

Amicitia et Caritas: Classical and Christian Views on Friendship

This paper examines the progression of views on the nature of friendship from the classical age to the medieval age. The primary focus is on the relationship between *caritas* and *amicitia*. Friendship has always been valued, but the understanding of it develops and changes over the centuries with all the cultural and linguistic shifts. This paper considers whether the Classical and Christian views of friendship are compatible, and how the latter builds on and perfects the former. Cicero, Augustine of Hippo, and Thomas Aquinas are put into conversation. All three agree that charity belongs to friendship, but they differ on how and to what degree. Carolinne White, in her book *Christian Friendship in the Fourth Century*, states that some of the pagan proverbs on friendship were accorded authority on the level of the Scriptures, giving as an example Augustine's opinion on Cicero's definition of friendship, which he believed was accurate and reverent in spirit (White 1992). Their friendships with their contemporaries are also a point of interest.

Cicero's *De Amicitia* and Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* (II-II.Q23-27) frame either end of the discussion. Augustine, though he wrote much on friendship, did not write a particular work on the topic, and various sources of his are considered. While the philological focus remains on the Latin words, the influence of Aristotle's thoughts on friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics* cannot be neglected, especially given the strong Aristotelian undercurrent of Aquinas' philosophy.

Bibliography

White, Carolinne. *Christian Friendship in the Fourth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.