orders his mind to this truth, and in accord with this truth, he orders and governs his own life. Theology is wisdom in this highest sense, for in theology, all things are treated under the aspect of God, either because they are God himself or because they are ordered to God either as a principle or an end.[5]

Although I have made use of medieval scholastic descriptions of theology, or what Aquinas calls sacred teaching (*sacra doctrina*), that does not mean that the description is necessarily tied to a particular genre of theological writing. One might find such an understanding of theology expressed in a particularly explicit and extended way in a *summa*, but it need not be limited to such strictly scholastic genres. One could have a scripture commentary that would fit such a description of theology. This would be true of St. Thomas' commentary on the letters of St. Paul, or St. Bonaventure's commentary on the Gospel according to St. Luke, or even, I would argue, St. Augustine's Tractates on the Gospel according to St. John. Or again, a treatise on a particular topic could fit this description of theology.

Thus, in claiming that Thomas More is a theologian, I mean his works that deal with matters of faith are not simply reflections or expositions on Catholic topics of either a controversial or spiritual kind, but rather are works that manifest a sustained scientific and sapiential habit of mind that can rightly be called theological. To get at this in practice, let us turn to the *Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation*.

We know the splendid fictional context of the *Dialogue*: the young Hungarian Vincent seeks comfort from his old and ailing

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[5] *ST* I.1.7.resp.

uncle Antony in the face of the impending incursion of the Turk. Vincent seeks comfort not only for himself but for friends and family. He describes the particular concern precisely.

> And now sith the tydynges haue come hether so brymme of the great Turkes interprise into these parties here: we can almost neyther talke nor thynke of any other thyng els, than of his might & our mischefe. There falleth so contynually before the eyen of our hart, a fearfull imaginacion of this terryble thyng/[6]

Then follows an accounting of what they fear (anticipating precisely the fears to be addressed in Book III). Vincent concludes,

> Therefor good vncle, agaynst thes horrible feres of thes terrible tribulacions / of which some you wot well our howse all redye hath, & the remnant stand in dread of / give vs while god lendith you vs, such plentye of your comfortable councell, as I may wryte and kepe with vs, to staye vs when god shall call you hens.[7]

The condition of Vincent and his family is the entirely understandable fixation on the threatening Turk. It is all they can think and talk about. It is what falls before the eyes of their hearts: "a fearfull imaginacion of this terryble thyng." Why is this? Because they are afraid; and thus Vincent asks for comforting counsel "agaynst thes horrible feres of thes terrible tribulacions."

The *Dialogue* is, as its title indicates, a matter of comfort, of giving strength to those who are in tribulation.[8] Antony tells us what he means by tribulation early in Book I: "For tribulacion semeth

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[6] *A Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation*, I.preface, 6.18-23. All references to the *Dialog of Comfort* (hereafter *DC*) are according to the internal division of book and chapter followed by page number, and line number for quotations, to the Yale Critical Edition, *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, volume 12, ed. Louis L. Martz and Frank Manley (New Haven: Yale UP, 1976).

[7] *DC* I.preface, 7.19-23.

[8] See note on "comfort" in the commentary of *CW* 12, p. 331.

generally to signifie nothyng els, but some kynd of grefe eyther payne of the body or hevynes of the mind."[9] He refines it towards the end of Book I:

> I suppose now that you will agre that tribulacion is euery such thing, as trowbleth & greveth the man, eyther in body or in mynd / & is as it were the prik of a thorn, a bramble / or a brere thrust into his flesh or into his mynd / And surely Cosyn the prik that very sore priketh the mynd / as far almost passeth in payne the grefe that payneth the body / as doth a thorn that stikketh in the hart, passe and excede in payne the thorn that is thrust in the hele.[10]

Of particular concern, if sheer bulk and word count are a viable measure, are those tribulations which afflict a man and are within his power to escape, but at a high moral or spiritual cost. In his recounting of the dangers posed by the Turk, Vincent hits on the greatest danger posed to a Christian. A Christian in the hands of the Turk will suffer; but he need not. He could abandon his faith and take up the religion of the Turk, and in so doing his tribulation would come to an end. Vincent fears not principally the persecution of the Turk, he fears that he will apostatize when confronted with the persecution of the Turk.[11]

Antony undertakes his comforting with much practical advice. But that is not all there is. Antony guides Vincent to see the world a certain way, to give him a vision of the reality of man that is the basis of the practical advice. That vision, however, presumes a theological habit of mind in the author. Sir Thomas brings to bear an understanding of the causal order of things—principally of man—precisely as understood in relation to the first principle and end that has been revealed fully in Jesus Christ. From this vision of the

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9 *DC* I.i, 10.6-7.
10 *DC* I.xvi, 50.18-24.
11 *DC* I.preface, 6-7.

reality of man, the practical advice follows as a consequent line of action. This is the work of the wise man: to order. As author, More guides his reader (as Antony guides Vincent) in the ways of the wise man who orders his life in its particulars according to the highest cause. In this, the *Dialogue* is not an exposition of some points of doctrine; rather, it is a work with theological vision of man that gives the theological scaffolding to the practical advice.

I would like to look, at least in part, at that vision.

That this vision is theological is clear from Antony's first response to Vincent's request for comfort. He says that the pagan philosophers have written works of comfort but that these shall be set aside. Instead, all spiritual comfort is to be based on the foundation of faith. Why is this? The pagans lack knowledge of God, the end to whom all is to be referred, and from whom the graces necessary for full comfort is had.[12] Thus More signals through Antony that the foundational vantage point of the work will be the revealed truths of the Catholic faith, especially God as principle of grace and final end of all things. It is not that he will only deal with revealed truths (as we will see below), but that all he deals with will be under this particular consideration, from this particular vantage point of the faith. An essential feature of a theological work is thus stated here at the beginning of the *Dialogue*.

I follow Frank Manley in seeing that the work is structured according to the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity and this corresponds more or less to the three books of the *Dialogue*.[13] I do not mean simply that Book I is about faith, Book II

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[12] *DC* I.i-ii, 9-14.

[13] Frank Manley, "The Argument of the Book" in the Introduction to the critical edition of the *Dialogue* in *CW* 12, p. lxxxvi-cxx. It is not my intention to note the precise points of agreement and divergence between my reading of the *Dialogue* and Manley's as my purpose is different. He sought to lay out the argument; I am attempting to show the profoundly theological character of the work. These are intimately related but nonetheless distinct.

about hope, and Book III about charity; rather, I mean the work follows a progression in the spiritual life in which all three are operative. It is not that having dealt with faith in Book I, More then turns his attention to hope. It is not that kind of a work. Instead, More treats of faith in Book I and then uses what is now operative to foster hope in Book II; hence, faith is also fully present in Book II, just as hope was present by way of anticipation in Book I; faith and hope then continue into Book III as More progresses to charity.

I shall consider each of the three books in turn with an eye to this structure. Having said that, full disclosure is necessary. There is no systematic consideration of the theological virtues as such in the *Dialogue*. What is present is a practical articulation of these virtues; we find examples and exhortations and instantiations of them in action. To get at the conceptual understanding of the virtues that undergirds what More says, I will bring to bear an extrinsic guide to the theological virtues, namely St. Thomas Aquinas. I do this first because as near as I can tell what More says is entirely consonant with what Aquinas teaches[14]; second, because although I do not know if More read Aquinas on the theological virtues, the fact that he cites him on a rather narrow point of morals[15] gives me some confidence that he might be informed as well on the great teacher's thinking on the more significant topics of faith, hope, and charity; and third because More speaks of Aquinas as "the very floure of theology, and a man of that trewe perfyte fayth and crysten lyvyng."[16]

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14 I can take some comfort in the fact that Manley too leaned on Thomas Aquinas in his reading of the *Dialogue*.

15 *DC* II.i, 82 on *eutrapelia* as a pleasant form of speech.

16 "Now the wretche [Tyndale] rayleth by name vppon that holy doctoure saynt Thomas, a man of that lernyng that the greate excellent wyttes and the moste connynge men that the chyrche of Chryste hath hadde synnes hys dayes, haue estemed and called hym the very floure of theology, and a man of that trewe perfyte fayth and crysten lyuynge thereto, that god hath hym selfe testyfyed hys

In speaking of faith, hope, and charity, we speak of theological virtues. Virtues are dispositions of a power in man. A man has the capacity or power to do something, that is, to act. That he has the power does not mean he necessarily exercises it or exercises it well. That he exercise it well requires a habit or virtue. A virtue disposes one to act promptly, with ease, and with delight. It is a second nature. It is not, however, a toggle switch. In the case of the natural acquired virtues, one can be more or less virtuous, and that depends on one doing the particular act of that power. The more one does it, the stronger the virtue; the more it becomes a second nature. This is why in human activities we practice, so as to grow in the habit, that is, we become increasingly disposed to do that particular thing well, with ease, and with delight. Virtues bring powers into act.[17]

The theological virtues are a particular and peculiarly Christian breed of virtue. They have their origin not in human activity but in divine grace. The Christian has faith, hope, and charity because of a divine gift received at baptism. These virtues dispose the powers of man to act and to act with regard to a particular object: God. Thus the theological virtues have their origin and their object in God. But these are dispositions, virtues; they are not acts. It is up to the Christian himself to bring them into act, and here too there is a spectrum not a toggle switch. Some Christians, through the exercise of the theological virtues, grow in the virtues, that is, they come to do the acts promptly, with ease, and with delight. For others, the virtues languish. Many are somewhere in between.[18]

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holynesse by many a greate myracle, and made hym honowred here in hys chyrche in erth, as he hath exalted hym to greate glory in heuyn." *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, Book VII, in *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, volume 8.2, ed. Louis A. Schuster, et al. (New Haven: Yale UP, 1973), p. 713.20-28.

[17] See *ST* I-II.55.

[18] See *ST* I-II.62.

In structuring the *Dialogue* according to the theological virtues, More has situated the circumstances of the dialogue in a theological frame. That frame is one of divine causality revealed in Jesus Christ by which God moves man through the graces of the theological virtues so as to bring him to his final end of happiness which is God himself. This is the scaffolding that supports the many rich elements of the *Dialogue*. In considering each of the virtues in turn, we can see how this works concretely.

The first of the theological virtues is faith.[19] In the Catholic tradition to which More is heir, faith is principally in the intellect. It is a virtue, given by God in baptism, that disposes the intellect to act. St. Augustine famously defined faith as thinking with assent,[20] for this is precisely what the intellect does: it thinks and assents to the truth of those things it thinks about. God is the object of faith precisely as he has revealed himself. Faith is assent to truths not known by demonstration, but nonetheless full assent is given because these truths have been revealed by God. Faith is first and foremost about knowing, about the exercise of the intellect.

In turning to Book I of the *Dialogue*, we can see two aspects of faith at work. First, Book I is a practical exposition of the necessity of faith in the life of the Christian. Second, it is an actual exercise in faith for the believing reader, for it is a thinking.

Antony says they must begin with the "grounde & foundacion of fayth."[21] Echoing the classical teaching on faith, Antony tells Vincent faith is a gift of God. It is a gift that can feel very faint; but it can increase and grow. The Christian must pray for its increase; he must also work for its increase by withdrawing from "worldly fantasies," so that it might grow like a mustard seed.[22] In speaking

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19 See *ST* II-II.1-6.

20 *De predestinatione sanctorum*, 2; see *ST* II-II.2.1.

21 *DC* I.ii, 12.12.

22 *DC* I.ii, 13.

of worldly fantasies Antony refers implicitly to those fears and imaginings that dominate the minds of his family at all hours. The problem is precisely that they are thinking about the terrors of the Turk and not about the object of faith, God.

One finds many particulars of the Catholic faith articulated in Book I. Antony addresses attacks on the Catholic doctrines of merit and purgatory.[23] He addresses a number of objections to the good of tribulation, objections arising from Catholic prayer, corporal acts of mercy, and Sacred Scripture.[24] But fundamentally, what matters most to Antony is that in all of this the Christian assents to the proposition that God's wisdom best disposes things in his sovereign goodness:

> let vs nothyng dowt / but that like his high wisedome better seeth what is best for vs than we can see our selfe / so shall his souerayne goodnes give vs the thyng that shall in dede be best/[25]

All that he has to say about the good of tribulation is ultimately governed by divine wisdom which orders all things. To understand divine wisdom is to see its causality operative in the world. Antony gives particular explanations but within this larger governing causality known through revelation.

The four causes of comfort that follow from divine wisdom and which give Book I its structure are each related to faith. The first cause of comfort (chapters 3 to 6) is the very desire to be comforted, which as Antony notes, presumes faith, that is, it presumes a faith in God who can so comfort.[26] The second cause of comfort is in the tribulation itself (chapters 7 to 10). Here Antony

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[23] *DC* I.xii, 37-40.
[24] *DC* I.xv-xvii, 46-58.
[25] *DC* I.vi, 21.26-29; see also, e.g., xi, 36.
[26] *DC* I.iii, 15-16.

distinguishes the various ways in which tribulation can be medicinal. This too is an exercise in faith, for it is an exercise of the intellect in thinking about sin in relation to divine justice and mercy. Vincent says this is a cause of comfort "yf we may well perceyve yt"[27]; such perception is in the intellect. The third cause of comfort is knowledge that we can merit here in this life (chapters 11 and 12),[28] and the fourth is knowledge that the cross is needed for heaven (chapters 13 to 20).[29] These last two are also matters of assent of the intellect to a truth that is known through revelation. Because the believer knows these things to be true, he can be comforted. Without the faith there is no such comfort. Antony traces the lines of causality by which the believer can see the truths of faith as true causes of comfort, that is, of knowing the good to be achieved in tribulation. Sir Thomas is here articulating the kind of causal connections that are part of the theologian's task, and as he discusses each in turn he articulates how that causality works.

The essentially intellectual character of faith is manifest in Vincent's language. He sees,[30] or cannot see.[31] Something is opened to him or opened and declared[32]; he perceives[33]; he considers[34]; some things are obscure and dark[35]; he has doubts.[36]

We can see much of this at work in the concluding chapter of Book I. Antony says,

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[27] *DC* I.vii, 23.27.
[28] *DC* I.xi-xii, 35-40.
[29] *DC* I.xiii, 40-44.
[30] *DC* I.iv, 17.8; xvi, 49.20.
[31] *DC* I.x, 30.23.
[32] *DC* I.ix, 27.13; vii, 23.16.
[33] *DC* I.vii, 23.28.
[34] *DC* I.xi, 35.13.
[35] *DC* I.viii, 24.21-22.
[36] *DC* I.xix, 64.4-5.

> If we lay first for a sewer grownd a very fast fayth / wherby we beleve to be trew all that the scripture sayth, vnderstondyng trewly as the old holy doctours declare it, and as the spirite of god instructith his catholique church / than shall we consider tribulacion as a graciouse gyfte of god.[37]

What follows is a summary of the specific points made about tribulation in the life of the faithful in the course of Book I. More's point is clear enough. If one holds certain truths of the faith, others necessarily follow. It follows from God's goodness and wisdom that tribulation is a gracious gift of God. The connection is causal for it follows from the very nature of God as an agent. To so understand God rightly is to get the consequences—the effects—right as well. This is the work of theology as science. From this follows the practical consequences in the ordered life of the wise man. "Who so these thynges thynketh on & remembreth well, shall in his tribulacion neyther murmur nor gruge."[38] This is an exhortation to acts of faith. The Christian is to think about these things and in so doing remember them. These are the things to be consistently occupying the mind of the Christian if he is to prepare for grievous tribulation. For the believing reader, More has provided an occasion for acts of faith, for assent to the truths of the faith here presented. In the very acts of assent in such a reader, the virtue of faith is strengthened. Then by way of both recap of what has been treated as well as a view to what is to come, Antony speaks of what follow from these acts of faith: patience, thanksgiving to God, trust in God and the seeking of his help, submitting one's will to God, prayer to God, confession, so loving of God as to go to him. Here Antony indicates what follows still further upon faith in the life of the Christian.

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[37] *DC* I.xx, 75.7-11.
[38] *DC* I.xx, 75.25-26.

With Book II we clearly have a shift in tone, and it suggests a shift in focus as well. We enter the world of merry tales; there are fourteen in Book II by my count, with an additional handful in Book III. Book II opens with a discussion of merry tales. Humor is a valuable thing, Vincent maintains.[39] Antony agrees but also sees something else. He notes how much more interested one is in merry tales than in the serious matter of the faith (i.e., the matter discussed in Book I). Antony brings out the question of what one savors: alas, for all too many, the object of savoring, of delight, is the merry tale. If only Christians so savored as well the delight of heaven.[40] With the question of savor, More moves us to the appetites.

We see the move in the kinds of tribulation distinguished in chapter 3 and which provide a further structure for the *Dialogue* as a whole. Antony identifies three kinds of tribulation: those we have not willed and cannot escape (already dealt with in Book I), those we have not willed but will to endure (II.viii to the end of the *Dialogue*), and those we will in the first place (II.iv-vii). This distinction is according to the will.

How are we to understand the will?[41] Classically, the will is an appetite: it is the rational appetite in man, in distinction from the appetites of the senses. The rational appetite, like all appetites is an appetite for something, a hankering for, a desire for, some good. In the case of the sense appetites, it is for a good of the senses (the quenching of thirst for example). In the case of the rational appetite, the will, it is for a rational good, that is, a good recognized precisely as such, that is, as good. When I determine with my reason that something is good, that very determination moves the will to desire that good. If I do not possess this good, I desire to do so; if I already

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[39] *DC* II.i, 82.
[40] *DC* II.i, 83-5.
[41] See *ST* I.82, I-II.8-16.

possess it, I desire to keep it. These acts of desire are acts of the will. We can use another term for acts of the will: love.[42] When I love some good, I act through my will. And when I love some good, I move myself into act: I seek to gain it, I seek to preserve it. The particular actions I do all follow from my love and precisely for this reason those acts are acts moved by the will. Of course, all such activity requires that the good in fact be known and be known as good; that is, the acts of will require antecedent acts of the intellect or reason.

With the discussion of merry tales in the very first chapter of Book II, More signals that we are now moving to the consideration of our love of things, our savoring of things. It is a savoring that has gone awry[43]; it is a disordered savoring in which we take much greater delight in merry tales than the truths of the faith. It is a disorder that will be addressed throughout Books II and III as Antony considers the disorders that savor the goods of the body at the expense of the goods of the soul.

How am I to recognize or measure my love? One way is by fear and sadness. What causes fear or sadness is what harms or threatens one's good. Bad is always understood in relation to good of which it is a privation. What I fear or grieve manifests what I love, for I fear or grieve that which harms what I love.

Books II and III are about fear. What is fear?[44] In the classical analysis, fear is a passion, what we might now call an emotion or feeling. It is a reaction; it is something we suffer in both body and soul, as a result of something external. What is that something? It is something dangerous. It is an evil that threatens us but does not yet have us in its grip. (Once the evil is upon us, we

[42] See *ST* I-II.26-28.
[43] See *ST* I-II.82-86.
[44] See *ST* I-II.40-44.

have the passion of sadness.) Fear arises from our loves and it is a good thing to fear that which can threaten what is good. But not all goods are equal and the danger in the moral life is a disordered love of goods, by which we love lesser goods more than greater goods. This in turn applies to fear; for we might well fear harm to a lesser good and thereby sacrifice a higher good in order to preserve the lesser. This is, of course, precisely the circumstance of the *Dialogue*; namely, that out of fear for harm to the body, the Christian will sacrifice the goods of the soul.

The issue is usually not a matter of knowledge, of knowing the good. The issue is rather one of love, that is, of loving the good, or better of loving rightly and in the right order the many goods that constitute human life. That is not to say that there cannot be much muddled thinking; disordered loves often lead to disordered thinking; but it turns out that even rightly ordered thinking can all too often crumple in the face of disordered loves. This is the circumstance of Antony's family. As Book I makes clear, Vincent knows the hierarchy of goods. But seeing the truth does not seem to be sufficient. The problem is that he does not love them accordingly. Indeed, as Vincent progresses he proposes ways of thinking about the situation that might allow him to preserve his goods in spite of the Turk.[45] Here is the crumpling of right thinking that arises in the face of fear. One starts to reconsider what one knows to be true. Antony steadfastly calls Vincent back to the truth, but that is not enough. Antony must address the cause of such thinking which is not in the intellect but in the will, in Vincent's loves.

There is a cardinal virtue related to fear and its allied passions, and that virtue is fortitude (or courage or bravery, call it what you

[45] Dramatically so when Antony shrewdly suggests Vincent take the role of a man of great wealth confronted with the demands of the Turk, *DC* III.xv, 238-42.

will).[46] It is a virtue of the will by which a man is master of those passions that arise in the face of what is dangerous, or harmful, or threatening, or simply unpleasant. What do we mean by dangerous, harmful, or threatening? We mean that some good I have or desire is in jeopardy and my inclination is to safeguard that good. Is that not itself a good thing? Yes it is, but since all goods are not of equal value, one must safeguard the greater goods, even at the expense of lesser goods. The classical paradigm of fortitude is the soldier. Why is this fortitude? Because he is under threat, specifically the threat of death, but he is willing to sacrifice the good of life if need be for a higher good, the good of defending his city. For Thomas Aquinas, the highest instance of fortitude is the Christian martyr.[47] Importantly in the moral order, fortitude protects the higher virtues of prudence and justice.[48] Fear can all too easily lead to the overriding of right judgment in prudence or the right rendering of each his due in justice. Fortitude then rightly moderates fear according to the measure of reason. What Vincent and his family are thus notably missing is fortitude. The clarity of the truth in Book I and its inadequacy in the face of the Turk make that clear. Hence the need for two more books. And hence the *Dialogue* is a dialogue of comfort, that is, of strength or fortitude.

How does one acquire fortitude? If the philosophers had an answer, it is not of immediate concern to More in the *Dialogue*. Antony is all but silent on fortitude as an acquired cardinal virtue, a curious fact for a dialogue of comfort. We can, nonetheless, account for it simply enough: More maintains his theological course. The strengthening of the will so as to order the passions rightly becomes

[46] See *ST* II-II.123.
[47] See *ST* II-II.124.
[48] See *ST* I-II.61.2.

the work of the theological virtues of hope and charity, to which we now turn.

If faith is a virtue of the intellect, hope and charity are virtues of the will, that is of the rational appetite of the soul. Let us first consider hope.[49] There is a natural hope manifest in the many things of life for which we hope. And in so hoping, we desire something, we want some good but it is a good we do not have (otherwise we would not hope for it). At the same time, it is a good that is not easily had; it is a difficult or arduous good, but a good nonetheless possible. Hope is also a theological virtue. This hope has as its object God as the final good of the human person, God as one's ultimate happiness. The Christian desires it because he does not, in fact, now have it. With the redemption achieved by Christ it is now possible, but is not easily had. Hope is first for God as end; without God's help, however, that end is, in fact, not possible; grace—divine help—is needed. Thus God is the object of hope not only as the Christian's final end but also as the source of grace by which the Christian is necessarily aided in coming to that final end for which he hopes. The Christian has hope not only in the end but also in the means to that end.

Let us return to the basic structure of the *Dialogue*. Antony distinguishes the three kinds of tribulation according to their volitional status.[50] There are those tribulations we do not will and cannot escape; these are the tribulations of Book I, such as illness. Then there are the tribulations voluntarily taken up; these are dealt with briefly at the beginning of Book II. Finally, there are those tribulations that are not willed but can be escaped. These are the subject of Book II beginning with chapter eight and continuing to the end of the *Dialogue*. The principal kinds of tribulation that More

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[49] See *ST* II-II.17-18.
[50] *DC* II.iii, 86.

considers under this heading are tribulations with regard to fear. We can see this in the very text of Psalm 90 that serves as the basis for most of Book II and all of Book III:

> The trouth of god shall compasse the about with a pavice, thow shalt not be aferd of the nightes feare, nor of the arrow fleyng in the day, nor of the bysynes walkyng about in the darknesses / nor of the incursion or invacion of the devill in the mydde day.[51]

God promises his pavis, a mighty shield of the truth that surrounds and protects the one who wields it. And what does this shield protect from? From fears. With this shield, the Psalmist promises, "thow shalt not be aferd." He then delineates the four objects of such fear: 1. the fear of the night, 2. the arrow flying in the day, 3. the busyness walking about in the darknesses, and 4. the incursion of the devil in the midday. So what is the tribulation? The tribulation, the thorn or bramble that sticks in the soul, is not the fear of the night, the arrow flying, the busyness walking, or the incursion of the midday devil; the tribulation is the fear of these. This is the tribulation that although not taken up willingly, is to be willingly endured. The tribulation is that out of fear one might not face the threatening evil and instead flee it. Thus, for example, my students at first often think in discussing the arrow flying in the day that the tribulation is the pride signified by the arrow, for this is indeed a temptation. But in fact the tribulation is the fear of the good Christian who fearing pride collapses in the face of the opportunities for greatness to which God is calling him. Instead of arming himself as a good Christian against pride and fighting it in a magnanimous striving for excellence, he turns away from such greatness succumbing to the sin

[51] Psalm 90.5-6, *DC* II.xi, 105.19-23.

of pusillanimity.[52] The fundamental frame of the *Dialogue* from chapter ten of Book II on is fear.

If fear is about future ills, hope is about future goods. The problem that runs through the objects of fear is not simply a matter of faith. By faith, the Christian knows of God's love and his grace to bring the Christian to eternal life. This is promised to those who cooperate with grace. And much of Book I is about the exercise of that virtue of faith so as to bring this truth to mind. With Book II, More seeks to bring the will into act as a result of this truth known. If the Christian knows that God will aid him in his times of tribulation, then he may, indeed ought, to hope for that aid; he should desire it and desire it as a Christian should, in prayer with confidence. More turns to hope as the consequence of faith. We see this clearly at the beginning of chapter 10 just prior to the introduction of Ps. 90 when Antony says,

> A grete comfort may this be in all kyndes of temptacion, that god hath so his hand vppon hym that is willyng to stand & will trust in hym & call vppon hym / that he hath made hym sure by many faythfull promyses in holy scripture, that eyther he shall not fall / or yf he sometyme thorow fayntnes of fayth stager or hap to fall / yet yf he call vppon god betymes, his fall shalbe no sore brosyng to him /[53]

In each of the three fears from Psalm 90 dealt with in Book II, Antony's message is simple enough: there is no need to shrink before the danger that threatens, for the Christian knows of God's help and can therefore act on it, first and foremost in hoping for it expressed especially in prayer for God's grace. So it is in considering the fear of the night, Antony says,

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[52] See *DC* II.xvi, 157-66.
[53] *DC* II.x, 102.16-21.

> But he that (as the prophet sayth) dwellith & contynueth faythfully in the hope of godes help, shall so be clipid in on euery syde with the shild or pauice of god, that he shall haue no nede to be a ferd of such tribulacion that is here callid the nightes feare.[54]

Antony's study of this fear is in great part a study in the ways in which the devil works to keep the faithful Christian from exercising hope, through fear, pusillanimity, scrupulosity, and some forms of temptation to suicide. The fear of the arrow flying in the day is the fear of pride that arises from prosperity or position or authority. Antony counsels,

> Let such a man therefor temper his fere with good hope / and thynke / that sith god hath set hym in that place (yf he thinke that god haue set hym therin) god will assist hym with his grace to the well vsyng therof... But els let hym contynew in his good bysynes / & agaynst the devilles prouocacion vnto evill / blesse hym selfe & call vnto god & pray/[55]

Antony concludes the lengthy discussion of the fear or riches—the fear of the busyness walking about in the darknesses—with this beautiful affirmation in hope:

> And therefor Cosyn to make an end of this pece with all / *a negocio perambulante in tenebris*, of this devill I meane / that the prophet calleth besynes walkyng in the darknesses / yf a man haue a mynd to serue god and please hym, & rather lese all the good he hath / than wittyngly to do deddly synne, and wold without murmur or gruge give it euery whitt away in case that god shuld so commaund hym, & intend to take it paciently / yf god wold take it from hym, & glad wold be to vse it vnto godes pleasure, & do his diligence to know & to be taught what maner vsing thereof god wold be pleasid with, & therein fro tyme to tyme be glad to folow the counsayle of good vertuouse men: though he neyther give away all at ones

[54] *DC* II.xii, 107.13-17.

[55] *DC* II.xvi, 162.10-13, 15-17.

> nor give euery man that asketh hym neyther / Let euery man fere and thynke in this world that all the good that he doth or can do is a greate deale to little but yet for all that fere / let hym dwell therwith in the faythfull hope of godes helpe / and than shall the trouth of god so compas hym about (as the prophet sayth) with a pavice / that he shall not so nede to drede the traynes of & the temptacions of the devill, that the prophet calleth bysynes walkyng about in the darknesses / but that he shall for all the havyng of riches & worldly substaunce, so avoyd his traynes & his temptacions, that he shall in conclucion by the greate grace & almightie mercie of god, gete into hevyn well inough /[56]

The faith of the Christian is to bring the virtue of hope into act in the very circumstance of such fears. In such acts of hope, rightly founded upon faith, the Christian is strengthened. He is strengthened in the very exercise of hope as a strengthening of the will in its ordering to God. He is further strengthened in the graces that follow from the petitions offered in hope for divine assistance to endure his tribulation.

Why does More give attention to presumption and despair in Book II? Because these are the principal sins opposed to hope.[57] They are especially sins with regard to hope in God's assistance. In the case of presumption, the Christian fails to recognize that the good is an arduous one, and thus he thinks that his salvation is, simply, in the bag. He is, in his mind, so good that God could not conceivably damn him; or he is in fact a terrible sinner, but it does not matter because God's mercy is so great that what the Christian does is of no ultimate consequence. The presumptuous man fails to see the demands made upon him in his life as a Christian such that he needs grace in the here and now to live the life demanded of him. The practical consequence, as the tale of Fr. Reynard the Fox makes

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[56] *DC* II.xvii, 186.5-15.

[57] See *ST* II-II.20-21.

clear, is moral and spiritual laxity, the concession to the lesser goods to the practical neglect of the highest good.[58] On the other hand there is despair. If presumption is a sin against the arduous character of the good hoped for, despair is a sin against its possibility. The despairing Christian thinks that God simply will not help him as he needs to be helped and he will therefore be damned.

One can recognize in some of the analyses of presumption and despair a reply, rather irenic, to positions put forward by the protestant reformers. These are not points arising randomly; More has not simply dropped a bit of counter-reformation polemic into this *Dialogue*. The topics arise naturally given the theological context of the virtue of hope. More's point is not simply that the reformers disagree with some aspect of Catholic teaching, but rather that their positions undermine the Catholic understanding of the reality of the human person redeemed before God. One cannot simply remove or alter one element without affecting the whole. The theological frame of the *Dialogue* and the centrality of hope in Book II bring this out in a practical way in the conversation with Vincent, who, in his raising of some reformation themes, fails to grasp the deeper and essential theological unity at stake. It is this, in part, that Antony is trying to help him see.

Book II deals with a set of notable fears but they are not the fears that have brought Vincent to Antony. They do, however, provide More with an opportunity to discuss at length and in different circumstances the Christian's experience of fear (as well as to distinguish true instances of fear from merely apparent, as in the taxonomy of suicide). The fear that is at the heart of the *Dialogue,* for it is the fear that has brought Vincent to Antony in the first place, is the fourth: the incursion of the devil in the midday, which Antony

[58] *DC* II.xiv, 114-21.

interprets as the open persecution of the devil.[59] This is the fear of persecution by which one is directly threatened with loss of property, position, power, with imprisonment, torture, and ultimately death. And it can all, it would seem, be avoided. One need simply abandon one's Christian faith and all one's fears would disappear. And this is the principal fear in Vincent: that the fear of losing these other things will lead him to give up the single most important thing, his Catholic faith. This is Book III.

Manley suggested that Book III corresponds to the third theological virtue of charity or love, although he found himself substantially qualifying the claim. Book III continues the themes of faith and hope but it is not obviously a matter of charity.

What do we mean by charity? In so far as we mean the theological virtue, we need some precision.[60] We do not mean love in just any old way, although we are speaking of love. Charity is love and therefore a virtue of the will. It has as its object God, as do all the theological virtues, and it has God as the good loved as such. But we need to be yet more specific if we are to see it as a specifically Christian virtue. After all, pagans can and have loved God. Aquinas teaches that charity is friendship with God.[61] As a friendship it is mutual and not one sided. Furthermore, every friendship has something that the friends share that is the basis of that friendship. In the case of charity, what is shared is the divine life of God, his very happiness. This is entirely a matter of divine initiative, of God's grace, and in this it is a theological virtue. The Christian loves God because of and in the divine life God has shared with him. And from that he loves others as God loves them, as those

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[59] *DC* III.ii, 200-201.
[60] See *ST* II-II.23-27.
[61] *ST* II-II.23.1.

who actually or potentially can share in that divine life. This charity begins in this life and comes to its perfection in the beatific vision.

That one knows this reality of friendship with God requires faith, for it has been revealed by God. In faith, one knows this reality and knows it is good. And because he knows it in faith as good, he loves it, moved by God himself to do so. This love, charity, has a profound effect on the life of the Christian. Since it is love of God as that good that is in reality the final end of the Christian life, it is the love that shapes all other human actions, for all other actions are to be ordered to that end. Insofar as other actions are not so ordered, they are, in varying degrees, sins, for they are destructive of the love of God in the soul of the Christian. This charity, in the language of the scholastics, forms all the other virtues and acts of the Christian.

For More, the issue is not the conceptual reality of the virtue of charity, it is the question of how to exercise that virtue in act. How to love God in act. The danger is precisely that so many other loves that have the immediate attention of the Christian will suppress charity, indeed, even destroy it through mortal sin. Like all virtues, charity must be exercised. But in the difficult circumstances of the *Dialogue,* the danger of other disordered loves coming to the fore is great indeed.

Thus it is in the third book we come to the fourth and most immediate of the fears of Psalm 90: open persecution. Here the charity of the Christian is put to the test precisely with regard to the other things he loves: his possessions, his power, his reputation, his freedom, and then directly, his love of his physical well being, and then finally his love of his life lived here. When Vincent presents Antony at the beginning of Book III with the list of goods to be lost, Antony responds,

> And surely Cosyn I dowt it litle in my mynd / but that yf a man had in his hart / so diepe a desiere & love longyng to be

> with god in hevyn to haue the fruicion of his gloriouse face, as had those holy men that were martires in old tyme / he wold no more now styke at the payne that he must passe betwene / than at that tyme those old holy martirs did / But alas our faynt & feble fayth, with our love to god lesse than luke warm, by the fyery affeccion that we bere to our own filthy flesh, make vs so dull in the desiere of hevyn, that the sodayne drede of euery bodely payne, woundeth vs to the hart and strikith our devocion ded /[62]

At this point, faith must be actively in play, hope for eternal life and the help of God must be in play. But that is still not enough: one must love the very life of God for the good it is, for that perfect good that is so graciously made possible to the Christian believer. And it is precisely that love exercised that will strengthen—comfort—the Christian in his resistance to the open persecution of the devil.

In Book III, Antony works in two directions. First, he seeks to pry the believer from his love of created goods, or better, to love them in the modest way they are to be loved. The purpose is to create a space in the affections of the believer so that he can indeed come to love God. This is the second movement: the increase in the actual love of God, which is increasingly possible because all other goods have an increasingly and rightly diminished place in the heart and affections of the believer.

Antony maintains a clear and unsentimental focus on the reality of things and their limitations. For each of those aspects of life threatened, Antony cuts them down to size. In concluding the passage just quoted above, Antony says,

> And therefor hath there euery man Cosyn (as I said before) mich the more nede to thinke vppon this thing many tyme & oft aforehand, ere any such perell fall / & by mich devisyng thervppon before they se cause to fere yt, while the thing shall

[62] *DC* III.iii, 204.28-205.7.

> not apere so terrible vnto them / reason shall bettre entre, & thorow grace workyng with their diligens / engendre & set sure, not a sodayne sleyght affeccion of sufferaunce for godes sake / but by a long contynuaunce, a strong depe rotid habit / not like a ride redy to wave with euery wind / nor like a rotelesse tre scant vpp an end in a lose hepe of light sand, that will with a blast or two be blowen down /[63]

It is here in the final book that the arguments of the philosophers and pagans come to play a prominent role in discussing the values of such goods. For example, Antony says we might love outward goods for two reasons. The first is that they are commodius to us for the present life; the second is that they are of use in meriting the life to come.[64] He then considers just how commodius these external goods of riches, fame, and office are for the present life. The arguments are in great part philosophical. Some are drawn explicitly from pagan authors; Antony cites Juvenal, Terence, and Martial by name. Similar points can be found in Seneca's letters to Lucilius and in Lady Philosophy's arguments in Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*.[65] Does this use of philosophical arguments suggest a slip on More's part having explicitly set the philosophers aside at the beginning of the *Dialogue*? How are we to understand this introduction of philosophers, indeed of pagans, here? We can understand it as theological. In Book I, More established the essentially theological focus: the argument of the work is from faith. The vantage point is that of revelation; it is not philosophy. But the theological vantage point does not exclude philosophy and the writings of pagans; it simply reads them in relation to revelation. And so it is here. The powerful arguments of the philosophers are

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63 *DC* III.iii, 205.7-17.

64 *DC* III.vii, 209.

65 *DC* III.viii-xii, 210-25. The parallels with Seneca and Boethius have yet to be spelled out, a needed complement to the notes of the critical edition.

not free standing. They serve the purpose of rightly ordered charity and as such are subsumed into the revelatory object of theology. Seneca said many of the same things about possessions and even argued for disciplines of self-denial, but the vantage point from which he considers these arguments was that of a stoic without revelation. Sir Thomas can take up the arguments, not as an excursus from his principal task in the *Dialogue*, but as something fully integrated into it. This is confirmed when Vincent insists that no Christian sees external goods solely as commodious to this life, but rather also sees them as well ordered to merit for the next. Antony's prompt response is that the persecution of the Turk will test such claims.[66]

This is the wide exercise of the intellect to see things rightly. The point is not to disparage created goods in some ugly manichean way, but to see them as they truly are so that they can be loved as they are truly worthy of being loved, not in themselves, but as ordered to the highest good, which is God. It is this ordering that is the work of charity informing all the other loves and acts of the Christian.

Yet greater fears grip Vincent, the fears that arise from harm to one's very person: pain, thralldom, imprisonment, and death.[67] In addressing these most bitter fears, Antony turns ever more directly to fostering the love of God in that space being created by the diminishment of the love of created goods. He does this through meditation on the passion of Christ. This requires an intensification of the exercise of the imagination. Although the imagination moves naturally enough to the matters of the sense appetites, it can be disciplined to higher loves. Antony shows how charity orders the imagination such that the very exercise of the imagination becomes

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[66] *DC* III.xiii, 225-27.

[67] Beginning at *DC* III.xvii, 244.

an exercise of charity. We see this most exquisitely in the increasingly intense meditations on Christ. The Christian exercises his imagination to see Christ. He exercises his faith to understand, however inadequately, the Word incarnate. This provokes his hope and still further his love, for he sees what Christ has done and how Christ has loved. In this, the Christian comes to order his life. Christ is the very model for this ordering. How frequently More comes to speak of meditating on the passion of Christ as preparation for persecution.[68] The essential point in these meditations is to see that Christ so suffered willingly. He embraced that suffering willingly. Why? Out of love for sinful man; more particularly, for the Christian who is faithfully meditating on Christ's suffering and passion. The meditation on that love, on that good of being so gratuitously loved by God incarnate, is to draw the will to a further love. The believer must look steadily at this. He must strive for what Antony called a deeply rooted habit, i.e., a virtue of such constant prompt meditation. The point of all of this exercise is, in the end, to fix the Christian's affections on God. That is to say, to bring the Christian to love God in act, not simply in passing or thinly or theoretically.

Then there is the final great culminating act of the imagination in Book III in which the imagination is now turned directly to the threatening Turk. Anthony invokes the Turk in all his terror, at one's doorstep, in one's house. The imagination simply overwhelms the terror of the Turk. It turns to the terrors of hell as the floor opens to reveal Satan and his demons. Hell, in turn, is overwhelmed by the vision of heaven and the triune God that is the very object of charity and whose life is the very goal of the Christian.[69] But it has taken

[68] See, for example, *DC* III.xvii, 244-250 on the pain of Christ, III.xx, 279-80 on the imprisonment of Christ, and III.xxvii, 312-14 on the death of Christ.

[69] *DC* III.xxvii, 315-16.

three books to get here for what is at work is not simply the imagination, it is the unified exercise of the faculties of the Christian soul informed by charity.

To conclude, in what sense can we speak of the *Dialogue* as a work of theology and Thomas More as a theologian?

First is the explicit vantage point of the work which is what is known by faith. Sir Thomas signals immediately in Book I that the work is written from the vantage point of what has been revealed. From this he never flags. The introduction of pagan authors and various kinds of arguments strictly from reason are situated within the context of faith.

This vantage point provides the vision of reality that governs the *Dialogue*. This is the frame or scaffolding that ultimately holds the work together. In theological terms, this is the causal ordering of the science upon which More relies. We see it in many ways throughout the *Dialogue*. That God is wise and good and so governs all of creation including human history stands foundationally as the first cause in the vision. Much follows from this and most importantly for the *Dialogue* that there is indeed a comfort to be had in tribulation. Thus man in his suffering is located within the causal reality of divine providence. This is true not only with regard to the origin of such tribulation but more importantly to its ultimate ordering to God as man's final end. This glorious end exercises its final causality over the whole of the work. The revelation of man as fallen, sinful, and redeemed by Christ is all ordered to that end. The particulars of the analysis of tribulation (e.g., its medicinable value) are always rooted in this vision of reality.

A more focused causal order immediately governs the work, however, and that is the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity in the life of the Christian. These virtues are given by God and, in turn, ordered to him. They work in man but their actuality requires man's cooperation. That actuality follows the proper ordering of the

soul of man according to the powers of intellect and will. In their proper operation under the causal power of the theological virtues, the intellect and will bring increasing order to the passions and the imagination. Such is the theological scaffolding, at least in part, of the *Dialogue of Comfort*.

Still, it is the scaffolding and as important as that is to understanding the *Dialogue*, we can ask further what is that scaffolding supporting? The answer here too is theological, for the theological causal understanding of reality supports the ordered life of the wise man. We have in the *Dialogue* the movement of what is known conceptually into act. Faith leads to hope, faith and hope to charity which in turn informs and governs everything (including faith and hope). The wise man needs to know rightly so as to act rightly. Action must be consequent upon the truth.

The scholastics distinguish speculative and practical sciences. Speculative sciences are ordered to the knowing of the truth; practical sciences are ordered to action. What kind of a science is theology? Aquinas says it is in fact both but principally speculative. It is first and foremost about revealed truth from which the lived Christian life flows. More's *Dialogue of Comfort* is essentially a practical work ordered to act; but it is thoroughly grounded in an understanding of what is known through the revealed truths of faith. The arrival of the Turk may not be the time for a systematic treatise, this may not be what Vincent and his family need, but what they do need must be founded upon those systematically considered truths understood precisely in their integral conceptual unity. There is a steel scaffolding of the work that makes the movement of it possible.

The *Dialogue* is in great part a theological work in the practical order. More's point is not simply an explanation or exposition of a way of seeing things. He wants to foster, in Antony's words, deeply rooted habits, that is virtues, especially the theological virtues. In these is the true comfort of the Christian. Hence the

manifold repetitions of the work, the circling around topics, the returning to already covered themes but in a new key, the reminders of what one already knows, of what has already been covered. Hence, the work is a dialogue, not a treatise. The point is the habit-forming exercise of the powers of the soul, but now ordered to God; or better, the actualization of the Christian soul already so ordered by divine grace, but not lived. The faithful and attentive reader actually exercises the virtues and in that regular exercise might well come to acts of faith, hope, and charity ever more promptly, with ease, and with delight. More has captured the reality of the progress of the soul in its spiritual life. He has captured it in such a way as to help his reader exercise the powers of the soul. It is the right ordering of things.

All of this manifests the wisdom of Thomas More. He manifests in the *Dialogue*, both in the implicit frame as well as the explicit content, a theological mastery of the revealed truths of the faith. In seeing this, we can see more clearly the unity and order of the work as a whole. We can also see what is surely one of the most striking features of the *Dialogue*: it is not just the truths he articulates, but the reality he strives to achieve in the soul of his reader. In all of this we see a work of true theological genius.

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