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ARTICLES

DISCUSSION

BOOK SYMPOSIUM

Roure, Marie-Louise. 1962. "Le traité des propositions insolubles de Jean de Celaya." *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen age* 29: 235–337.
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Practicing Hope

Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung

Abstract: In this essay, I consider how the theological virtue of hope might be practiced. I will first explain Thomas Aquinas's account of this virtue, including its structural relation to the passion of hope, its opposing vices, and its relationship to the friendship of charity. Then, using narrative and character analysis from the film *The Shawshank Redemption*, I examine a range of hopeful and proto-hopeful practices concerning both the goods one hopes for and the power one relies on to attain those goods. In particular, I show how the film's picture of the role friends and friendship play in catalyzing hope is a compelling metaphor for Christian hope's reliance on God.

Is hope a *virtue*? If so, then it is meant to be *practiced*. Thomas Aquinas calls virtue, whether acquired or infused, an "operative habit," that is, a disposition ordered toward *acting* well—since even infused virtues must be exercised.[1] In the words of Benedict XVI, "The one who hopes *lives* differently" (2007, sect. 2; emphasis added).

Contemporary usage of the term 'hope' usually refers to a feeling, a wish, or an optimistic disposition toward the future. While there is nothing wrong with this usage, and while psychological states and personality traits may certainly affect an agent's practice, I want to consider hope as a virtue—that is, as a lasting feature of an agent's character. To recover the notion of hope as a virtue and to illustrate how it might be practiced as such, I will consider Thomas Aquinas's treatment of the theological virtue of hope in dialogue with the film *The Shawshank Redemption*. The analogues of hope in the film, along with actual examples of prison life, highlight two points: first, that hope is essential for human flourishing, and second, that practices of theological hope in particular are relational. Specifically, they are embedded and encouraged especially within friendships, of which friendship with God is an exemplary kind.

'Hope' is commonly used to mean wishing for or wanting something whose future attainment is uncertain. Aquinas's account of the virtue of hope likewise takes hope to involve a desire for a future good that is not yet attained, but it is also more than this. The theological virtue of hope in

[1] In what follows, all citations from the *Summa theologiae* are from Aquinas (1981).

the *Summa theologiae* concerns a desired future good whose attainment requires a habitual willingness to depend on another—namely, God. In this essay, I will show how the character of Ellis Boyd "Red" Redding (played by Morgan Freeman) in *The Shawshank Redemption* provides an analogue of this virtue and points to practices of hope that involve reliance on others.[2] Before examining Red's hope, however, I will argue that Andy Dufresne, the film's main character, fails to exhibit the dependence characteristic of theological hope, although his character still offers hints of what the object of hope must be like, whether it is desired inside or outside of prison. Using the film's narrative, "lived" examples, I will show that a deeper spiritual conception of hope illuminates dimensions of the human quest for goodness obscured by the current, often casual use of the term. Interpreting the film's characters in light of Aquinas's analysis of hope also illuminates a range of hopeful and proto-hopeful practices.

In this essay, I will first explain Aquinas's account of the theological virtue, including its structural similarity to the passion of hope, its opposing vices, and its relationship to the friendship of charity. Second, I will evaluate Andy's claim to hope, arguing that while it falls short of the theological virtue, both Andy's character and the film's treatment of the goods Andy loves and longs for still anticipates important features of virtuous hope and its practice. Third, I will consider the ways in which Red's hope can be read as a picture of Christian hope. In the last section, I will draw conclusions from this dialogue between Aquinas and *The Shawshank Redemption* about practices characteristic of those with the virtue of hope.[3]

1 Aquinas on Hope

1.1 Passions and Virtues

Aquinas's accounts of the virtues are built on his moral psychology in the questions on the passions. Hope—the passion and the virtue—therefore share a basic structure, the structure of desire.

Hope is the middle movement in love's threefold logical structure (Lombardo 2011, 55). After envisioning an object as "good for us" (*complacentia*), the appetite can move toward that good with longing (*concupiscentia*), as a future good to be attained. This state of the appetite—desire as motion toward the end—essentially characterizes the passion of hope (*ST* I–II 40.1).[4] The last moment in the threefold structure of love is "enjoyment" (*fruitio*), which is Augustine's and Aquinas's name for delight in the object as actually and finally possessed. This psychological structure is found at the level of both the sensory and the rational appetites. Thus the virtue of hope will be a disposition to desire a loveable good and to move toward it until one possesses it and one's desire is finally at rest.

Unlike other uncomplicated desires, hope comes in to play when future possession of the good yearned for is not only uncertain, but when its attainment also involves some difficulty or taxing effort.[5] In Aquinas's terms, hope is desire for an *arduous* future good, which is difficult but possible to obtain (*ST* I–II 40.1). (The common use of hope as 'desire' or 'desire for something of uncertain outcome' or even 'wish' tracks Aquinas but and does not typically include this further feature.) Hope's object is thus complex; its desire must face and overcome difficulties, while maintaining the possible attainment of that good as its motivational focus.[6] Whether and how a desired but difficult good is possible to obtain turns out to be the key to his conception of hope as a theological virtue.

If the good one seeks seems possible to get, even with great effort and struggle, then one feels hope. On the other hand, despair looms when the difficulty seems too great to overcome, and the good, therefore, does *not* seem attainable. This is why having the energy to persevere in one's pursuit of something good and showing eagerness to attain it are signs of hope, while resignation and inactivity are characteristic of those who despair, and complacency is characteristic of those with presumption.[7]

The passions are responses to what the agent perceives, so that one's perception of the object (sometimes different from the reality of the matter) shapes the agent's appetitive reaction.[8] The important point is that things that shape one's perception of a situation can be pivotal for maintaining or abandoning hope. Hopeful desires, in turn, can further shape one's perception of a situation, producing a kind of virtuous circle. On Aquinas's account, the virtue of faith enlarges one's vision of the good and works in tandem with the virtue of hope to stretch one's confidence that one will attain that good.[9]

[2] In this essay I consider the story as retold in the film, not the original short story by Stephen King.

[3] I do not intend to offer an exhaustive list of such practices, but only those suggested by the dialogue between the film and Aquinas, especially friendship. A study of, say, Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* or the film *Glory* would no doubt generate additional examples of practices.

[4] Socrates, in his conversation with Agathon, makes the same point in Plato's *Symposium*. Desire is for a good that one lacks and wants to possess. He also argues that even when one does possess some good one can still desire it *if* one's desire is to have the good as one's own "forever" and one still lacks—at the present moment—the future possession of this good (1979, 199D–200E, 206A).

[5] The uncertainty of attaining the object is not a feature of the theological virtue, nor is it necessary as a feature of Aquinas's conception of the passion, but inscrutability is a common feature of situations in which hope is in play.

[6] It thus also differs from the passion of daring, which is caused by hope, but has the attack and removal of an approaching *evil obstacle* to something good as its motivational focus.

[7] Robert Miner (2009, 226–227) makes the point that the passion of hope "promotes activity."

[8] Aquinas is well aware (and insists, in his discussion of prudence's relation to the moral virtues) that this dynamic goes both ways: one's appetitive orientation and formation also shapes one's grasp of the world.

[9] On the close relationship between faith and hope, see also Benedict XVI's analysis of Hebrews 11:1 (2007, sections 2 and 8).

Hope comes in two forms—a sense of possibility based on one's *own* skill or power, and a sense of possibility based on help from others who are able and willing to assist one.[10] Aquinas's concept of hope will not make a virtue of human achievement or individualistic self-reliance. Even in his analysis of the virtue of magnanimity, the virtue that perfects the passion of hope, he transforms Aristotle's account by arguing that a virtuous assessment of one's own power requires a supernatural perspective, which includes regarding one's own power itself as a gift from God.[11] The resources one believes one has—everything from one's own finances and physical strength to psychological resources such as the support of one's friends—make a great deal of difference when it comes to fostering and maintaining hope. The theological virtue of hope specifically relies on both the divine power (God's ability to help those who need it) and the divine mercy (God's willingness to help those who do not deserve it).

As a theological virtue, hope relates a human being to God in two ways: as the end hoped for (final cause) *and* the essential means to that end (efficient cause). The one hoping desires the good of a relationship of loving union with God and desires God's help to attain it. Cultivating hope as a theological virtue will therefore require seeking one's own fulfillment or happiness as a good that is possible to realize through the help of another. It will require learning to rely on another for help. For Aquinas, hope is a virtue of acknowledged dependence and learned trust. Further, the goal of hoping is not a good that is solely one's own: it is a relationship, a good that one shares with another.

1.2 Vices Opposed to Hope

The vices opposed to hope—despair and presumption—both close off one's yearning for a possible future good by treating the good as other than possible to attain. They do so in opposite ways. Presumption's stance toward the good assumes that its attainment is already actual, rather than being a future possibility; appetitively speaking, the presumptuous person is identical to one who has the good already in his or her possession. In the vice of despair, on the other hand, the appetite responds to the future good as if it is impossible to attain and is closed off forever.

[10] "A thing may be possible in two ways, namely by one's own power, or by another's. Accordingly when one hopes to obtain something by one's own power, one is not said to wait for it, but simply to hope for it. Properly speaking, one is said to await that which one hopes to get by another's help as though to await (*expectare*) implied keeping one's eyes on another (*ex alio spectare*). . . . Therefore this movement of hope is sometimes called expectation" (*ST* I–II 40.2). When discussing the theological virtue, Aquinas says: "Now a thing is possible for us in two ways: First, by ourselves, and secondly, by means of others. . . . Therefore, whenever as we hope for anything as being possible to us by means of the divine assistance, our hope attains God himself, on whose help it leans" (*ST* II–II 17.1).

[11] For a fuller discussion of Aquinas on magnanimity, see DeYoung (2004), Miner (2009, 227–229), and Herdt (2008, 77–80).

Josef Pieper argues that both despair and presumption trade on a lived denial of the human condition as a "*status viatoris*"—that is, a condition of being on the way to one's ultimate end, but not there yet (1986, 47). This is the human condition in this life because union with God is possible now but not yet completely possessed. Both the one who presumes and the one who despairs live as if the human person had already and permanently arrived at one final end or another. In presumption, one's appetite rests prematurely as though one is already eternally blessed; in despair, one's will acquiesces to being already damned (*ST* II–II 18.2-3).[12] The vice of despair thus enacts an internally contradictory condition of "living death."[13] Aquinas implicitly characterizes both presumption and despair as types of false rest. To hope is therefore to live in accord with the truth of the human condition. One is still on the way toward something greater, something future, and something that draws one beyond oneself and one's current position. Human lives ought to be marked by desire for a good toward which they must continue to move (and be moved).

The difference between presumption and hope, therefore, does not consist primarily in the degree of cognitive certainty about one's attainment of the end. After all, on Aquinas's account, the hopeful one possesses the certitude of faith: she knows that, should she continue to hope and strive for her supernatural end, she can be assured—on the testimony of God, not because she sees this truth for herself—of God's assistance in helping her reach that end (*ST* II–II 18.4).[14] Insofar as the hoped-for good depends on God's abilities and character, then, the end is "completely assured" (Roberts 2003, 282).[15] As long as that good is not actually, fully, or permanently present, however, the will of one who hopes must still incline and move one toward it.

Although the film is silent about the theological dimensions of the human predicament, the prisoners in *Shawshank* struggle with despair, and many

[12] If one names despair itself as a terminus, the progression toward despair should not be counted as despair itself, but only a movement of the will toward such a disposition or stance. For more discussion, see DeYoung (Forthcoming).

[13] Despair involves living a contradiction in which one has a natural desire for one's ultimate end while one simultaneously cuts oneself off from desiring the necessary means to get it. Both disordered stances of the will—presumption and despair—further imply that the divine assistance, as the description under which God is the object of hope, is no longer possible for oneself.

[14] See *ST* II–II 4.8 for Aquinas's explanation of the certitude characteristic of faith. I take it to be the case that this cognitive condition may come apart from the subjective feelings of assurance on the part of the one hoping.

[15] Roberts takes the end of hope to be "a kingdom of justice and love in which God is honored as god and human relations are peaceful and mutually benevolent." If one takes hope's end to be the shalom of the new creation, this is a "completely assured prospect." Aquinas's account, however, makes one's own personal friendship with God the object (presuming that charity with God will then include the shalom that Roberts describes), in which case hope depends not only on God's power and mercy but on the willingness of the one hoping to receive them.

make it a way of life.[16] Their practices are shaped accordingly; their gaze is directed down at the floor, not upward and outward; their shoulders are bent; their tasks are mere busywork and dull chores; they have no joy; and their laughter is harsh. Many inmates with life sentences will attest that their main spiritual struggle is to resist despair, lest they merely "do time" until the inevitability of death. They struggle with despair not only because of their guilt, but because they see no possibility of new life beyond their current state of punishment. Contrast the Shawshank prisoners' response with the spirituals of African American slaves in the antebellum South. The prisoners are resigned and they do not sing, while the slaves' songs lament their present sufferings and keen with yearning for future glory.[17] Their hymnody thus itself seems to be a practice of hope, as illustrated in the prebattle campfire scene in another Morgan Freeman film, *Glory* (1989).

1.3 Developing Hope

Both Aquinas and *The Shawshank Redemption* picture hope as an enduring task, something to cultivate and sustain over a lifetime. This picture fits the dispositional and practical profile of a virtue better than a wish or feeling. The developmental nature of the virtue is clearest when Aquinas distinguishes two forms of the theological virtue—imperfect and unformed, in contrast to perfect and formed.[18] Unformed hope is the habit of relying on God's assistance to attain one's ultimate end for one's own sake. In unformed hope, love of self is therefore the ground of motivation. God is valued as an assistant, useful for the sake of achieving something the one hoping wants for herself. Hope is problematic and imperfect if it stays in this state, without being "formed" or perfected further by charity, which Aquinas defines as friendship or union with God.[19]

Virtue—as a disposition formed and perfected through characteristic acts—is typically cultivated in stages, and realistically so. A child learns to love virtue for its own sake not by beginning with virtuous motivations, but by being given rewards and punishments, incentives and disincentives to perform virtuous deeds—deeds that are not desired (at this early stage) for their own sake. The goal, however, is to progress beyond this initial stage, through habituation and practices that gradually discipline the passions and

[16] Of course they need not be aware of or articulate about the nature of their existential commitment. Many thinkers from Kierkegaard to Pascal to Dostoyevsky recognize that one can be in despair and not be conscious of it.

[17] This is one reason why the film's music scene is so powerful. Despair deliberately shuts out from one's gaze any beauty that might shake one out of one's condition and teach one to yearn again for something more. In a conversation about this point with Robert C. Miner, he has pointed out that there is likewise no music in Dante's *Inferno*—only noise.

[18] Formed by charity, that is: charity is the "root and mother" of all perfect (i.e., infused) virtues; for Aquinas this means it is their formal cause (*ST* II–II 23.8).

[19] See also Aquinas (*ST* II–II 19) and DeYoung (2012) on the gift of fear associated with the development of the theological virtue of hope.

form the intellect and will. Through practice, the person learns to become "the sort of person who does this sort of thing" and to think of herself in this way. The end of the process is the stage in which virtuous activity is easy (or at least easier), enjoyable, and valued for itself. She no longer needs to consider rewards and punishments to choose virtue; in fact, she will do the virtuous thing even if it does not bring extrinsic rewards. She wants to do the virtuous thing because she wants to be a virtuous person and live a life that is fitting and good, which she now understands to be a virtuous life. At this mature stage of moral development, the grown person has become someone who endorses her upbringing and values the goods that her moral tutors valued. Moreover, she values them now in the way her moral tutors do (Burnyeat 1980, 188–189).

Aquinas thinks human spiritual development in hope typically works in a similar way. He describes this process as the move from what he calls the love of desire, where objects are loved for one's own sake, to the love of friendship, of which charity is the paradigmatic case. The move from the love of desire to the love of friendship looks like this: At first, the hopeful person desires her own supernatural happiness and understands that God's assistance is required for it. Her own power, she sees, is clearly insufficient. So she relies on God's power to get what she wants for herself—her own happiness. However, Aquinas says, the process of relying on God in a habitual way over a suitable period of time allows her to get to know God better and to find him not only powerful but also merciful, ready to lovingly and faithfully supply her needs. Through this process of habitual reliance, the one hoping develops a relationship with God, and learns to know him and the sort of good she longs for better.[20] She comes to appreciate that her own fulfillment is found in just such a friendship. If all goes well,[21] she begins to love God back, now as a friend, loved for who he is and not *just* what he does for her. In Aristotelian terms, she passes through an imperfect friendship of utility to gain a virtue friendship, where she loves the other for his own sake, as "another self" (1999, IX.4 1166a30). The one hoping still desires God's power and mercy as necessary means to assist her to her ultimate end, but now she also loves the one assisting her as a friend. Already while "on the way" one gets a taste of what it is like to love and be loved as a friend of God.[22] Over time, the disposition of hope initially prompted by one's need for God's assistance is perfected by love.

[20] Learning to hope might thus be well characterized as a "dialectical activity." According to Brewer (2009, 47) engagement in such "temporally extended and self-deepening" activities "itself tends to produce a clearer and more ample appreciation of the goods internal to that activity" as one progresses. Brewer's examples of dialectical desires include love of God and love of others (56–65).

[21] This presumes that the requisite grace is given. For Aquinas, this is necessary for any virtue to be perfected by charity, since charity is always an infused virtue.

[22] Aquinas says that hope already attains God, on whose help it leans (*ST* II–II 17.1). Charity, too, has both a "now and not yet" character, as a disposition that is infused but increasingly perfected in this life, until it is completely perfected in union with God in the next. The mode

1.4 The End and Object of Hope

Aquinas locates the theological virtue of hope in the will, or rational appetite, since this hope has God—a supersensory, spiritual good—as its object. The will, on Aquinas's conception of the soul's powers, necessarily inclines human beings to their ultimate end; hope is one virtue that perfects its orientation. The upshot is that hope as a virtue has to do *primarily* with the ultimate end of human life. This way of defining hope raises questions about that for which humans can rightly hope.

If the virtue of hope has a single, unique proper object—namely, God as the efficient and final cause of happiness—how then might *other* things also be properly hoped for? Aquinas answers that the single "*ratio*" of hope's "formal" object—that is, hoping in "God as divine assistant" toward one's ultimate end—can extend "materially" to many objects, just as faith in God as first truth includes all the particular articles of faith. The range of things that can be virtuously hoped for extends to anything by which God helps one *in via*: a challenging or reassuring word, mercy shown in a time of need by a friend, a word of correction, a supportive community, a book, an experience, a good role model, and so on. As Dominic Doyle puts it, in hope the "desire for future happiness spills over into the present, such that hope can depend upon God's help now 'for anything' in order to attain God" (2011, 40). In this way, it appears, there is little in theory that might be excluded from hope's secondary or material object.

Additionally, hope can function as something of an architectonic or second-order virtue. Aquinas notes that charity has the function of ordering the activities of the other infused moral virtues to the human ultimate end, as one of the supernatural principles that order subordinate powers and those powers' particular objects. In regard to how hope is practiced, it seems that hope's own distinctive acts of trusting God's assistance can also order and inform other acts of particular virtues. For example, one could imagine an act of courageous endurance inspired by hope that one's perseverance or sacrifice is the most fitting expression of one's trust in God.

of attainment is different for each of the two virtues, however. Hope attains God under the *ratio* of something good for me that is loved for my own sake (*amor concupiscentiae*)—in Aquinas's words, "In like manner a man loves a thing because he apprehends it as his good. Now from the very fact that a man hopes to be able to obtain some good through someone, he looks on the man in whom he hopes as a good of his own" (*ST* I–II 62.4). Charity, on the other hand, attains God under the *ratio* of something good in itself, loved for its own sake (*amor amicitiae*). Although there is synergy between these two loves, the one does not reduce to the other, according to Aquinas: "As stated above (Question 40, Article 7), in treating of the passions, hope regards two things. One as its principal object, viz. the good hoped for. With regard to this, love always precedes hope: for good is never hoped for unless it be desired and loved. Hope also regards the person from whom a man hopes to be able to obtain some good. With regard to this, hope precedes love at first; though afterwards hope is increased by love." Because "from the fact that a man thinks that he can obtain a good through someone, he begins to love him: and from the fact that he loves him, he then hopes all the more in him" (*ST I–II 62.4 ad 3*).

In this case, hope keeps one's eyes on God's provision of the eternal good of friendship with himself, despite the pain and loss of earthly goods, even in the middle of suffering.

In these ways, hope reframes and reorganizes other hopes for more proximate activities and ends.[23] It seems right to say that having the theological virtue of hope should temper fear of the death of a loved one from illness, loosen one's grip on comforts and luxuries, soften disappointments with career aspirations that went to ruin, bolster one's commitment to faith-inspired projects that seem a "stretch" from the point of view of one's current resources, lead one to positions of vulnerability and boldness that one would not venture to risk if not for an eternal perspective on one's life and vocation, and so on. Given the reorientation of the self toward the ultimate end and the self's position of total reliance on God to realize that end, one would expect hope to saturate motivation thoroughly (desires and aversions) in ways that shape daily practice.

However one conceives of extending hope's range to additional secondary objects, the point for Aquinas is that no such objects of hope are unconditionally included in the ultimate end, though some may contingently be so. Thus, at certain times and places they may be appropriately hoped for *as* penultimate goods. It is not the case that these goods must be intentionally pursued under the description "something God uses to help me to my ultimate end, which is eternal fellowship with him." Still, they must *in fact* fall under such a description for the agent, and be hoped for (desired, loved, clung to) in ways appropriate to goods less than God, the final end of the virtue, and in ways appropriate to keeping God as the ultimate ground of hope's attainment of the good.

Robert C. Roberts (2007) and William C. Mattison III (2012) both argue that the conditional and proximate nature of one's hope in lesser things shapes human moral life and practice in significant ways. When the virtue of hope fixes desire on the ultimate end as the only thing that can be appropriately desired in that way, it frees one from excessively valuing or relying on any other created goods as false substitutes for that end. Hope enables a kind of detachment from things in this world to which one might otherwise cling too tightly. As Mattison puts it, if one has the theological virtue of hope, one will not trust transient, fragile, and imperfect things to "save" (2012, 120). One will, rather, be able to value them for what they are—created things, finite goods—and to discipline the appetites rightly

[23] Aquinas calls all three theological virtues "principles" of the other infused moral virtues (which are infused dispositions concerning desires and aversions for more particular objects) in that their orientation of the person to her ultimate end affects the operation of all the virtues all the way down (*ST* II–II 63.3 and ads 2-3). Although he attributes a "commanding" function to charity alone (*ST* II–II 23.8) and names it a "principle" of all good works that can be directed toward the human ultimate end (*ST* II–II 65.3), perhaps hope can also be understood as directive of the operation of affections and virtues regarding more proximate objects that fall under its *ratio*, while it, in turn, is directed by charity.

to correspond to the goodness that is in those things, not some ultimate goodness one might project onto them via illusion or fantasy. Roberts says, "Not only does the hope of glory enable [the Christian] honestly to resign all earthly prospects; it also enables her to take those prospects up again and appreciate them for what they are" (2007, 153). In other words, hope prevents one from idolizing one's marriage, career, possessions, children, or one's once youthful and beautiful body. It is essential, on this view of the theological character of hope, that lesser goods—even great goods such as justice and loving human relationships—be hoped for *as proximate and provisional*, although one may certainly still desire these things intensely as great goods that contribute greatly to human flourishing. Desire for them is nonetheless properly proportioned when they are seen as signs and anticipations of the good that will bring complete fulfilment. As Augustine argues in the *City of God*, one values them rightly as significant comforts, encouragements, and provisions that enable one to make the journey toward something greater still, not the things that finally give rest (1993, Bk. XIX, Ch. 17). In the same way, losing these goods will not crush hope altogether and leave one in despair, even when these losses are excruciatingly painful. Nor will attainment of them tempt one to presumption, as if one had already secured one's fulfillment so one could rest in this life. One who hopes virtuously will be less likely to absolutize human achievements and human solutions to problems with the virtue rightly ordering these "not yet" activities to the ultimate end, and with hope rightly subsuming all human efforts under God's power.

2 Andy: A Story of Hope?

In the next section, I will argue that the portrayal of friendship between Andy Dufresne (Tim Robbins) and his fellow inmate Red (Morgan Freeman) in the film, *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994), is a compelling analogue of theological hope. But what about Andy himself? Understandably, analyses of hope in the film tend to focus on Andy, since he is the story's main character. Andy's resilience amid horrific conditions in prison and the escape he engineers for himself create a picture of heroic and godlike character, in contrast to Aquinas's conception of theological hope.

Andy is incarcerated for nineteen years for the murder of his wife and her lover—a crime which he did not commit. Prison conditions are brutal, but Andy remains quietly resilient. At one point Andy is punished with two weeks straight in solitary confinement, known to inmates as "the hole," for playing a Mozart opera over the prison's public address system. When he emerges from his stay in the hole, Andy confidently asserts that his time in the hole was "the easiest time [he] ever did" because he had Mozart in his head and heart. Confronted by the others' bafflement, he offers an eloquent speech about the hope he has within himself, how it has kept him alive, and how it cannot be touched or taken away by prison guards or conditions.

Red, another prisoner, replies with a warning: "Hope is a dangerous thing"; it has "no place on the inside [of prison]" and "will make a man insane." Andy responds with a stark alternative: the example of their fellow inmate, Brooks, who upon being released from prison committed suicide.[24] It is clear in this scene that Andy believes that what he calls hope is necessary to live—from the darkest depths of imprisonment (solitary confinement) and daily life in prison to the wide open world of freedom outside the prison's walls. Furthermore, hope is necessary to live in a fully human way. To fail to long for life on the outside, or at least keep its beauty within one's heart and mind, is to despair—to choose death.

Beyond keeping Mozart alive in his heart (a kind of mental or emotional escape from the dreary reality of solitary confinement), Andy also plans to escape from prison in other (physical) ways. By the end of the film, the audience realizes that behind a pin-up poster, there is a hole he carved in his cell that leads to the sewage tunnels in the walls of the prison, through which he escapes. He appears a day later at a bank to collect funds diverted during his accounting work for the warden. It is enough money to begin a new life far away on the coast of Mexico. The plan took years to effect: Andy spent many nights spent quietly scraping the wall of his cell with a tiny rock hammer and as many days secretly emptying rocks from his pockets in the prison yard, literally tablespoons at a time.

Throughout the film, Andy's character is sharply distinguished from that of the other prisoners.[25] Because of the duration of his suffering and his consistent response to it over almost two decades in prison, it is reasonable to conclude that Andy has dispositions most people would endorse as virtuous or admirable. His often unconventional behavior and responses to situations come from his settled habits and his reflective endorsement of their intrinsic value. Furthermore, his character is the single most important factor in helping him to live mentally and emotionally beyond the walls of the prison.

Knowing Aquinas's account, however, one may be struck by how humanistic the portrait of Andy's hope is in the film (although it is made

[24] This might be taken as additional support for the relational character of hope.

[25] Unlike the other inmates, Andy is innocent of his crime. So escape (even if justified in Andy's case—a debatable point) is not an outcome to be hoped for or pursued by others. Andy has to recover from being treated like a criminal by an unjust system to break out of a place he does not belong, while the other prisoners have to recover from internalizing their criminal identity, often over the course of a life sentence without parole, while making prison their provisional home. In prison, one's Department of Corrections' number is a mark of identity as important, or more important, as one's name, and in interactions with others 'on the outside' one is an inmate, a convicted felon, and ex-con, etc. Incarceration and all of its indignities has a way of working itself into the very fabric of one's identity in dehumanizing ways. The main existential task for many actual prisoners is to find a way to recover their humanity and find hope in prison, rather than hoping to get out. My thanks to the inmates at Handlon Correctional Facility in Ionia, Michigan, and the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola for helping me grasp this point and its importance.

more inspiring and perhaps alluring by the baptismal imagery in the escape scene). Andy is sustained in prison by his dedication to achieving justice for himself—that is, by engineering his own "redemption." He escapes entirely by his own power and effort, unaided by any others. His "creative accounting" with prison funds is an ingenious but criminal ploy after the justice system and the warden fail to honor his innocence time and again. His objective is his own physical freedom from prison—his longing for a life in paradise, at least the earthly paradise of a beach in Mexico. In this respect, the film can arguably serve as a metaphor: Shawshank prison is a picture of the life most people live and the futility of trying to find happiness in this world. Andy shows the possibility of life beyond its walls. Nevertheless, Andy's character provides a stirring portrait of the triumph of the *human* spirit, or perhaps one should say his superhuman spirit, which bursts the bonds of slavery to secure justice for itself with its own power.

Although the film makes a case of Andy as a paradigmatic figure of hope, which Aquinas's account of hope as a theological virtue would lead one to reject, a more nuanced account of Andy's character as proto-hopeful has some warrant and carries useful implications for how to practice hope. Hope itself has two facets—the good hoped for, and the means that make its attainment possible. On the first point, hope's end, Andy seems to get some things right, at least in an anticipatory way. The goods he hopes for appear to be universal and shareable goods that both outlast and transcend himself, but which can still be counted as his own. On the second point, as already noted, he seems too independent and self-reliant to capture the fullness of Aquinas's conception of the virtue. If Andy had a full conception of human happiness and freedom that extended not only beyond the bounds of Shawshank prison but also beyond the bounds of all the exigencies of this life, then he may have grasped his need for more than his own resources and his own power in attaining it. With its limited perspective, the film cannot say much more about the character of hope than this.

Regarding hope's end, it seems too harsh to say that nothing but false or idolatrous hope keeps Andy alive, for reasons I will argue below. It is better to think of Andy's tendencies as proto-hope made possible, as Robert Miner suggests, by his virtue of magnanimity: "In itself, magnanimity is neither necessary nor sufficient for the theological virtue of hope. But to suppose no connection between the two would be a mistake. Magnanimity prepares the soul for the theological virtue" (2009, 227). On the other hand, Andy's self-reliance makes ascribing any sort of trust or dependence to him problematic, and if one wants to think of hope paradigmatically in these terms, as Aquinas does, Andy does not model it. He does, however, value friendship—which again creates opportunities for him to develop hope. Furthermore, one need not make any claims about Andy himself having the virtue of hope to consider the film itself as a signpost that offers insight about hope and examples of how to practice it.

One of the problems with nontheological hoped-for objects is that even if attained, they can be lost and one's hopes disappointed. Are the good things that Andy yearns for and works for like this? To make the case that Andy's desires are proto-hopeful, a counterfactual approach is promising. For it, one would need to ask, what role did Andy's desired and loved goods play in his motivation? Is Andy's hope completely satisfied when he escapes and sets up shop on the beach in Mexico? Even outside of prison, could *his* picture of the good life be fulfilled *in this world*? Alternately, what would have happened if Andy's escape plans had failed and he lived out the rest of his days at Shawshank prison? Would he have despaired and found nothing to live for?'

Despite its happy ending, the film leaves the end for which Andy yearns ambiguous—or at least as a question for the viewer to ask himself or herself. Although the escape scene appears to be about Andy's solo triumph over evil and escape to his dream life, this is *not* the last scene of the film. Moreover, previous scenes in the film provide clues that this dream of escape is not all that Andy is living for. When Benedict XVI describes hope, he says, "While [hope's] community-oriented vision of the 'blessed life' is certainly directed beyond the present world, as such it also has to do with the building up of this world—in very different ways, according to the historical context and the possibilities offered or excluded thereby" (2007, sect. 14). As the Mozart scene illustrates, Andy loves the beauty of music. Even under threat of terrible punishment, he cannot quite bring himself to turn off the public address system before the last note of the duet fades away. It appears to be his appreciation for the aria's beauty, and not merely the desire to thumb his nose at the guards, that motivates him in this scene. He also has the impulse to *share* the music—again, quite possibly to rebel but also because he thinks he has something worth sharing and he wants others to be uplifted by its beauty, too. The goods he loves and longs for are inexhaustible enough to sustain further dreams and desires; they transcend his own individual life; and they are personally cherished, but also count as common goods that contribute to human flourishing in the whole community. The same dynamic is present in the library he creates and curates in the prison. Andy's intellectual world is greater than the prison walls, and therefore greater also than an earthly paradise in Mexico. Intellectual goods, too, are not merely his own; he attempts to offer them to his fellow inmates, and he acknowledges that they outstrip any good he himself already completely possesses (or can, perhaps, ever possess).

In such actions, therefore, Andy persists in making prison life more than dreary drudgery for himself and for others; he seems consistently to be drawn to goods and beauty that elude his own final grasp, goods he values beyond the immediate moment and beyond his own personal enjoyment of them. They are not escapist fantasies that he controls; they are real goods that enlarge, energize, and enrich his current way of living. Even if his taste of them is merely anticipatory, partial, and imperfect within prison,

for him they are signs of a better, more fully human life—one he values and yearns for. (In fact, his character is consistently marked by this sort of love and longing throughout the film.) Would he still long for these goods in Mexico? He would be freer to enjoy them, surely, but as goods larger than himself and his present grasp, they could, even in his life "on the outside," be future and transcendent and expansive. Furthermore, they are not merely things he can fully grasp and attain by his own power. He needs Mozart to compose the music and authors to write the books. Those created goods are gifts he receives from others and must rely on them for. By appreciating these goods and making them available to others, he in turn becomes a catalyst for others' hope.

What is also striking about Andy is the stability of his character and his loves. Just as prison does not undercut who he is and the loves that sustain his life and keep him yearning for more, so life in Mexico is not an end attained so much as a new opportunity to pursue the same things, now with fewer constraints. No matter what his circumstances and regardless of what is taken away or what is restored, the *basis* of Andy's life remains secure; the things he holds on to are stable. This aspect of the film's story yields another structural analogue to hope. Explicating Hebrews 11:1, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for," Benedict XVI describes the link between faith and hope in terms of its basis or the substance underlying it:

> This 'substance,' life's normal source of security, has been taken away from Christians in the course of persecution. They have stood firm, though, because they had found a better 'basis' for their existence—a basis that abides, that no one can take away. We must not overlook the link between these two types of 'substance,' between means of support or material basis and the word of faith and the 'basis,' the 'substance' that endures. (2007, sect. 8)

Andy loses all his possessions when imprisoned and yet has a "basis" on which to live, just as he holds on to Mozart even when the material basis of the music is taken away in solitary confinement. Thus even if Andy's character does not meet Aquinas's standard of hope, in these respects his life anticipates practices of hope and the effects hope should have on one's character.

The counterfactual questions about the place Mexico holds within the structure of Andy's desire are meant to determine to what extent that idyllic life in Mexico is Andy's ultimate end, his self-chosen heaven on earth, attainable by his own efforts.[26] The answer I have argued for here is that although Andy does not have theological hope, the structure of his desires is analogous to the way hope orders all earthly and human goods toward

[26] There are several counterfactuals to imagine here: How would Andy have lived if his escape had been thwarted? How would he react if his life in Mexico did not turn out to be what he thought, or if he settled instead in a poor, dusty town in the southern United States?

its final end. When practicing hope, then, counterfactual questions can also be useful in analyzing cases in which one is asked to give penultimate goods up; they can likewise prompt one to ask what the state of one's desires might be if one attained them in full.[27] If they were lost, would one despair? Would one presumptively rest in a self-made paradise if they were gained? As Andy would have to maintain his character if his escape were completely and finally unsuccessful *and* if it were completely and finally successful, so also asking a counterfactual question about what effect the loss of a particular good would have can provide hints about whether one's loves are rightly ordered or whether one is asking more of them than they can ever deliver.[28]

In the counterfactual test, then, there is an argument that Andy longs for goods not fully graspable in this life, a fact Andy himself seems to acknowledge. While the "something more" he hopes for is not spelled out, there is reason to think the film is implicitly offering something more subtle than a picture of self-made happiness and a shallow rendering of the triumph of the human spirit. Andy's attitudes and actions reveal that he loves created things—freedom, beauty, music, and his friend Red—for what they are, namely, things that give some consolation while one waits and things whose goodness points beyond themselves to a fuller and more fully human life, not things that he can finally or fully possess in this life. The film itself thus offers a picture of hope as a desire for these things *as signs or anticipations* (and likewise, consolations and encouragements) for the journey and not as ultimate ends graspable here and now.

As much as the film offers an anticipatory and incipient view of hope, however, there is still the problem that Andy's hope in the film is completely self-reliant. If theological hope is ultimately the only way to be virtuously hopeful, then Andy's hope fails to be a virtue. The film does not offer any theological or even theistic interpretation of Andy's hope. His own intellectual, psychological, and physical abilities are the primary basis of his sense of the possibility of obtaining the future good he desires. He does not even rely on the other prisoners for his escape; on the contrary, he keeps his escape plans entirely to himself (in part, of course, to protect his friends). Even if one can argue for elements of transcendence in the ends and goods Andy hopes for, there is no dependence on anyone else, human or divine, evident in Andy's hope of escape. While he must rely on the artistry of Mozart to sustain him in prison and the natural cover of a thunderstorm to

[27] It seems, paradoxically, that in this life love for others—for instance, a spouse or dear friend—is plagued by both the temptation not to love that other enough *and* the temptation to love him or her too much. Relationships are often spoiled by selfish deficiencies, to be sure, but the argument Aquinas, Mattison, and others make is that they are also spoiled by a kind of excessive attachment.

[28] Compare Augustine (1991, Bk. IV.vi) mourning the death of a beloved friend, whom Augustine loved "as if he would never die."

mask his escape, his final bid for freedom depicts a man acting on his own power.[29]

Rather than arguing that Andy himself exemplifies hope, then, I concede that his disposition, however admirable, fails both to have as its *telos* a relationship with God and fails to manifest hope's key feature of dependence. Nevertheless, Andy's case is complicated. Even if he lacks hope as Aquinas defines it, he is noble, courageous, and clearly inspired by love for transcendent goods like beauty and truth. Andy is an example of a life that points to goodness beyond itself and the power of a character that can see goodness beyond the walls of a prison and manage to hold onto a measure of that goodness even within its walls.

3 Red: A Story of Hope

Despite the ambiguity found in the portrait of Andy's virtue, the film does offer a picture of hope's essential dependence in Red. It is telling that the entire film is narrated by Red, so the film is implicitly as concerned with the hope of Andy's friend as it is with Andy himself. Viewed as a story about Red, the film offers a clear and powerful analogy of the theological virtue of hope. Moreover, it depicts hope's means as requiring dependence and hope's end as friendship, although in this case it is a human friendship rather than friendship with God.

[29] Is there an acquired virtue of hope? The closest Aquinas comes to admitting such a phenomenon is his discussion of the controversial Aristotelian virtue of magnanimity, a virtue concerned with appropriate confidence in one's own power, although hope also plays a role in acts of courageous daring, such as Andy's escape. In the film, one sees Andy exemplifying something close to four virtues that Aquinas names as quasi-integral (and also potential) parts of the virtue of courage (*ST* II–II 128). Magnanimity is one of the four; the others are magnificence, patience, and perseverance. Magnanimity, also known as "confidence," is an expansiveness of heart and mind, a "stretching forth of the appetite" beyond a position of ease or comfort toward greater things that grow one's abilities. "Magnificence" enables one to mobilize the resources necessary for a great or heroic task. With patience, one must hold up well under the sorrow caused by the present evil or difficulty, endured firmly for the sake of what can yet be. Closely paired with patience is perseverance, a virtue concerned with tasks that take a long time and require delayed gratification. Andy must be constant in executing an escape plan that takes years of small, daily tasks. In summary, even if one wanted to deny that Andy has the theological virtue of hope, on the terms Aquinas defines it, one might still account for the admiration of his character *via* these other virtues indirectly connected to the passion of hope via their relationship to the cardinal virtue of courage. The difficulty in accounting for Andy's hopefulness by means of magnanimity and its associated virtues is that it runs up against the same problem in Aquinas's account, namely, that proper magnanimity—even though it concerns what is in the agent's own power, rather than reliance on another—still requires that the agent recognize that what is in her power is a gift of grace, and not merely a matter of human capacities: "magnanimity makes a person deem himself worthy of great things *in consideration of the gifts he holds from God*" (*ST* II–II 129.3 ad 4). As I have argued elsewhere, in this respect, magnanimity too is a virtue of acknowledged dependence. Furthermore, Aquinas says at the end of his account of patience and perseverance that both are infused virtues (*ST* II–II 136.3 and 137.4).

Red learns to hope from Andy. Like the theological virtue, which is infused, his hope is received as a gift from another. Andy's friendship and Andy's vision of beauty and goodness beyond what prison affords gradually bring Red from apathy and despair to hope. With Andy's help, both Red's imagination and his appetite are stretched beyond what he has previously yearned for or believed possible for himself. Likewise, in the case of the theological virtue, the future good to be attained with difficulty is union with God (human beings' supernatural end), a good that can be made known and reached only with God's assistance.

In the film, Red's hope mirrors the structure and end of theological hope in a variety of ways. While Red waits in prison, he longs to be with his beloved friend again. When he is released, Red understands that Andy has gone before him to show him the way to a new life. Because of Andy, Red then patterns his pursuit of all other goods according to his longing for a new, fuller life in a world beyond the only one he has ever known. Insofar as the film's depiction of Shawshank prison symbolizes the suffering of this life and the pointlessness of trying to find one's ultimate peace there, Red's decision, upon his release, to follow Andy to Mexico is analogous to the Christian choice to put one's hope in things not yet seen, based on faith and trust in another's word—echoing the Hebrews 11 definition of faith.

After his release, Red goes to find Andy's letter and tucks it into his pocket, beckoned by confidence (*con-fides*: faith in the word of another) in the words, "I will be hoping that this letter finds you and finds you well, Your friend, Andy." The letter, like revelation and its promises, is both a confirmation of Andy's friendship now and a promise that points him onward. Andy's friendship with Red in prison gives Red a foretaste of a greater life of friendship when they are both free. The attraction of such a life draws Red out of the hotel room where the despairing and friendless Brooks chose to end his life, and into a bus station, a symbol of his life *in via*. Like the letter, all other goods now serve the end of pursuing a life in friendship with Andy. Red uses the cash for a bus ticket, but both the cash and ticket are goods for him only *in relation to* his journey and its goal. They are, like earthly goods, not to be clung to as ultimate or as assuring fulfilment in themselves. As signs and aids for Red, they are important to him as resources enabling him to anticipate new life and move toward its realization. Red is now living forward in hope; he is on a journey with an (only partly grasped) end in mind—a destination that is more than personal freedom or an earthly paradise: it is a relationship of love. For Red, being with Andy *is* the *telos*. As Benedict points out, the very nature of faith-informed theological hope is that its "substance" is God himself, rather than the contingent, fragile, and ultimately losable material conditions of this life, even at their best.

In the film, the sign-pointing function of hoped-for lesser goods is, I think, also signaled. In his letter to Red, Andy describes a project and future plans and the need for a partner; therefore, the freedom he longed

for was not an end but the beginning of a new life. Red finds Andy on the beach, not in a lawn chair getting tan and sipping piña coladas, but working on a boat—perhaps itself a sign of his continuing journey toward further horizons and implying further movement toward a good not yet possessed.[30] Such intermediate goods and projects and partners serve as icons of a kind of life and a fullness of goodness even a paradise on earth cannot fully deliver. This is why good things, properly hoped for, can often make one weep and rejoice at the same time; their full beauty is fully revealed only with their absolute fragility and limitations. There is both sweetness and painful yearning in the experience of hope, an experience matching Aquinas's account of the complex structure of this virtue. Here, too, the film provides a picture of the character of hope as a virtue shaping all of life, even the best (paradise) *this* life can offer.

When Red finally arrives in Mexico, he and Andy embrace. It is the last shot of the film. In one sense they are finally at rest—secure in their friendship and secure in their life of freedom. Yet the final shot of the film is not a close-up of the bliss on each of their faces, but a God's-eye point of view that dwarfs the figures on the beach. The choice of camera shot could be interpreted as a way of indicating to the viewer that what Andy and Red have learned and loved so far is a beginning, not an ending, a commitment that will stretch their longings even further, beyond what their limited human perspective from the beach can grasp.

Benedict XVI sums up both the promise and the limitations of the film's portrayal of Andy's and Red's redemption well in these words:

> [Man is] redeemed by love. This applies even in terms of this present world. When someone has the experience of a great love in his life, this is a moment of 'redemption' which gives a new meaning to his life. But soon he will also realize that the love bestowed upon him cannot by itself resolve the question of his life. It is a love that remains fragile. It can be destroyed be death. The human being needs unconditional love. . . . If this absolute love [of God] exists, with its absolute certainty, then—only then—is man 'redeemed,' whatever should happen to him in his particular circumstances. (2007, sect. 26)

4 Practices of Hope

Aquinas's account of the theological virtue and Red's reliance on Andy's friendship together show the power of a life and character shaped by hope. One could sort the practices of hope found in these sources into roughly

[30] The openness of the landscape and seascape in this scene are compelling. The ocean stretches out farther than one can see. Thanks to Matthew Lamb for pointing out the possible *significance of the boat.*

two categories: first, practices that concern the object of hope (hope's end), and second, practices that concern reliance on another both to develop the virtue and to attain that object (hope's means). Friendship is a key practice of hope, however, because it spans both of these categories.

The film, working on a human and therefore analogous level, vividly portrays the catalyzing and sustaining power of friendship in a life of hope, a point I will return to when considering practices of the theological virtue in particular. Encouragement to hope comes through friends in a variety of ways: for example, they are models of the virtue; they teach one about new goods and new places, and thereby attract one to new and higher loves; they write to one; and they make and keep their promises, teaching one to trust and rely on them. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who spent time in prison himself, describes fellowship with other believers as a great consolation and encouragement, a "source of joy and strength" (1957, 19–20). Red's hope is born and sustained through friendship with Andy, who sees him not in terms of his past criminal record but in terms of their present relationship and future together. By contrast, many prisoners, rejected and forgotten by family and friends, struggle with loneliness and despair even to the point of suicide.

Walter Bruggemann (2014, 125) writes, "Hope is a tenacious act of imagination given in dream, oracle [or prophecy], narrative, and song." With respect to hope's object, the film gives one a reason to support the arts (both music and the visual arts, including films)—for their power to help one imagine and expand one's vision of goodness. As friends do on the personal level, on a cultural level artists can inspire attraction to goods that extend one's sense of possibility and enlarge one's longings. Andy's cell walls are covered with reproductions of classic art, which stand in stark contrast to the crude pin-up poster that hides his escape hole. Music, another common and self-transcending good, lifts one's spirits and inspires one to savor beauty beyond the moment. Singing can thus be a practice of hope—not singing for an audience or for show, but singing to express oneself and to join in a chorus with others, to lament or to remember or to lift one's spirits.[31] One might argue that Andy's moment with Mozart plays the same sort of role as Paul's and Silas's songs in prison in the midst of persecution (Acts 16:25);[32] the other prisoners listened and were inspired to inhabit a world beyond the walls of prison. Why sing instead of speaking one's hope? Perhaps because "our spoken words are inadequate to express what we want to say, that the burden of our song goes far beyond all human words" (Bonhoeffer 1957, 58). Or as Red puts it when recalling Andy's choice to play *The Marriage of Figaro* over the prison's public address system,

[31] The final chorus of *Les Misérables* is another example of this practice.

[32] All scriptural citations are from the New International Version.

> I have no idea to this day what those two Italian ladies were singing about. . . . I'd like to think they were singing about something so beautiful it can't be expressed in words and makes your heart ache because of it. I tell you those voices soared, higher and farther than anybody in a gray place dares to dream. It was like some beautiful bird flapped into our drab little cage and made those walls dissolve away. And for the briefest of moments, every last man at Shawshank felt free.

Through these experiences of transcendent beauty, the film shows that human flourishing requires centering one's life around and investing in spiritual goods that are larger than the self—relationships and loves and projects and dreams that teach one to reach further, to long for more.

The film offers evidence that suffering, too, can cultivate hope because it keeps one painfully aware of one's hunger for a kind of love and peace that the world cannot deliver. Both Red and Andy become aware of their need for hope in *Shawshank* because prison destroys all illusions of satisfaction or flourishing within its walls. Suffering keeps one from the vice of presumption by reminding one of a truth that it easy to ignore or deny when one lives in earthly paradises and not in prisons: that nothing in this life will finally or fully give rest to desire. Without suffering and the detachment or relinquishment it demands, one can more easily pretend that one is already at rest, and that one does not need hope.

Finally, hope—especially hope in the help of another—requires waiting. Aquinas describes this sort of hope as *ex-spectatio*—literally, *looking outside* oneself to another whose assistance is essential both for believing in the possibility of attaining the good and also actually obtaining it (*ST* I–II 40.2 ad 1; II–II 17.1 and 4). When one's sense of possibility depends on another, it is not entirely up to oneself to determine when and where and how the good will be attained. Waiting implies a lack of control, and yet there is a difference between hopeful expectation and merely killing time. The prison context makes clear that how one handles time is also a practice of hope. The inmates who are simply "doing time" are not waiting for anything. The passing of time feels endless because it is purposeless coping devoid of any expectation of goodness. Hopeful waiting not only means remaining ready to receive something from another, but also looking out for good things to come, believing and trusting that one's life has a *telos* that one can expect to be good. In theological hope, "waiting for the Lord" is an activity, because it takes psychological and spiritual effort to remain in a position of trust when one cannot see what lies ahead and the outcome is not in one's power (e.g., Ps. 27:14). To wait in hope is to remain open to the goodness longed for and not give up on the one with the power to deliver it.[33] While suffering teaches one to let go of false hopes, waiting is

[33] For an example of such stories of waiting, see chapters 11 and 12 of Stump (2010).

a crucible in which one learns that despairing resignation—giving up on one's genuine good—is the enemy of true hope.

On an even more explicitly theological note, what sort of practices might one cultivate, especially when the ground of one's sense of possibility is the help of another? I will not attempt to give an exhaustive list; however, *Shawshank* also gets some important features of hope right here, even if it can speak of them in only an analogous way. The film is ostensibly about hope, but it is equally a film about friendship and the difference friendship makes for cultivating hope. Red's hope is a compelling metaphor for the theological virtue—hope in the help of another. Red learns for the first time what hope looks like through Andy's life and character. Red learns from Andy already in prison, long before Andy's escape or Red's release, that their destination is a real place; Andy teaches him the name of the town that will be their common destination, and tells him the spot in the field to dig for a message, should Red decide to follow him in hope. This is, in a parallel way, what God, through the theological virtue of faith, reveals in this life about the human ultimate end. Later, Red journeys to Mexico through the resources Andy provides. Red gets a letter from Andy after Red's release from prison and the gift of cash to pay his way there, a way he has no way to pay for with his own resources. Just as importantly, Red has the gift of Andy's friendship for the journey: first in person when they are both inside prison, as an encouragement while they wait, then again in the letter's assurance and promise of what lies at the journey's end, and finally in person again when they are reunited in their Mexican paradise. The film ends with Red saying "I hope" as he finds Andy on the beach and they embrace. It is clear that Red does not love Andy merely for the sake of his assistance; he loves him as a friend whose company, presence, and friendship he cherishes for their own sake. For Andy and Red, as for Aquinas's theological portrait, the love of friendship is an essential part of practicing hope and encouraging others to practice it, too.

The film thus depicts how human beings can help each other to cultivate hope by mirroring and participating in the friendship of God toward one another. Although this help can also be exemplified in wider forms of solidarity and benevolence, the personal nature of the assistance, is, I think, important for practices of hope because hope involves one's own personal ultimate good. Those who assist, therefore, must care about *me* and *my* reaching my end. And for this the relationship of friendship seems best suited. Practices of hope found in the film include providing and accepting provision for the physical means to make the journey (the cash for a bus ticket has as its spiritual analog the corporal works of mercy, such as feeding the hungry, offering shelter to the homeless). They also include encouraging others and sharing intangible goods that keep one's spirits alive for the journey (e.g., the spiritual works of mercy, comforting

the sorrowful).[34] Human promises made and kept faithfully anticipate and point to God's promises, his faithfulness, and his Word, which is the ultimate basis of theological hope.

Practicing the theological virtue of hope thus also means learning to receive help: both learning to ask for it and to accept it graciously, rather than closing oneself off from others and striving for self-sufficiency. While many prefer to be independent and take care of themselves, or perhaps to be the giver of help (i.e., the person with plenty of resources, power, and control), learning to be dependent creatures—who need to receive gifts and particularly the gift of friendship to see the good fully and be taught to yearn for it properly—may be one of the most important ways to practice hope. Developing strong friendships and building communities of mutual interdependence are also practices of hope on both the human and the divine level, as Aquinas notes: "[E]very human being needs, first, the Divine assistance,[and] secondly, even human assistance, since we are naturally social animals. . . . Accordingly, in so far as we need others, it belongs to the [virtuous] to have confidence in others, for it is also a point of excellence in us to have at hand those who can help us" (*ST* II–II 129.6).

The Shawshank Redemption shows viewers how such reliance on others in love and friendship is essential for cultivating and sustaining Red's hope. For Aquinas, in a parallel way, hope is practiced through acts of regular reliance on God's help—most obviously, perhaps, through the practice of petitionary prayer (*ST* II–II 17.2 obj. and ad 2; II–II 17.3 obj. 2). The posture of prayer itself puts one in a position of total dependence, a position acknowledging one's status as both a creature before an all-powerful Creator and a child before a merciful Father. That prayer is a practice of the theological virtue of hope is seen by contrast with hope's opposing vices. The presumptuous person will not feel the need to pray, for she no longer sees herself in need of further assistance to her end; she has "got it made." The despairing person, on the other hand, will not pray, but for different reasons: he assumes God will not help him, or he assumes he is beyond the reach of God's redeeming power and mercy. To pray is to ask for assistance expecting to receive it and to acknowledge one's dependence and need for redemption while renewing one's trust in the promises and faithfulness of God to deliver what is needed.

The two thieves on the crosses next to Jesus at Golgotha exemplify hope and despair in this way: one rejects Christ's redemptive assistance, choosing to shoulder his own punishment unto death, while the other one prays,

[34] Forgiveness is also on this list of spiritual works of mercy, and one might argue that forgiveness itself is a practice of hope, in part because it entrusts all offenses against oneself, like one entrusts one's own offenses against God, to the divine justice and mercy. Rather than demanding that all justice be settled in this life, and it lives in anticipation of the final peace that will come in the next life when human hopes are fulfilled. The bishop and Jean Valjean in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* provide a vivid portrait of forgiveness as a practice that is characteristic of hope.

"Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom" (Luke 23:42–43). Andy, too, remembers Red, even as he goes ahead of Red to his Mexican paradise. His leaving shows Red that prison life is not all there is, and when he leaves, he gives Red words of invitation and promise to follow when he is released.

For Red, the act of remembering Andy in that bleak hotel room yields hope for new life and keeps him from dying alone in despair, like Brooks and the second thief. It may seem ironic that practicing hope, a forward-looking virtue and a prayer for things yet to be, should also involve remembering the past. The film depicts Red in prison after Andy's escape, remembering his friend, their nineteen-year history together, and the radically new frame of possibility enacted by Andy's breakout. To follow Andy, Red must keep in mind the name of the town in Mexico that Andy told him. In a parallel way, the psalmists recount the narrative events of God's faithfulness in keeping his promises to Israel, and partakers in the Eucharist memorialize Christ's sacrifice. These examples are evidence that acts of remembrance can be practices of hope insofar as the remembered past renews one's reasons to hold fast to promises for the future. Remembering promises already kept and love already given, prompted by the reminders of friends and the community of the faithful, encourages those who hope to continue relying on God and longing for a life of perfect friendship with him.

5 Conclusion

I have argued that *The Shawshank Redemption* pictures the ways that hope is essential for human flourishing. Through the story of Red, the film also pictures human friendships as central to practices of hopeful reliance on others. Seen against Aquinas's framework, the film's depiction of the virtue of hope and its practice can only gesture imperfectly at the theological dimensions of hope. Both sources in dialogue with each other however, show how hope—as a virtue—can be practiced, especially in friendships both human and divine.

Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung
E-mail : rdeyoung@calvin.edu

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The Significance of Liturgical Singing

Terence Cuneo

Abstract: This is an essay on two topics—singing and liturgy—that lie well outside the standard repertoire of topics that form the subject matter of contemporary philosophy of religion, let alone Anglo-American philosophy more generally. Nonetheless, I maintain that thinking through the topic of liturgical singing can bear philosophical fruit. My discussion takes as its starting point the striking fact that the liturgies of Eastern Christianity are almost entirely sung. I explore the question why this would be especially fitting. The answer I offer draws upon recent work in philosophy of literature, collective action, and musical cognition, arguing that what I call the secondary form of the liturgy and its content mesh in such a way that, when an assembly sings the content of the liturgical script, it thereby instantiates important dimensions of its content.

It is a striking feature of the Eastern Christian liturgies that they are almost entirely sung.[1] With the exception of the homily, almost nothing in these liturgies is merely spoken. Moreover, aside from the occasional gesture, such as when the priest bows to the assembled, virtually none of its actions is performed in silence. Instead, singing accompanies nearly all the actions that constitute these liturgies, including the action around which they revolve, namely, eating the Eucharistic meal.

To my knowledge, the Eastern liturgies are unique among the Christian liturgies in this regard; none of the other Christian liturgies incorporates singing to the extent to which the Eastern liturgies do. Why is that?

A satisfactory reply to this question would be complex, but let me gesture toward the beginnings of an answer. All the liturgies in the Christian tradition exhibit an orientation, emphasizing certain activities rather than others. Many of the liturgies that belong to the Reformed traditions, for example, emphasize proclamation, placing the sermon at the center of the service. Any singing that occurs in these liturgies is supposed to complement

[1] Unless I indicate otherwise, when I speak of the Eastern liturgies, I'll have the Eucharistic liturgies in mind. I should also note that I am working with a semi-idealized type of these liturgies in which many portions of the liturgical script are sung by the congregation (and not simply the choir, chanters, or celebrant).