

QUESTION 27

The Principal Act of Charity, i.e., the Act of Loving

We next have to consider the act of charity and, first of all, the principal act of charity, which is the act of loving (*dilectio*) (question 27), and, second, the other acts or effects that follow upon the act of loving (questions 28-33).

On the first topic there are eight questions: (1) Which is more proper to charity, to be loved or to love (*amari vel amare*)? (2) Is the act of loving (*amare*) the same thing as the act of willing the good (*benevolentia*)? (3) Is God to be loved because of Himself (*propter seipsum*)? (4) Can God be loved directly (*immediate*) in this life? (5) Can God be wholly (*totaliter*) loved? (6) Does the love of God have a mode or fixed quantity (*habet modum*)? (7) Which is better, to love a friend or to love an enemy? (8) Which is better, to love God or to love one's neighbor?

Article 1

Which is more proper to charity, loving or being loved?

It seems that it is more proper to charity to be loved rather than to love:

Objection 1: Charity is found to be better in better individuals. But better individuals ought to be loved. Therefore, it is more proper to charity to be loved.

Objection 2: What is found to be the case in most instances seems to be more fitting for the nature and, as a result, better. But as the Philosopher says in *Ethics* 8, "Many wish to be loved more than to love, and for this reason the lovers of flattery are many." Therefore, it is better to be loved than to love and, as a result, this is more fitting for charity.

Objection 3: That for the sake of which each thing is such-and-such is itself more such-and-such. But it is for the sake of being loved that men love; for in *De Catechizandis Rudibus* Augustine says, "There is no greater incentive for someone to love you than for you to love him first." Therefore, charity consists in being loved more than in loving.

But contrary to this: In *Ethics* 8 the Philosopher says, "Friendship lies more in loving than being loved." But charity is a certain sort of friendship. Therefore, charity consists more in loving than in being loved.

I respond: Loving is appropriate to charity insofar as it is charity. For since charity is a virtue, it has by its essence an inclination to its proper act. However, to be loved is not an act of charity belonging to the one who is loved; instead, the act of charity belongs to one who does the loving, whereas being loved belongs to the one who is loved in accord with the common character of the good, viz., insofar as another is moved toward his good through an act of charity. Hence, it is clear that loving belongs to charity more than being loved does, since what belongs to each thing is what belongs to it in its own right (*per se*) and in its substance rather than what belongs to it through another (*per aliud*).

There are two indications of the claim that loving belongs to charity more than being loved does. First, friends are praised more for loving than for being loved—at the very least, they are blamed if they are loved and do not love. Second, mothers, who love the most, seek more to love than to be loved; for as the Philosopher says in the same book, "Some mothers entrust their children to a nanny—they do love them, to be sure, but they do not seek to be loved in return if it does not happen."

Reply to objection 1: By the very fact that they are better, better individuals are more lovable. But by the very fact that charity is more perfect in them, they are more loving, yet correspondingly loved. For a better individual does not love what is below him less than it is lovable, but someone who is less good does not attain to loving a better individual to the extent that he is lovable.

Reply to objection 2: As the Philosopher says in the same place, "Men want to be loved insofar as they want to be honored." For just as honor is bestowed on someone as a sort of testimony to the

goodness that exists in the one who is honored, so by the fact that someone is loved some good is shown to exist in him, since only what is good is lovable. So, then, men seek to be loved and to be honored for the sake of something else, viz., for the manifestation of the good that exists in the one who is loved. But those who have charity seek to love in their own right, since this is the very good of charity, just as every act of a virtue is the good of that virtue. Hence, it belongs more to charity to want to love than to want to be loved.

Reply to objection 3: Some love for the sake of being loved, not in such a way that being loved is the aim of their loving, but because being loved is a sort of path that induces a man to love.

Article 2

Is loving, insofar as it is the act of charity, nothing other than willing the good?

It seems that *loving (amare)*, insofar as it is the act of charity, is nothing other than *willing the good (benevolentia)*:

Objection 1: In *Rhetoric 2* the Philosopher says, “To love is to will good things for someone.” But this is to will the good (*benevolentia*). Therefore, the act of charity is nothing other than willing the good.

Objection 2: An act belongs to what its habit belongs to. But as was explained above (q. 24, a. 1), the habit of charity exists in the power of the will. Therefore, the act of charity is likewise an act of the will. But it tends toward nothing other than the good, which is to will the good. Therefore, the act of charity is nothing other than willing the good.

Objection 3: In *Ethics 9* the Philosopher posits five things that belong to friendship: the first is that a man wills the good for his friend; the second is that he wills him to exist and to live (*velit ei esse et vivere*); the third is that he shares his life with him; the fourth is that he chooses the same things; the fifth is that they grieve together and rejoice together. But the first two pertain to willing the good (*benevolentia*). Therefore, the first act of charity is willing the good.

But contrary to this: In the same book the Philosopher says, “Willing the good is neither friendship nor loving (*amatio*); instead, it is a source (*principium*) of friendship.” But as was explained above (q. 23, a. 1), charity is friendship. Therefore, willing the good (*benevolentia*) is not the same thing as loving (*dilectio*).

I respond: Willing the good (*benevolentia*) is properly said to be an act of the will by which we will the good for another. Now this act of the will differs from an act of loving (*differt a actuali amore*) both (a) when the latter exists in the sentient appetite and also (b) when it exists in the intellectual appetite, i.e., the will.

For the love that exists *in the sentient appetite* is a passion. Now every passion inclines one with a sort of impetus toward its object. However, the passion of love is such that it does not arise suddenly, but instead arises through a constant inspection of the thing that is loved. And this is why, in *Ethics 9*, the Philosopher, in showing the difference between willing the good and the love that is a passion, says that willing the good does not involve reaching out and desiring, i.e., it does not have any impetus of inclination; instead, a man wills the good for another solely by a judgment of reason. Similarly, this type of love arises from familiarity, whereas willing the good sometimes arises suddenly, as happens to us at a boxing match when we will victory for one of the boxers.

On the other hand, the love that exists *in the intellectual appetite* likewise differs from willing the good. For this sort of love implies a certain union of affection on the part of the lover with the one who is loved, viz., insofar as the lover thinks of the one who is loved as being in some sense one with himself or as belonging to himself, and so he is moved toward him. By contrast, willing the good is a simple act

of the will by which we will the good for someone even without presupposing the sort of union of affection just mentioned.

So, then, willing the good (*benevolentia*) is included in the act of loving (*dilectio*) insofar as it is an act of charity, but the act of loving (*dilectio sive amor*) adds the affection of union. And this is the reason why the Philosopher says that willing the good is a *source* of friendship.

Reply to objection 1: In this place the Philosopher defines love not by giving its entire nature (*totam rationem ipsius*), but by giving something that belongs to its nature and in which the act of loving is especially clear.

Reply to objection 2: The act of loving (*dilectio*) is an act of the will that tends toward the good but is accompanied by a union with the one who is loved—something that is not implied by willing the good.

Reply to objection 3: What the Philosopher says in this place is relevant to friendship to the extent that it arises from the love that someone has for himself, as he says in the same place—so that, namely, one does all these things to his friend as to himself. This pertains to the affective union mentioned above.

Article 3

Is God loved out of charity because of Himself or because of something else?

It seems that God is loved out of charity not because of Himself but because of something else:

Objection 1: In a homily Gregory says, “From the things that the mind knows it learns to love what is unknown.” But he is calling intelligible and divine things ‘unknown’ and things that can be sensed ‘known’. Therefore, God is to be loved because of other things.

Objection 2: Love follows upon cognition. But God is known through another—this according to Romans 1:20 (“The invisible things of God are clearly seen, having been understood through the things that have been made”). Therefore, He is likewise to be loved because of another and not because of Himself.

Objection 3: As a Gloss on Matthew 1:2 says, “Hope generates charity.” Fear likewise leads to charity, as Augustine says in *Super Primum Canonicum Ioannis Tractatus*. But hope looks for something to be acquired from God, whereas fear withdraws from something that can be inflicted by God. Therefore, it seems that God is to be loved because of some hoped for good or because of some evil to be feared. Therefore, He is not to be loved because of Himself.

But contrary to this: In *De Doctrina Christiana* 1 Augustine says, “To enjoy is to adhere to someone by love because of himself.” But as he says in the same book, God is to be enjoyed. Therefore, God is to be loved because of Himself.

I respond: The preposition ‘because of’ or ‘for the sake of’ (*propter*) implies a relation to a cause. Now there are four genera of causes, viz., *final*, *formal*, *efficient*, and *material*; in addition, a *material disposition*, which is not a cause absolutely speaking, but rather a cause in a certain respect (*secundum quid*), is traced back to the material cause. And it is with respect to these four genera of causes that something is said to be loved because of one thing or another:

- (a) with respect to the genus *final cause*, in the way that we love medicine because of health;
- (b) with respect to the genus *formal cause*, in the way that we love a man because of his virtue—since, namely, by his virtue he is formally good and hence lovable;
- (c) with respect to the genus *efficient cause*, in the way that we love certain individuals because they are the children of *this* father;
- (d) with respect to a disposition that is traced back to the genus *material cause*, as when we are said

to love someone because of something that has disposed us toward loving him—for instance, because of certain benefits that have been received—even if, after we have already begun to love him, we come to love our friend not because of those benefits, but because of his virtue.

Hence, in the first three ways we love God for Himself and not because of anything else. For He is not ordered toward anything else as His end; instead, He Himself is the ultimate end of all things. Nor is He informed by anything else in order to be good; instead, His substance is goodness itself, according to which all things are good as likenesses (*exemplariter*). Nor, again, does His goodness exist in Him from another; instead, it is from Him that goodness exists in all other things.

However, in the fourth way He can be loved because of something else—namely, since we are disposed by certain other things to progress in our love of God—for instance, by the benefits that we receive from Him or, again, by the rewards that are hoped for or by the punishments that we intend to avoid through Him.

Reply to objection 1: From the things that the mind knows it learns to love what is unknown, not because the things known are the reason for loving the unknown things in the manner of a formal cause or final cause or efficient cause, but because through the things that are known a man is disposed to love what is unknown.

Reply to objection 2: The cognition of God is, to be sure, acquired from other things, but afterwards, once God is known, He is known not through other things but through Himself—this according to John 4:42 (“We now believe not because of what you told us: for we have seen for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the savior of the world”).

Reply to objection 3: As is clear from what was said above (q. 17, a. 8 and q. 19, a. 7), hope and fear lead to charity in the manner of dispositions.

Article 4

Can God be loved directly in this life?

It seems that God cannot be loved directly (*immediate*) in this life:

Objection 1: As Augustine says in *De Trinitate* 10, “What is unknown cannot be loved.” But we do not have a direct cognition of God in this life, since “we see now through a mirror, darkly,” as 1 Corinthians 13:12 says. Therefore, neither can we love Him directly.

Objection 2: One who is incapable of what is lesser is incapable of what is greater. But it is greater to love God than to know Him, since, as 1 Corinthians 6:17 puts it, one who adheres to God through love becomes “one spirit with Him.” But a man cannot have a direct cognition of God. Therefore, *a fortiori*, he cannot love Him directly.

Objection 3: A man is cut off from God through sin—this according to Isaiah 59:2 (“Your sins have caused a division between you and your God”). But sin exists in the will more than in the intellect. Therefore, a man is less able to love God directly than to know Him directly.

But contrary to this: As is clear from 1 Corinthians 13:9ff, since the cognition of God is mediated, it is called “dark” and it “passes away” in heaven. But, as 1 Corinthians 13:8 says, “Charity does not pass away.” Therefore, charity in this life (*caritas viae*) adheres directly to God.

I respond: As was explained above (q. 26, a. 1), the act of a cognitive power is perfected by the fact that the thing known exists in the knower, whereas the act of an appetitive power is perfected by the fact that the appetite is inclined toward the thing itself. And so the movement of an appetitive power is toward the things in accord with the condition of the things themselves, whereas the act of a cognitive power is in accord with the mode of the one having the cognition.

Now the very order of things is in its own right such that God is knowable and lovable because of

Himself (*propter seipsum*), insofar as He is by His essence (*essentialiter*) truth itself and goodness itself, through which other things are both known and loved. But as regards us, since our cognition arises from sensation, the things that are first knowable are those that are closer to the senses, and the ultimate terminus of cognition lies in what is maximally removed from the senses.

Accordingly, one should reply that (a) the act of love (*dilectio*), which is the act of an appetitive power, even in this life tends first toward God and then flows from Him to other things, and that, accordingly, (b) the act of charity loves God directly and loves other things through God (*mediante Deo*).

By contrast, it is the opposite with cognition—viz., we know God through other things as a cause is known through its effects, or else in the mode of preeminence or of negation (*vel per modum eminentiae aut negationis*), as is clear from Dionysius in *De Divinis Nominibus*.

Reply to objection 1: Even though what is unknown cannot be loved, nonetheless, it is not necessary for the order of cognition to be the same as the order of love. For love is the terminus of cognition. And so where cognition ceases, viz., in the thing itself that is known through another, love is able to begin immediately.

Reply to objection 2: Since the love of God is something greater than the cognition of God, especially in the state of the present life (*maxime secundum statum viae*), it presupposes the cognition of God. And since cognition does not come to rest in created things but tends through them toward something else, love begins with this cognition and through it flows to other things—in the manner of a circle—as long as (a) the cognition, beginning from creatures, tends toward God and (b) the love, beginning from God as the ultimate end, flows toward creatures.

Reply to objection 3: The aversion from God that comes through sin is removed by charity and not by cognition alone. And so it is charity that, by loving, joins the soul directly to God by a bond of spiritual union.

Article 5

Can God be wholly loved?

It seems that God cannot be wholly (*totaliter*) loved:

Objection 1: Love follows upon cognition. But God cannot be wholly known by us, since this would be to comprehend Him. Therefore, He cannot be wholly loved by us.

Objection 2: As is clear from Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, love is a sort of union. But a man's heart cannot be wholly united with God, since, as 1 John 3:20 says, "God is greater than our heart. Therefore, God cannot be wholly loved.

Objection 3: God wholly loves Himself. Therefore, if He is wholly loved by someone else, then someone else loves God as much as He loves Himself. But this is absurd. Therefore, God cannot be wholly loved by any creature.

But contrary to this: Deuteronomy 6:5 says, "You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart."

I respond: Since love is thought of as lying between the lover and what is loved, when one asks whether God can be wholly loved, there are three ways in which the question can be taken:

(a) In one way, insofar as the mode of totality is referred back to the entity that is loved. And in this sense God is to be wholly loved, since a man ought to love the whole that belongs to God.

(b) In the second way, the question can be understood so that the totality is referred back to the one doing the loving. And in this sense, too, God ought to be wholly loved, since a man ought to love God with his whole strength (*ex toto posse*), and he ought to order whatever he has toward the love of God—this according to Deuteronomy 6:5 ("You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart").

(c) In the third way, the question can be understood in accord with a comparison of the one loving to the thing loved, so that it means: Is the mode of the one who is loving equal to the mode of the thing loved? And this is impossible. For since each thing is lovable to the extent that it is good, God, whose goodness is infinite, is infinitely lovable, whereas no creature can love God to an infinite degree. For every power that belongs to a creature—whether that power is natural or infused—is finite.

Reply to objection 1 and objection 2 and objection 3 and to the argument for the contrary: The replies to the objections are clear from what has been said. For the first three objections go through for the third way, and the argument for the contrary goes through for the second way.

Article 6

Is there some mode or determinate quantity of the love of God that should be had?

It seems that there is some mode or determinate quantity (*modus*) of the love of God that should be had:

Objection 1: As is clear from Augustine in *De Natura Boni*, the nature of the good (*ratio boni*) consists in “mode, species, and order” (*in modo, specie et ordine*). But the love of God is the best thing in a man—this according to Colossians 3:14 (“Above all things have charity”). Therefore, the love of God should have a mode or determinate quantity.

Objection 2: In *De Moribus Ecclesiae* Augustine says, “Tell me, I ask you, what is the mode of loving? For I fear being either more inflamed or less inflamed with desire and love for my Lord than I ought to be.” But it would be useless for anyone to seek a mode unless there were some mode of the love of God. Therefore, there is a mode or determinate quantity of the love of God.

Objection 3: In *Super Genesim ad Litteram* 4 Augustine says, “Mode (*modus*) is what its own proper measure (*propria mensura*) fixes for each thing.” But the measure of the human will, as well as of exterior action, is reason. Therefore, just as there has to be a quantity fixed by reason in the case of the exterior effect of charity—this according to Romans 12:1 (“... your reasonable service ...”)—so, too, the interior act of loving God must itself have a determinate quantity.

But contrary to this: In *De Diligendo Deum* Bernard says, “The cause of loving God is God; the mode or determinate quantity is to love without mode or determinate quantity.”

I respond: As is clear from the passage just cited from Augustine, ‘mode’ (*modus*) implies a certain determination of measure. Now this determination is found both (a) in the measure and (b) in the thing measured, though in different ways.

In the *measure* it is found *in its essence (essentialiter)*, since a measure is in its own right (*secundum seipsam*) such that it determines and moderates other things, whereas in *the things that are measured* the measure is found in relation to another (*secundum aliud*)—that is, insofar as those things attain to the measure. And so within the measure nothing can be taken as unmodified (*immodificatum*), whereas the thing that is measured is such that unless it attains to the measure, it is unmodified—regardless of whether it falls short of the measure or exceeds the measure.

Now in all desirable and doable things the measure is *the end*, since, as is clear from the Philosopher in *Physics* 2, we must take from the end the proper conception of what we desire and what we do. And so the end has a mode or quantity in its own right (*secundum seipsam*), whereas the means to the end have their mode or quantity from being proportioned to the end. And so, as the Philosopher says in *Politics* 1, “In every art the desire for the end is without a limit or terminus, whereas there is a limit to the desire for the means to the end.” For instance, a physician does not impose any limit on health, but effects it as completely as he can. By contrast, he does impose a limit on the medicine. For he does not give as much medicine as he can, but instead doles out the medicine in proportion to health; if the

medicine were to exceed that proportion or fall short of it, then it would be immoderate.

Now the end of all human action and affection is the love of God, through which, as was explained above (q. 17, a. 6 and q. 23, a. 6), we especially attain to the ultimate end. And so with the love of God there cannot be a mode (*modus*) in the way that a mode exists in *a thing that is measured*, where it is possible for there to be too much or too little (*plus et minus*). Rather, with the love of God the mode is found as it exists in *a measure*, in which there cannot be excess; instead, the greater the degree to which the rule (*regula*) is attained, the better it is. And so the more God is loved, the better the love is.

Reply to objection 1: What is *per se* is better than what is *through another (per aliud)*. And so the goodness of a measure that has a mode or quantity *per se* is better than the goodness of the thing measured, which has a mode or quantity through another. And so charity, which has a mode or quantity in the way that a measure does, is likewise preeminent over the other virtues, which have a mode or fixed quantity in the way that things that are measured do.

Reply to objection 2: In the same place Augustine adds that the mode or quantity of loving God is that He be loved with one's whole heart, i.e., that He be loved as much as He can be. And this has to do with the mode or quantity that is appropriate for a measure.

Reply to objection 3: An affection whose object is subject to the judgment of reason is to be measured by reason. But the object of the love of God—that is, God—exceeds the judgment of reason. And He is not measured by reason, but instead exceeds reason.

Nor is there a parallel between the interior act of charity and its exterior acts. For the interior act of charity has the character of an end, since a man's ultimate good consists in his soul's adhering to God—this according to Psalm 72:28 (“It is good for me to adhere to God”). By contrast, the exterior acts are, as it were, ordered toward the end, and so they are to be measured both by charity and by reason.

Article 7

Is it more meritorious to love one's enemy than to love one's friend?

It seems that it is more meritorious to love one's enemy than to love one's friend:

Objection 1: Matthew 5:46 says, “If you love those who love you, what reward will you have?” Therefore, to love one's friend does not merit a reward. But as is shown in the same place, to love one's enemy does merit a reward. Therefore, it is more meritorious to love one's enemies than to love one's friends.

Objection 2: The greater the charity something proceeds from, the more meritorious it is. But as Augustine says in *Enchiridion*, to love one's enemy belongs to “the perfect children of God,” whereas to love one's friend belongs also to imperfect charity. Therefore, to love one's enemy is of greater merit than to love one's friend.

Objection 3: Where there is a greater effort for the good, there seems to be greater merit, since, as 1 Corinthians 3:8 says, “Each one will receive his own reward according to his labor.” But a man needs a greater effort for loving his enemy than for loving his friend, since it is more difficult. Therefore, it seems that to love one's enemy is more meritorious than to love one's friend.

But contrary to this: What is better is more meritorious. But it is better to love one's friend, since it is better to love someone who is better. But one's friend, who loves, is better than one's enemy, who hates. Therefore, to love one's friend is more meritorious than to love one's enemy.

I respond: As was explained above (q. 25, a. 1), the reason for loving one's neighbor out of charity is God. Therefore, when it is asked which is better, or more meritorious, to love one's friend or to love one's enemy, there are two ways in which these acts of love can be compared: (a) on the part of the neighbor who is loved and (b) on the part of the reason for which he is loved.

In the first way, the love of one's friend surpasses the love of one's enemy. For a friend is both better and more closely connected; hence, he is a more fitting 'matter' for love and, because of this, the act of loving that passes into this matter is better. Hence, its opposite is, accordingly, worse; for it is worse to hate one's friend than to hate one's enemy.

In the second way, however, the love of one's enemy is preeminent, and this for two reasons. First, there can be some reason other than God for the love of one's friend, but God is the only reason for love of one's enemy. Second, assuming that both are loved because of God, the love of God is proven stronger when a man's mind extends to more remote things—more specifically, right up to the love of one's enemy—just as the power of a fire is shown to be stronger by the fact that it diffuses its heat to more remote places. Again, the love of God is shown to be stronger to the extent that we accomplish more difficult tasks because of it, just as, once again, the power of a fire is stronger to the extent that it is able to ignite matter that is less combustible.

But just as the same fire acts more strongly on nearby things than on remote things, so, too, charity loves more fervently those who are connected with one more than those who are remote. And on this score, the love of one's friends, considered in its own right, is more fervent and better than the love of one's enemies.

Reply to objection 1: Our Lord should be understood to be speaking *per se*. For the love of one's friends has no reward in God's eyes when they are loved solely because they are one's friends, and this seems to happen when one's friends are loved in such a way that one's enemies are not loved. However, the love of one's friends is meritorious if they are loved because of God and not just because they are one's friends.

Reply to objection 2 and objection 3 and the argument for the contrary: The reply to these objections is clear from what has been said. For the next two arguments go through on the part of the reason for loving, whereas the last argument goes through on the part of those who are loved.

Article 8

Is it more meritorious to love one's neighbor than to love God?

It seems that it is more meritorious to love one's neighbor than to love God:

Objection 1: What the Apostle prefers (*magis elegit*) seems to be more meritorious. But the Apostle prefers love of neighbor over love of God—this according to Romans 9:3 (“I wished myself to be cursed by Christ for the sake of my brothers”). Therefore, it is more meritorious to love one's neighbor than to love God.

Objection 2: As has been explained (a. 7), it seems less meritorious in some sense to love one's friend. But God is especially one's friend, who “loved us first,” as 1 John 4:10 says. Therefore, it seems less meritorious to love Him.

Objection 3: What is more difficult seems to be more virtuous and more meritorious, since, as *Ethics 2* says, “Virtue has to do with what is difficult and good.” But it is easier to love God than to love one's neighbor, both because (a) all things love God naturally and also because (b) in God there is nothing that is not to be loved—something that is not the case with one's neighbor. Therefore, it is more meritorious to love one's neighbor than to love God.

But contrary to this: That because of which each thing is such-and-such is itself more such-and-such. But the love of one's neighbor is meritorious only because one's neighbor is loved because of God. Therefore, the love of God is more meritorious than the love of one's neighbor.

I respond: This comparison can be understood in two ways:

In one way, insofar as the two sorts of love are considered *separately*. And in that case there is no

doubt that the love of God is more meritorious. For a reward is due for it because of itself, since the ultimate reward is to enjoy God, toward whom the movement of the love of God tends. Hence, in John 14:21 a reward is promised to one who loves God: “If anyone loves me, he will be loved by my Father, and I will manifest myself to him.”

Second, the comparison can be considered insofar as ‘love of God’ is taken to mean that God alone is being loved, whereas ‘love of neighbor’ is taken to mean that one’s neighbor is loved because of God. And in this sense the love of one’s neighbor includes the love of God, whereas the love of God does not include the love of one’s neighbor. Hence, there will be a comparison of the perfect love of God, which also extends to one’s neighbor, with a love of God that is insufficient and imperfect by reason of the fact that “this commandment we have from God: that he who loves God should also love his brother” (1 John 4:21). And in this sense the love of one’s neighbor is preeminent.

Reply to objection 1: According to one explanation in a Gloss, the Apostle did not wish this—namely, that he should be separated from Christ for the sake of his brothers—when he was in the state of grace, but instead he had wished it when he was in the state of unbelief. Hence, he is not to be imitated on this point.

A possible alternative reply, following Chrysostom in *De Compunctione*, is that this passage does not show that the Apostle loved his neighbor more than God, but instead shows that he loved God more than himself. For he willed to be deprived of the enjoyment of God for a time (which pertains to his love of himself) in order that God’s honor might be procured among his neighbors (which pertains to the love of God).

Reply to objection 2: The love of one’s friend is sometimes less meritorious because the friend is loved because of himself, and so the love falls short of the genuine reason for the friendship of charity, which is God. And so the fact that God is loved because of Himself does not diminish the merit; instead, it constitutes the whole character of merit.

Reply to objection 3: It is the good of virtue, rather than its difficulty, that contributes more to the character of merit. Hence, it does not have to be the case that whatever is more difficult is more meritorious; rather, what is more meritorious is what is more difficult in such a way that it is also better.