

The Relation of Political Freedom to the End of Man According to St. Thomas Aquinas

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This dissertation explores, through the thought of Thomas, the relation between the ultimate end of man in God, and the freedom of man under human government. **Chapter One** examines the context for this study, reviewing relevant points from some of the most influential figures in recent Thomistic political theology. This reveals the need for an approach to political freedom from anthropological foundations. **Chapter Two** affirms the teleological structure of freedom of the will in Thomas, as always already moved by the end to love of the good. All desires that move freedom are grounded in the ultimate end of human nature. Human freedom and its end cannot be abstracted from human nature, as Thomas affirms a desire of human nature for the vision of God, the vision that is the ultimate end of the freedom given in human nature. Since this ultimate end is received in grace, **Chapter Three** develops an understanding of nature in which absolutely dependent receptivity for the ultimate end is the perfection of the creaturely autonomy realized in freedom. Human freedom in the natural order and in the political realm is inviolable precisely as a capacity to turn to God in love. The order in human freedom is upheld in Thomas' treatment of political freedom, as **Chapter Four** shows through the ordering of law to virtue, justice and peace, and love. Government rightly promotes human love of the good, which must be realized through free actions in personal and familial lives, so government is rightly limited precisely through embracing

a particular understanding of the end of man. **Chapter Five** concludes that political freedom is always implicitly theological, and precisely as such calls for a certain reverence. If law treats freedom as not inherently ordered, law undermines freedom, and distorts the truth about man as in the image of the Trinity. Political freedom is rightly upheld in being explicitly or implicitly treated as ordered to the ultimate end in knowledge and love with God.