CHAPTER SEVEN: COMPLETION: DIVINE GIFT AND HUMAN GOAL

A. Is there a necessary conflict between divine and human goods?

The purpose of this chapter is to clarify the relationship between ultimate completion in Christ and the acts of Christians in this present life. Chapters four, five, and six have assembled and sorted out the material for a constructive treatment of this problem. This chapter puts them together. The remainder of the work will finish and furnish, explore and work within the framework built here. Therefore, this chapter is pivotal. But much of its content already has been established and explained previously, or will be unpacked and put to work later. For this reason, the present chapter will treat many points very quickly. It ought not to be read as if it were meant to stand by itself.

Is there a necessary conflict between divine and human goods? Can a human person who loves God totally also love human goods without reserve, to the full extent of their goodness? The answer to the first question is: No; to the second: Yes.

We are assured that one need not choose between these two loves because the human nature assumed by the Word was not thereby annulled (cf. GS 22). If a choice between loving God and loving human goods were necessary, our Lord Jesus, being God, could not make the wrong choice. Thus He could not have loved human goods. But anyone who could not naturally and spontaneously love all the basic human goods would not have an intact human nature, because the love of these goods is nothing but a disposition, built into human nature, toward its fulfillment. Therefore, our Lord Jesus, though a divine Person, did not have to prefer the love of God to the love of basic human goods. A fortiori, we human persons need not prefer love of God to our natural and spontaneous love of human goods--of all the goods described in chapter five, sections G and H.

Much popular Christian preaching and writing in times past suggested that to love God meant to prefer Him to created goods in a way that would mean rejecting or belittling these goods. Vatican II assures us:

> The Church holds that the recognition of God is in no way hostile to man's dignity, since this dignity is rooted and perfected in God. For man was made an intelligent and free member of society by the God who created him. Even more importantly, man is called as a son to commune with God and to share in His happiness. She further teaches that such a hope related to the end of time does not diminish the importance of intervening duties, but rather undergirds the acquittal of them with fresh incentives (GS 21).

This would hardly be so if love of God required one to reject or belittle human goods.

The appearance of conflict which can arise here is fundamentally the same as the appearance of conflict which arises when one considers that Jesus Christ is both true God and true man. In all our experience, any entity of a certain nature by that very fact cannot possibly be an entity of any other nature. Finite natures are like that: They exclude each other. So one tends to suppose that if Jesus is truly human, He cannot be divine, and vice versa. But the assumption is false. Divine nature is not exclusive--but the fact of the Incarnation is the only evidence for this. And this fact is a datum of faith, which remains a mystery to us. We must remember that we do not understand what God is in Himself--a point explained in chapter one, sections C-E.

If we keep this in mind, we will not make the mistake of thinking we understand what nature is in God, and so we will realize that we do not understand in itself the divinity of Jesus, the divinity in which we share. If we bear this in mind, we will not make the mistake of thinking we understand what divine goodness and love are in themselves. And so we will not have an insoluble puzzle about how one can love God with one's whole mind and heart and soul and strength, yet still love one's neighbor and oneself--and so every human good to the full extent of its goodness--without reservation.

Jesus is one Person with two natures; so are we. His humanity is assumed into the unity of His divine Person. Our divinity is received into the unity of our human free choice--as I explained in chapter six, section I. As Jesus is, so we are in this world (cf. 1 Jn 4.17). When one considers the make-up of the Christian and the make-up of Christian life, this analogy must be carried through and taken seriously. If not, all sorts of difficulties arise analogous to those which arose in Christology in the early centuries of the Church.[1]

Of course, our make-up is not exactly the same as that of our Lord. He is an uncreated divine Person; we are created human persons. He is Son of God by nature, we children of God by adoption. Unlike normal cases of adoption, in which a person of human nature adopts a child of human nature, thus changing the child's parentage but not its nature, God's adoption of us makes us share in His divine nature. For all practical purposes, a human adoptive parent removes the adopted child from its natural family. But for His purposes, God does not remove us from our natural, human family. Even Jesus is son of Mary, son of David, son of Adam. Thus God's adoption of us endows us with the infinite riches of His good without requiring us to renounce the finite, but very real riches, of our human heritage.

B. The love of God and human goods as motives for the act of living faith

In living faith one makes a human free choice to accept God's proposal of intimate communion, as I explained in chapter six, section I. Those who accept Jesus are "empowered to become children of God" (Jn 1.12). St. John Chrysostom comments that the power is like that which is given an ambassador, and that it is received in baptism. If one uses this power properly, then with the grace of God one has it in one's own free will to make oneself a child of God.[2] The first Christian act of the one baptized is the act of living faith which those who are seeking baptism ask of the Church (cf. DS 1531/800).[3]

Any human free choice must be directed to a human good. It is not difficult to see that the choice to accept faith is directed to human goods, for, as the Council of Trent teaches, prior to living faith a person with God's help prepares for it by

listening to the Gospel which is proclaimed by the Church, recognizing the Gospel's credibility, and believing it with human credence (cf. DS 1526/798; 1530/800). In this way, one's acceptance of God in faith is a reasonable, free human act, as Vatican I expressly teaches (cf. DS 3009-3010/1790-1971; 3033/1812). Such an act of reasonable submission--which is not suspended when the gift of living faith is received--must be directed to human goods. The relevant goods apparently are truth and religion, for converts come to the Church and seek from her living faith in baptism because they think her teaching true and her way a sound path to peace with God--the same general goods which every religious person seeks in a similar or less adequate way.

A person's commitment of faith as a human free choice made for the sake of some human goods--truth and religion--is self-determining. By a commitment one always makes oneself be a person of definite identity, for free choice is self determination, as I shall explain in part three. Thus by this human free choice one makes oneself share in the human goods of Christian community and truth--for example, one becomes a catechumen, associates with members of the Church, participates in some of their religious acts, such as prayers, and receives instruction in the faith.

Now, in the act of living faith, one's acceptance of God's proposal is transformed by being made out of love of Him. The transformation occurs by God's gift--the love is poured forth in our hearts through the Holy Spirit--and not by a self-creative act of our own. Thus we participate in divinity by our own free choice--not, however, by constituting ourselves divine, but by God's so constituting us. To the extent that our love and the love of the Spirit are one, we accept God in faith out of His grace; to the extent that our acceptance of His gift is ours and the Spirit's giving of the gift is His, we accept God in faith out of our own free choice.

The act of living faith is the primary act of Christian life--the first act which is both divine and human in one who is drawn into and enters adoptive divine childhood by this very act. Since this act is primary and it remains throughout Christian life (unless lost by sin), the make-up of the act which includes divine goodness and human goods, the love of God and love of human fulfillment, is the matrix and paradigm for every other act of Christian life.

The stress I am placing upon the role of free choice, the suggestion that the point of insertion of the human participant in divinity precisely is in the choice--somewhat as the unity of Christ is in His person--is likely to raise a question about the situation of Christian infants, who surely share in divine life but who appear not to make any free choices. The question is twofold. What about their situation now? What about their situation if they should die without ever making a free choice?

Without trying to evade the difficulty, I point out first that the account I have been articulating is a theological extrapolation based upon the data of revelation. Revelation on the whole obviously is addressed as saving truth to those who can understand it and make choices; it is not personally addressed to infants. Therefore, how God cares for them is not likely to be clear in the sources of revelation, and endless controversies about the fate of infants seem to show this to be so. One always must remember that in theology one proceeds on faith, and one does not know how many other ways of doing things God might have in the reserves of His infinite wisdom and love. But for us who can do it, freely adhering to God in living faith is absolutely vital.

Second, we have no sure way of knowing that infants do not make certain free choices; we only have no evidence that they do. In particular, we do not know what happens to infants who die if they have not made any free choice before death. Perhaps they have an opportunity to do so in some interim condition of which we know nothing.[4]

Third, Christian life is not individualistic. We are sinners in Adam and sons of God in Christ. Children who cannot act at a specifically human level naturally are members of society in their families, through their parents or guardians.

The Church is the mother of all her children. Thus the infant does in some sense share in an act of faith which is in some way its own, appropriate to its age and condition: the faith of the Church. When we say, "We believe. . .," we include in the "we" our baptized infants and others who for whatever reason cannot make a free choice, but who are somehow incorporated in the Church. I am inclined to think that this is a sufficient act of faith for all purposes for these individuals. But I admit that I do not know how to apply this account to the make-up of the Christian infant whose adoptive share in divine life must inhere in it just as ours must inhere in us.

C. The love of God and of human goods cannot come into direct conflict

In section A I argued that there is no necessary conflict between the love of God and the love of basic human goods. Now I will show that there is no possible direct conflict between the love of God and the love of any other good.

Love is expressed in works (cf. 1 Jn 3.16). Living faith demands that one do the works of love (cf. LG 41). If one loves God, one loves what He loves, and He loves the goodness of all He makes (cf. Jn 8.42). God hardly would love human persons if he cared nothing for the fulfillment of the human desires which He Himself placed in their human hearts. These desires are directed toward human goods. Therefore, by holiness, by loving as God loves, "a more human way of life is promoted even in this earthly society" (LG 40).

The fundamental reason why natural and supernatural love cannot come into direct conflict is that divine love is all-inclusive. God first and foremost loves His goodness as it primarily and perfectly is: Himself. God's goodness includes every possible good; He is infinitely good. This goodness is manifested in God's work of creation and redemptive re-creation as I explained in chapter four, section G. This communication of divine goodness is the glory of God. God does not act to acquire glory; He needs nothing.

God loves creatures in loving Himself, for the good of everything is implicit in His own goodness; the good of everything other than God becomes explicit and stands forth by God's free, creative choice. God does not need to--and He cannot--choose between created goods and Himself. He can only choose among possible created goods. His

love extends to all of these possibilities so far as they would be good; His gratuitously exuberant choice makes some of these possibilities be.[5]

The love of God given us by the Spirit is a share in God's own love. Therefore, our supernatural love is all-inclusive as God's love is. First and foremost by this love we love God as He loves Himself. We are glad God is and is God; we are moved to express joy in praise: "Some God!" In loving God, we also love everything else insofar as it is good, for insofar as it is good, God's goodness is in it as manifested and shared. Our love for creatures does not cause them to be real, but it causes us to care especially for what God creates and recreates in Christ Jesus. "Some world!" The world consists to a great extent in possibilities which can be realized by human acts. And so the Christian is moved to say: "Some opportunities!" Human wisdom enriched with the wisdom of the Spirit says: "Some playground for the children of God!" (cf. Prv 8.30-31).

In other words, the Christian's love is fixed upon the total reality of completion in Christ, described in chapter four, section H. This completion includes divine and human persons, communing in perfect fellowship, fulfilled with every good. If we seek this kingdom, all else is added (cf. Mt 6.33), for to seek the kingdom is to begin to share in it, and to this initial share will be added everything which belongs to heavenly fulfillment.

One's own human fulfillment, therefore, <u>cannot</u> be excluded by supernatural love of God. In chapter six, section C, I explained that the real question about selfish and unselfish love is how one's most fundamental commitments establish order among one's own interests and the interests of others. If one's fundamental commitment is that of faith in Christ out of love of God, then the order is this: Insofar as one is united with God in fellowship, one's interests and God's interests are the same, and insofar as one is a human person and the unique individual one is, one's interests are one's personal share in God's interests. This inclusion of one's personal interests within the communal good of God's interests in no way compromises one's own interests, for infinite goodness has room for every finite good.

Vatican II lists and discusses many elements which make up the order of this world, as we live in it here and now. About these elements, it teaches:

> All of these not only aid in the attainment of man's ultimate goal but also possess their own intrinsic value. This value has been implanted in them by God, whether they are considered in themselves or as parts of the whole temporal order. "God saw all things that he had made, and it was very good" (Gn 1.31). This natural goodness of theirs takes on a special dignity as a result of their relation to the human person, for whose service they were created. Last of all, it has pleased God to unite all things, both natural and supernatural, in Christ Jesus "that in all things he may have the first place" (Col. 1.18). This destination, however, not only does not deprive the temporal order of its independence, its proper goals, laws, resources and significance for human welfare but rather perfects the temporal order in its own intrinsic strength and excellence and raises it to the level of man's total vocation upon earth (AA 7).

This teaching would make no sense if there could be a direct conflict between supernatural love of God and natural love of human goods. There can be no such conflict. This point is part of what is meant by the saying: Grace perfects nature and in no way mutilates it.

D. <u>What love requires of the Christian</u>

Having shown that there is neither a necessary nor even a possible conflict between divine and human goods in Christian life, I now turn to a further point, already expressed in the quotation from Vatican II at the end of section C, namely, that Christian love demands service to human goods.

The first point to notice is that the interests of every other person, just as one's own personal interests, are fully included in God's interests. For this reason, the interests of those who share in love of God cannot really conflict. For the fulfillment of all created persons in heavenly communion is part of what each adopted child of God loves, since this fulfillment is part of the totality of completion in Christ.

From this point of view, love of brothers in Christ is simply a matter of being consistent with oneself. St. John says:

> If anyone says, "my love is fixed on God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. One who has no love for the brother he has seen cannot love the God he has not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: whoever loves God must also love his brother (1 Jn 4.20-21; cf. Jn 15.12).

Sharing in the same divine love should mean <u>sharing</u> human goods, and failure to share the latter generously shows that the former is unreal--or that one is being dreadfully inconsistent with one's status as a child of God.

If people do truly love one another in a fully generous and sound way, they promote one another's true good. Thus human goods will be made to flourish abundantly. The act of faith, by which the Christian gives himself or herself to God will not be a package without contents, but a package full of human good things. John links faith and love of one another together, saying that the requirement of divine love is to believe in Jesus and to love one another (cf. 1 Jn 3.23).

Sometimes the question is raised whether the injunction to love the brothers--the command to Christians to love one another--is not narrow compared with the broader command to love one's neighbor, even to love one's enemy. I think the answer is negative; the difference is a matter of context. To tell a group of Christians as a group, "Love one another," is a very appropriate exhortation. And it is closely related to the love of God which they share together, as I have just explained. But such an exhortation could not be addressed to individuals singly, nor could it be addressed to a mixed audience--that is, to Christians and their enemies together.

The same love of God which demands that brothers and sisters in Christ love one another demands that all Christians love all their human fellows, even enemies, just as Jesus does. But the love of neighbor and of enemy is required because God's love

extends to those who do not (or not yet) share it and even to those who resist it. This reason for love is different from the immediate reason why fellow children of God will love one another, although the ultimate principle--supernatural love of God--is precisely the same.

The requirement to love one's neighbor also can be drawn from the general principle that love of God entails love of all the human goods, and these are realized only in the whole human family. Often one cannot do much to promote these goods except in a few persons, but one can always reverence the goods of persons. Thus, one loves one's least siblings by respecting their lives (cf. 1 Jn 3.12)--for example, by not aborting them. Hence, St. Paul teaches:

> He who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "you shall not commit adultery; you shall not murder; you shall not steal; you shall not covet," and any other commandment there may be are all summed up in this, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love never wrongs the neighbor, hence love is the fulfillment of the law (Rom 13.8-10).

Thus love of God demands service to all the basic human goods, at least the service of not violating the commandments which protect them. It is worth noticing that for St. John, it seems to be the case that love in action just <u>is</u> keeping the commandments (cf. 1 Jn 5.3). This interpretation makes a great deal of sense, for one cannot do anything for God in Himself, but one can do much for Him in one's neighbor.

Vatican II explains that human activity not only proceeds from human persons but is ordered to them. Human activity fulfills persons, and this aspect of what one does is more important than its technical results. On this basis the Council lays down a general moral standard:

> . . .the norm of human activity is this: that in accord with the divine plan and will, it should harmonize with the genuine good of the human race, and allow men as individuals and as members of society to pursue their total vocation and fulfill it (GS 35).

This norm expresses what love of God demands in respect to human goods, and it makes clear that such respect will contribute to the total human vocation, which is our calling to share in the heavenly kingdom where we hope to find completion in Christ.

E. <u>How is sin possible for Christians</u>?

If what I have been saying is so, then there can be no direct conflict between love of God and love of human goods. Indeed, the former demands the latter. But if this is so, how is sin possible? Even more, how can one who has entered into intimate communion with God lose the gift of His love?

In part three I will explain in some detail how every choice depends upon love of a basic human good. Thus, even when one sins, one does so for the sake of some good one loves. However, one who sins in seeking fulfillment in some human good does so by proceeding in a way which blocks fulfillment in others. Every choice, good or bad, is among human goods. But as I already explained briefly in chapter five, section D, not every existential self-realization by choice is morally good.

Goodness is not in any and every realization of one's possibilities, but in that way of realizing them which is open to further and fuller fulfillment. In a good choice, one sets oneself toward some fulfillment, and does not close oneself against any human fulfillment. In a bad choice, one not only sets oneself toward some fulfillment but also partially closes oneself to some human fulfillment.

One naturally and spontaneously loves each of the basic human goods; that is why people can care about and become interested in all sorts of things. Choices become necessary when particular possibilities for satisfying various interests come into conflict. When this happens, some interests can be satisfied and others not; some of one's basic thrusts toward fulfillment will issue in joy and others not. In morally good choices, none of these thrusts toward fulfillment is constricted or suppressed. In morally bad choices, some of them are constricted or suppressed. For example, if one chooses to solve a problem by hurting someone else, one constricts or suppresses one's own basic thrust toward community, toward getting along with people. But if one chooses to have lunch with a friend in Washington rather than to go to a concert in Baltimore, one's thrust toward the beauty of music is not constricted or suppressed, although for the time being it is not satisfied.

I will explain more fully in part five how moral evil not only harms others--for example, when one violates one of the commandments and harms one's neighbor--but also mutilates oneself, precisely insofar as one is a person fulfilled by making free choices. Moral evil is a kind of existential suicide. If one loves God, one loves those whom He loves. God loves life, not death. Therefore, although God can and does love morally evil people, He simply cannot love their moral evil, for this deprives them of their own human fulfillment. If one loves as God loves, one cannot love oneself as morally evil. One must hate oneself insofar as one is morally evil. But if one freely chooses to be and to remain morally evil, then one loves oneself as morally evil. Therefore, one who chooses in a morally evil way cannot love God. One cannot be open to infinite Goodness if one is closed against that participation in it which is an aspect of one's own personal fulfillment.

It follows that sin separates one from the love of God not by being a choice of a human good in direct preference to love of God, but by being a choice which violates one human good for the sake of another.[6] One need not and cannot directly choose between supernatural and natural love, between divine goodness and basic human goods. But one must choose among human goods, and one can do this in a way which God cannot love. Those who do this can know that in doing it they are breaking off their communion with God. This is so of anyone who deliberately commits a mortal sin. One can choose among human goods in a wrong way despite this awareness of what one is doing to one's relationship to God.

In this sense, whatever good one wrongly preferred is being taken in preference to love of God. So one can say that in sin one loves a merely human good in preference to

God, but this is an abbreviated way of saying that in sin one wrongly loves one human good in a way which infringes upon another, and in doing this loves oneself so badly that one cannot continue in communion with God, since this communion requires one to love oneself well, as God does, with openness to the whole possibility of one's human fulfillment.

F. The dynamics of sin, the devil, and hell

One who has entered into divine communion cannot lose the gift of God's love. It is imperishable and is very safe in the keeping of the Spirit. God does not abort His children nor does He allow spontaneous abortions from the womb of the Church. One has to abort oneself. One can do this because one's human freedom is respected, not taken away, by the love of God, and because in the present life Christians live by faith, not by sight.

If one knew God as one is known, one could not deprive oneself of the joy of such great good (cf. DS 443/228a). But at present, one's human acts, even when done out of love of God, bear directly not upon divine goodness known in itself, but upon this goodness mediated by faith and participated in one's neighbors. Hence, it is possible for one who has accepted the gift of communion with God and become His adopted child to become prodigal by refusing to live up to what faith teaches and by failing to respond to Christ's needs in one's hungry, thirsty, and generally miserable and needy neighbors.

The present situation of Christians is midway between the situation of those who have not received the Spirit of adoption and the situation of the blessed in heaven. Those who have not been redeemed in Christ and given the gift of His Spirit cannot avoid sin (cf. Rom 1.16-3.20). They long for the gift of the Spirit who alone can enable them to keep God's law (cf. Ez 36.26-27; 37.14; Is 32.15-19; Zec 12.10). The Christian has received the Spirit, who is the power of God; nothing can separate Christians from God's love in Christ (cf. Rom 8.38-39). In principle the Christian is sinless (cf. 1 Jn 3.3-9), yet anyone who claims in fact to be sinless is engaged in rationalization (cf. 1 Jn 1.8-10). In heaven, the blessed no longer can be unfaithful to God, can no longer break communion with Him.

At the same time, they can no longer give God that supreme gift of love: fidelity amidst obstacles and temptations to infidelity. The blessing of this opportunity is reserved for Christians living here and now, living by faith: Blessed are those who do not see, yet are faithful (cf. Jn 20.29).

The New Testament makes abundantly clear that one of the obstacles and sources of temptation is the devil. The Church constantly assumes and asserts that diabolical powers are real and personal; Vatican II continues the traditional teaching (cf. GS 37). The gift of the Spirit frees Christians from the power of the devil (cf. SC 6). But one who deliberately commits grave sin also throws away this privilege (cf. 1 Jn 3.8, 10, 12).

Today many prefer "personified evil" to "devil" or "Satan," to suggest that the devil is an idea rather than a person. I see nothing but wishful thinking to support this suggestion, although it seems clear that in New Testament times the various personal and impersonal sources of evil were no more completely sorted out than the various kinds of skin disease were distinguished from each other. The imprecision of "devil" in the New Testament does not mean that there was and is no devil any more than the imprecision of "leprosy" means that there was and is no such disease.

More practically important than the devil is the possibility of oneself ending in hell. I have said something about this in chapter four, section O. It is worth noticing that Vatican II's teaching on hell, while brief, is clear; the Council warns us to be careful, to stand guard constantly, lest we miss our present, our only opportunity for sharing in heaven (cf. LG 48). Having clarified to some extent what it means to share in divine life, I can now indicate somewhat more exactly why some persons lose it forever.

Love of God must be accepted by a creature with freedom, and this freedom must for this very reason be faithful to the goods proper to the creature. If an angelic or a human person constitutes a self which is not open to his or her own good, then that self is not compatible with love of God. God cannot do anything about this without either coercing the creature's freedom--and thus in reality destroying that freedom and the self constituted by it--or simply annihilating the creature altogether. However, evil is in the privation; the freedom and the being of the damned are good to the extent that they are. God loves these goods; they manifest His own goodness. And so He cannot destroy them.

The best God can do is to try every means possible to win the love of created persons. The length to which He goes is shown in our Lord Jesus. What He may have done to prevent the sin of the angels we do not know. But we can be certain that any created person who does not accept an offer of eternal life prefers a self more narrowly limited than the self would have had to be to remain open to or remain in God's love. Such a person does not want to share in divine life. God is faithful; He respects the gift of freedom He gave and does not withdraw it despite this abuse of it.

The more we love God, the more clearly we realize that He makes no arbitrary rules to trip us up and imposes no arbitrary punishments to make us suffer. Our evildoing diminishes His glory only in ourselves. His concern about the sin of creatures is the harm they do themselves and the misery they inflict on one another. The latter must be permitted for the time being, but those who suffer unjustly will receive their compensation. Meanwhile, as God's children love Him more purely, as they rid themselves of remnants of adolescent rebellion, they realize how ideal a Father He is. And so perfect love engenders confidence and excludes anxiety (cf. 1 Jn 3.18-22; 4.17-18).

G. Actual grace and human action

In chapter four, especially section F, I explained that human actions and goods are not possessions of persons extrinsic to them, but are what make up a complete human person. This fact throws light from another angle upon the relationship between the

divine life in which we share and the human life we live. If we did not live a fully human life, we would not fully share in divine life, not because the gift would be diminished, but because we would not be fully--a necessary condition for sharing fully. The more an adopted child of God flourishes, the more like the Father he or she becomes. And flourishing is in acting, not in death, not in sleep, not in inertness. The Spirit's gift of love is to the whole adopted child, and as the child grows, the gift grows --or, better, the gift nourishes the child until he or she matures to the full stature of a new person in Christ (cf. Eph 4.14-15).

The gift of the Spirit as a principle of Christian action and living clarifies the meaning of "actual grace."[7] The Church firmly, constantly, and definitively teaches that no one becomes an adopted child of God, no one lives up to this status, and no one reaches heaven except by the work of God. This work of God, an utterly free gift on His part, brings about in us everything which heals sin and contributes to sanctity unto eternal life (cf. DS 1525-1526, 1544, 1546, 1551-1553, 1566, 1568, 1572/797-798, 808, 811-813, 826, 828, 832). At the same time, God's work in us in no way eliminates our own free choice; with God's grace we must cooperate (cf. DS 1525, 1529, 1541, 1554/797. 799, 806, 814).

The problem which is raised by this teaching is: If God does it all, how can we freely and responsibly do anything? If we really make a difference, how can one suppose that the whole process and outcome of our redemption and sanctification is from first to last God's work?

The seeming paradox is contained in Scripture itself. Paul says that we are truly God's "handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to lead the life of good deeds which God prepared for us in advance" (Eph 2.10). Jesus says that only those drawn by the Father come to Him (cf. Jn 6.44). On the other hand, there are constant exhortations, including ones urging and insisting that grace be used well (cf. Rom 2.4-11; 2 Cor 6.1; Acts 7.51). Paul tells his converts to "work with anxious concern to achieve your salvation" (Phil 2.12), which would make no sense if they could not do anything about it. Clearly, everything is God's work and something also is ours.

Neither set of texts can be taken in isolation, nor should complex ideas be split up. For example, Jesus says: "He who lives in me and I in him, will produce abundantly, for apart from me you can do nothing" (Jn 15.5). The first two phrases make clear that we do something, indeed, a great deal, if we live in Christ; the last phrase by itself might be taken to mean the opposite. Paul says: "By God's favor [grace] I am what I am. This favor of his to me has not proved fruitless. Indeed, I have worked harder than all the others, not on my own but through the favor of God" (1 Cor 15.10). In these two sentences, the paradox appears twice.

In popular Catholic thought and piety, the difficulty often is clouded over and the truth of the Gospel and the Church's teaching greatly obscured by the supposition that God does a good deal and we do the rest. The relationship is imagined to be like any ordinary cooperation. This sense often is given to the saying: Work as if everything depended on yourself; pray as if everything depended on God. The assumption is that in fact what depends on you does not depend on God. This is false, and to suppose it is true is to dishonor God, to reduce His mysterious reality, and to claim for oneself what is not one's own--namely, exclusive credit for what one does by one's own free choice and action.

I think the problem about actual grace can be clarified--although the mystery cannot be dissolved--by making a distinction between those cases in which one who enjoys the gift of the Spirit and lives in God's love acts as God's child, and those other cases in which one not yet converted or one fallen into mortal sin contributes something by God's help to entering or reentering intimacy with Him.

In the first set of cases, one meaning of the "grace of God" is the gift of the Spirit, insofar as this gift makes one not merely an adopted child of God, but a living and acting and flourishing adopted child of God. Another meaning of the "grace of God" simply is the love of God poured forth in one's heart and inhering in it, insofar as this share of one's own in divine life not only is one's status as a divine child but is one's status and performance and flourishing as a divine child.

But there is still a third meaning of "grace of God," which one must not overlook. The human existence and action--everything properly belonging to the human person as human--is created. As such, it is totally dependent upon divine causality for its reality --not only for its beginning but for its enduring in reality. Hence, the whole human life of the adopted child of God depends upon God, just as every other creature does, for its reality.

But divine causality in this case is having a remarkable effect: Christian life. And since we speak of God by relational predication, this remarkable effect must be attributed to Him in a special way. It is a gift, a grace. It is very rightly called such because of the relationship of this created reality--Christian life--to the love of God in one's heart and to the gift of the Spirit to Whom this love is owed. On this account, actual grace, at work in the Christian's life, to the extent that it is something other than the grace of justification (often called "sanctifying grace") primarily is divine causality--considered as special because it is special--producing the very special effect which Christian life is.

But this leaves the other set of cases: God's help to those not yet converted and to those fallen into sin. It seems to me that this help also is divine causality--"grace of God" in the third sense--considered as special because it is special in bringing sinners into or back into divine intimacy.

"Grace" also refers to Christian life itself considered as an effect of such divine causality. Moreover, "grace" is used in an extended sense for any created entity--one's mother, a retreat, a chance encounter on a train--which ties fruitfully into the order of salvation. All such things are gifts of God; He creates them and providentially orders them to draw persons to Him or to make them grow in His love. But "grace" is said here in a very different sense than in any of the previous uses.

Now, two things cause trouble. First, to the extent that "grace" means divine causality, one is confronted with the mystery of the compatibility between God's causing

all creatures and created persons making created free choices. This mystery is insoluble, for we do not know what God is in Himself and do not know what it is for Him to cause. "Cause" is used in a unique sense of Him, and so we have no basis for--what is the troublesome supposition--thinking that if God causes a choice it cannot be free. God creates, gives reality to, human persons making free choices. We do not know how He does it, but neither do we know how He creates raindrops falling on our heads. This case is another instance of a general problem I discussed briefly in chapter one, sections C-E.

Second, it often is supposed that actual grace is a created entity other than human acts themselves--not an obvious entity such as a mother, a retreat, or a chance encounter, but a mysterious psychic or spiritual entity, like an unconscious impulse. Now if actual grace were this, if it helped us by unconscious pushes and tugs, it would be incompatible with human free choice. Then it would be true that the more such impulses did, the less we did, and the more we did, the less they did.

Fortunately, nothing in Scripture or Catholic teaching requires us to believe in such mysterious pushes and tugs. Therefore, while grace remains mysterious, we can be confident that there is nothing absurd in the idea that God's grace bestows our whole Christian life on us--everything we are and everything we do and everything we have, absolutely everything--and that a very important part of what God bestows is a human nature, human abilities, human freedom, human choices, human acts, human flourishing, and the sublime gift of our own share in His own divine life which transforms our humanity and everything which belongs to it into the fulfillment of an adopted child of God. Therefore, we ought to pray because everything depends on God; we ought to work because our ability and our work are a very important part of God's good gifts to us.

H. Transition

The main purpose of the present chapter is to show the relationship between Christian life in this present world and eternal life lived in the completion of all things in Christ. However, up to this point for the most part I have been laying groundwork by describing the complex make-up of Christian life. The Christian is a human person who lives a human life, but the Christian also is an adopted child of God in whom inheres as his or her own a share in divinity--the love of God communicated by the Holy Spirit. By virtue of this love, the Christian is united with God by living faith and through the medium of faith, which is a human act, enabled to shape the whole of his or her human life by God's love. Christian life is altogether God's work but it also is the work of Christians themselves, lived by the dynamism of the love of God poured forth in their hearts--and so lived by the power of and in fellowship with the Holy Spirit who constantly communicates this love.

Now, building on this foundation, I am going to deal with the ways in which Christian life here and hereafter is one continuous life and the ways in which this life and the next are quite distinct. Of course, I already treated one major point of distinction in sections E and F: At present Christians can sin and hell still is a real possibility; in heaven this no longer will be so. But this distinction, important as it is, is not what I am mainly concerned with in this chapter.

The problem rather is the unity and distinction of the now and the then in Christian life precisely insofar as it is Christian. Christians sin: not insofar as they are Christians. We sin insofar as we fall short of our calling, insofar as we betray God and are unfaithful to the Spirit. Sin aside, Christian life in this world is not what it is going to be, yet it also is what it is going to be. Throughout the New Testament one notices that the kingdom both already is and will continue to be, and is not yet but is about to be. Thus the question arises: Of present Christian life, what lasts and how does it last?

There are three levels at which this question must be considered. The most important level absolutely is that of communion with God, the status and life of the Christian as an adopted child of God. What is already and what is yet to come at this level? A second level, less important absolutely but tremendously important for moral theology, is that of human acts. Of the life we live now, what is going to last? (One also can ask what surprises God might have in store for His human children as human in heaven, but revelation says little about this, and so I will say no more than what I already said in chapter four, section M.) A third level, one I think more significant than generally has been realized, is that of bodily reality--or, in general, the dimensions of human persons other than their share in divine life and their human acts. Since we look forward to a new heavens and a new earth, since we are aware especially that we must die to reach our heavenly home and live there with Jesus and Mary, we tend to think that nothing at this level lasts. But in an important sense this is not so. I shall try to show why it is not so.

The discussion to follow is one of tremendous practical importance for Christian life. The point can be made clear by a parable.

A certain young man, having graduated from college and not yet settled into a job, was taking a leisurely approach to life. He worried little about how he spent his days, because he had the feeling that all of life lay ahead, and that no particular day could possibly make much difference. But one morning an angel appeared to him and gave him a box containing a large picture puzzle. "Put this together today, my son." the mysterious presence said. "If you complete it by nightfall, I will see to it that you inherit an estate of one hundred million dollars."

The young man went to work with great intensity. This day was not just a day like any other. He worked very hard. But he took no joy in what he was doing. Finally, as nightfall came, the young man put the last piece in place. "I made it!" he shouted exultantly. The angel soon appeared and gave the young man details of his forthcoming inheritance. He would have to wait to receive the principal, but meanwhile he would receive an adequate allowance.

As the young man rejoiced and planned his future, he thought over his big day. During it, he had been so busy that it had not seemed too bad. But upon reflection, the

young man realized that only his success made the day itself worthwhile. Had he failed, it would have been the worst day of his life. And had he been required to live his whole life in that fashion, he would not have done so for all the gold in Fort Knox.

Now, another young man, similarly situated, also was visited by an angel. But this angel had a different proposal. "Try to make today a perfect day. Live it the way you would like to live every day of your life." The young man's first thought was that he would arrange as pleasant a day as possible, indulge himself, and spend the evening in sensual delights. But the angel, as if reading his mind, went on: "Apart from one thing, I guarantee you that every day of your life will be like today. The one thing is this, any bodily pleasure you have today will be missing from what you do in the future."

When the angel disappeared, the young man thought for quite a while. What he did today was absolutely vital, for he was going to have to live the same way for the rest of his life. But pleasure was out, for if he spent his day as he had first thought, his whole future life would be empty. The only thing to do was to spend the day doing those things which he found most interesting and worthwhile. If the bodily pleasure which happened to accrue would be missing in the future, still the young man would have a rich, full, truly joyous life.

So the young man lived a very good day. When evening came, the angel reappeared. "Did you have a good day?" the angel asked. "Wonderful," the young man said with quiet satisfaction. "It was the best day of my entire life." "Well, then," the angel replied, "you have already received what I promised you. Proceed now to live every day just as you did today."

The point of the parable is this. Of those who take Christian life seriously at all, many, perhaps most, live it as the first young man spent his day. So lived, it lacks joy and as a lifetime proposition it is virtually impossible. However, I think that one can live Christian life much more as the second young man spent his day. So lived, it is joyous and as a lifetime proposition overwhelmingly attractive. However, to approach Christian life in this way, one must see clearly that much (not everything--the second young man had to abandon some delights) and what is really the most important part of present life will last. So the discussion to follow has great practical importance, <u>for it concerns</u> not only what is yet to come, but also <u>what lasts</u>.

I. <u>Communing in the Spirit</u>

At the level of the status of the Christian as an adopted child of God, Vatican II speaks traditionally and clearly about what is yet to come and what lasts:

> Joined with Christ in the Church and signed with the Holy Spirit "who is the pledge of our inheritance" (Eph 1.14), we are truly called sons of God and such we are (cf. 1 Jn 3.1). But we have not yet appeared with Christ in the state of glory (cf. Col 3.4), in which we shall be like to God, since we shall see Him as He is (cf. 1 Jn 3.2) (LG 48).

Our status as adopted children of God which involves fellowship with the Holy Spirit will last; the full experience of divine life is yet to come.

A pledge is a downpayment; it is part of what one will receive. When one receives the rest, one does not lose the downpayment. Thus, if the gift of the Holy Spirit is to last, there must be something about our status as adopted children of God which will remain forever.

Most obviously, this very status is to last. And it is worth noticing that this status has certain real aspects which will last.

We are not adopted as isolated individuals, but as members of the Church. This is so because one and the same Holy Spirit communicates divine life to all of God's adopted children. Thus He not only vivifies the Church but also unifies it. The Spirit is to the Body of Christ as a soul is to an organic body (cf. LG 7). The unity in multiplicity of the Church is itself a reflection of the Holy Trinity, upon which the Church is modeled by the Holy Spirit (cf. UR 2). Thus the fellowship of adopted children of God in the life of the Church will last in heaven.

The Church already is united with Christ; adopted divine children enjoy their life through and in Him. Part of the Church, at least one human person, Mary, already enjoys heavenly bodily and spiritual glory (cf. LG 68). The closer we are to Jesus and Mary, the better we realize that the full experience of divine life for which we hope already is given to us to the extent that it is enjoyed by these good friends of ours. The situation is like that of a family having a bad bout of the flu, one member after another being afflicted. When the first fully recovers, everyone's hope for recovery begins to be fulfilled.

A nature is a principle of action; so it would seem that a share in the divine nature would entail a share in divine action. The supernatural love which is our share in the divine nature is a disposition to divine fulfillment. The full experience of divine life which Mary enjoys and for which we hope is this fulfillment. She knows God as God knows her; she is like Him for she sees Him as He is (1 Cor 13.12; 1 Jn 3.2). At present, we do not share in such purely divine action. This is the one hundred million dollars yet to come.

Someone might object that even now we do in a way share in divine action. For when one infallibly proposes divine truth, forgives sins, brings about miraculous cures, and so on one is doing things which are beyond mere human power. The answer is that one does share in divine action in such cases, but only by way of one's own human action, which is united with Christ. The effect is brought about by Him through the power of the Spirit. In such cases, one need not express <u>one's own divine action</u> in one's human act, as Christ does. Indeed, a person separated from God's love by mortal sin can share in divine action by virtue of a relationship to Christ--for example, one in mortal sin can validly administer the sacraments (DS 1612/855).

Although we do not now experience divine life fully, we do human acts out of love of God, including many acts which we absolutely could not do if we did not share in divine life by adoption. A prime example is the act of living faith itself. The whole

of Christian life carried out in living faith--the life of sanctity as such to which we are called--is possible only because of love, for faith works in the whole of such a life only through love.

The acts of such a life are not unnatural, as if they were contrary to human goods; as human acts they fulfill human persons, and in this sense they are quite natural. But they also are supernatural in the sense that they are what they are by the grace of God, the gift of love which is given to bear fruit and bears it. Will the very supernaturality, the holiness of such acts remain?

In one sense, the answer must be negative, for faith itself and the present friendship of Christians with God will pass away. But this point can be misunderstood. What passes is the limitations, not the positive aspects, of such human acts involved in one's personal relationship with God. The human fulfillment in divine friendship--which includes a communing in the Spirit with the Father and the Son--that one can enjoy now in virtue of God's love in one's heart will remain as fulfillment; it will pass away only in respect to its limitations.

According to the promise of Jesus, the Spirit comes and remains (cf. Jn 14.16-18). He is not with us only as a principle, but present in Person. The children of God are not left in loneliness like orphans. The Spirit instructs (cf. Jn 14.26). He defends and guides (cf. Jn 16.7-14; Gal 5.25). Because of the presence of the Spirit, we have a concrete realization that we are children of God (cf. Rom 8.16). We cry out to God: "Daddy!" (cf. Rom 8.15). The Spirit makes up for our infantile condition by helping us in our weakness (cf. Rom 8.26-27). He takes a personal interest in our growth in the Christian life (cf. Eph 4.30). The entire book of Acts tells much about Christian life lived in clear consciousness of the full-time companionship of the Spirit. By this companionship, Jesus also is present to His disciples and remains with the Church all days.

St. John makes it clear that fellowship with the Spirit has a definite empirical aspect. The Spirit makes us know that Christ remains in us (cf. 1 Jn 3.24). The Spirit makes clear to us that we are in God and God in us (cf. 1 Jn 4.13). How does He do this?

In seeking to answer this question, one is tempted to look for the extraordinary and to ignore the ordinary manifestation of the Spirit in Christian life. Faith itself really is something quite remarkable, for by it we can adhere with amazing assurance and steadiness to our heavenly Father, accept and defend the mysterious truth of our Lord Jesus, and remain relatively calm amidst great difficulties (cf. 1 Jn 4.1-6; 2 Cor 5.16-6.10; Heb 11). Faith is aroused and sustained by the Spirit (cf. LG 12). Thus, people conscious of the faith that is in them have empirical evidence of the gift and continuing presence of the Spirit.

The prophets hoped for the Spirit to enable God's People to keep His word; Christians who cooperate with grace can experience this power of the Spirit in their lives. Thus anyone who lives a Christian life and experiences growth in likeness to Christ has personal experience of the presence of the Spirit. Of course, what I am saying by no means denies that at times there are extraordinary manifestations of the presence of the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 12.8-10). But living faith working through love is a greater gift and a surer experience of the fellowship of the Spirit than is any extraordinary occurrence, since such occurrences can be the work of spirits other than the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Jn 4.1; 1 Thes 5.19-22).

Many Christians have lacked awareness of the presence and work of the Spirit. Devotion to one's guardian angel, while excellent in itself, sometimes has served as a substitute for the devotion we ought to have to the Holy Spirit. He is our primary dear Angel, ever at our side; we are committed to His care by God's love; He lights, guards, rules, and guides us in the way of the Lord Jesus. Nevertheless, it seems to me that some at present are pressing to excess a desire for intense, explicit awareness of the presence of the Spirit.

In my view, each of the three divine Persons should be present in our religious experience somewhat differently from the others. The Father revealed Himself as the transcendent God; we ought to be aware of His presence in creation, in the given realities of faith and Christian life, and in the demands which Christian morality makes upon our consciences. The Son revealed Himself to us by coming among us as man, as another man like us; we ought to be aware of His presence in the Liturgy, in the leaders and fellow members of the Church, in the needs of all men and women. The Spirit reveals Himself to us as a mentor in living the divine life; we ought to be aware of His presence as God with us, alongside us in our Christian lives.

A young brain surgeon assisting in a delicate operation is adequately aware of the more experienced colleague, who is the chief of the operating team, if the younger surgeon collaborates smoothly and adaptably. The junior physician cannot do this effectively if he or she pays attention to the elder colleague as he or she would to a dinner companion or to the chief of staff's address to a conference. Not yet face to face, but already side by side, the Christian rejoices in the experience of the Holy Spirit.

By this analogy I by no means wish to suggest that the adopted child of God is equal to the uncreated Spirit. Since He is the natural Spirit of God, we the adopted children, the fruit of our common work is His in ways that it never can be ours. The Spirit is the soul of the Church; the Church is our mother in Christ, the mother of all God's little ones. We might well think of ourselves as very embryonic children, snug in the womb of the Church, dependent for our divine life upon the Spirit, much as a natural embryo depends for all its life and functioning upon the life-force of its mother, to which it is joined by the placenta.

Surely in heaven we will enjoy in the exercise of our native human capacities a great awareness of the divine Persons with whom we will be sharing our entire lives, including our lives as the particular human individuals we are. But even now we have some experience of the three divine Persons with us. It varies from the experience we all have at times of God's closeness in our prayers and our daily work to the experience of a martyr like St. Stephen (cf. Acts 7.55-56) or of a mystic like St. John of the Cross. In all but its limitations and imperfections, such experience will last.

J. The importance of the lasting significance of human acts

In chapter four, section M, I discussed to some extent the enduring reality of human actions. Now I wish to consider the topic again in view of the analyses developed since then. Here my special focus is on the question of the way in which Christian life in this present world contributes to life in heaven.

Very often this relationship is understood in terms of merit, and merit is thought of as a claim to a promised reward, along the lines of the situation of the first young man in the parable in section H. Now, there can be no question of denying that adopted children of God acting with the power of grace do merit growing intimacy with God and their heavenly reward. The Church definitively teaches this; the Council of Trent made it abundantly clear against Protestants who denied it (cf. DS 1545-1550/809-810; 1582/842). However, while the parable should not be pressed too hard in respect to details, I think the relationship between Christian life in this world and heavenly life--and hence merit--ought to be understood somewhat along the lines of the situation of the second young man in the parable. There is an intrinsic relationship, not merely an imposed and arbitrary one, between living a good Christian life now and living with God forever. And what we do now in Christ is part of the promised reward.

One of the most discussed theological questions about merit is the question of its relationship to grace. This question is nothing but part of the question of the relationship between grace and human action already treated in section G. Since absolutely everything related to and making up the life of an adopted child of God is God's work, all of it--all without exception--is due to His grace. No matter how one understands merit, merit and all its preconditions and consequences in us results wholly from God's free and generous gift. Thus, the following discussion in no way compromises or calls into question this fundamental principle.

The situation of the first young man in the parable is not a promising model for Christian life. There are several reasons for this.

One difficulty is brought out in the parable itself. One who does not see the enduring value in what he or she is doing is likely to find the activity burdensome. Work which is done with no sense of fulfillment in the working itself becomes alienated labor; it is drudgery and lacks inherent meaning. One would not do it if one were not pressed by the promised reward to do it. Unfortunately, many Christians look at Christian life in this way; this view leads to a kind of legalistic minimalism: What do I <u>have</u> to do to get my reward? In Christian life, not even labor ought to be viewed in this way (cf. LG 41).

Another difficulty follows from the first. Anyone at times must do some things which seem pointless but are necessary for an extrinsic end. For example, no program is so ideal that any student does not at times find himself or herself having to meet requirements which seem a waste of time. One can put up with a certain amount of this sort of thing. But nobody can go through the whole of life fulfilling meaningless requirements. Men who must do much alienated labor--for example, poor laborers--still do it for the hours when they can putter around the house, play with the kids, eat, watch television, have a beer, and bed the good wife.

Now, if Christians see the whole of their lives as alienated labor in respect to heaven, they nevertheless will have to, and so they will, spend what time they can in intrinsically fulfilling activity. But since this activity is intrinsically fulfilling, they will have a hard time seeing any relationship between it and heaven. The result is that much of Christian life is placed outside the sphere of faith. Faith becomes an issue only when specifically religious acts (saying the rosary in the evening) or the moral demands of the Church's teaching (being faithful to the good wife) come into play.

A third difficulty is that if one thinks of Christian life as alienated labor, there is likely to be a great deal of resentment. Children hate to be told they must do chores <u>before</u> they can go out to play. A sense of oppression, brought to consciousness, is a tremendous power for revolution, as the marxists realize. Likewise, Christians who think that living a good life in this world is a merely extrinsic means for getting to heaven are likely to feel more or less imposed upon--more, the more they feel the demands of Christian life.

Christian life should be a building on sound foundations to do the Father's will as a constructive piece of work (cf. Lk 6.46-49; Mt 7.21-27). If the will of the Father is perceived as that of an arbitrary despot, Christian life instead becomes a pure burden. If, on the contrary, one has a firm, even if not very clear, sense that one is doing something significantly connected with a worthwhile outcome, then one can have a sense of participation. Children like to <u>help</u> mom bake a cake or <u>help</u> dad fix the car. As soon as the sense of cooperation is present, a Christian is able to work with satisfaction. Our heavenly Father has odd ideas about how to get things done, but He no doubt knows what He is doing. The yoke becomes sweet and the burden light, for love makes it so (cf. Mt 11.30; 1 Jn 5.1-5).

A fourth difficulty with extrinsicism is that one who feels that moral requirements are arbitrary is likely to begin to make up his or her own. For example, if there is no intelligible connection between Christian sexual morality and heavenly happiness, then surely a kind and loving Father will not mind very much if we have a bit of fun now and then. Everybody's doing it, including some fine Christians. So it must really be the case that among consenting adults, what feels good and hurts nobody is right.

Vatican II has taught clearly and in several places that human goods should be pursued and somehow integrated into the heavenly kingdom (cf. AA 7; LG 31, 36; GS 39). I have treated this point to some extent in chapter four, sections M and N. I wish now to show more precisely how Christian life now is related to eternal life.

K. Love of God and love of lasting human goods

Vatican II specifically states that after we have served Christ in this world and nurtured on earth all the good fruits of our human nature and work, we will find them again in a purified condition in heaven (cf. GS 39). In sections C and D of the present

chapter I have explained how love of God and love of human goods cannot conflict, and have shown that the former demands the latter. Here I wish to clarify both of these points in relationship to one another. In this way, some light will be thrown on some very sound traditional devotional ideas: that one should do everything for God's glory and should offer up each day's prayers and works, joys and sufferings, in union with the sacred heart of Jesus and the immaculate heart of Mary.

Vatican II teaches that married love by its very nature is ordained to having and bringing up children. God, who created marriage, blessed it: Be fruitful. Therefore, real married love has as one of its chief purposes:

> that the couple be ready with stout hearts to cooperate with the love of the Creator and Savior, who through them will enlarge and enrich His own family day by day.
>
> Parents should regard as their proper mission the task of transmitting human life and educating those to whom it has been transmitted. They should realize that they are thereby cooperators with the love of God the Creator, and are, so to speak, the interpreters of that love (GS 50).

The tremendous significance of these brief explanations often is overlooked, because they are regarded as mere packaging for the Council's inconclusive and rather equivocal statement about contraception.

What the Council is saying is that Christian parents in having and raising children are pro-creating: They are helping God create new members of His family. Clearly, if one does this, one's love of God is expressed in human goods: in all of the goods to be realized in one's children. And these goods, to the extent that one hopefully entrusts them to God, are destined to last in heaven. Moreover, Christian parents not only are pro-creating, they also are pro-redeeming. For Christian parents bring up their children to love Christ, and thus they share in the work of their children's redemption. By God's grace this sanctification will last. Parents who have and raise their children for God are not engaged in a senseless, arbitrarily imposed task.

Of course, human persons, even adopted children of God, do not create in a strict sense. Only the Trinity creates. But God has chosen to create children in such a way that they depend for their very existence upon parents. In doing this, He has given those who are parents a greater likeness to Himself than they otherwise would have. If I were not a father--something an angel cannot be--I would be without one way in which I am like the Father. Thus, God has as it were made His own work more complicated; He could simply have created persons without parents--angels. But the additional complexity more fully manifests the divine goodness, for it ennobles creatures who thus share in His likeness not only by being what they are but also by causing others to be with a certain generosity and exuberance. Parents, after all, give much and get little in having and raising children.

A similar line of clarification can be applied to the redemptive aspect of the work of Christian parents. They act for and with Christ, not as though His redemptive work were somehow deficient, but because He has chosen to share with us not only His divine life which is our blessing in being redeemed but also the human fulfillment which is His glory in redeeming. Just as God chose that humankind would be redeemed only by Mary's consent, so He has chosen that His adopted children shall come to Him by their parents' commitment. If all Christians are God, all Christian parents are parents of God. As Mary cooperates in redemption (cf. LG 56), so do all Christian parents.

One might say that these points are well enough taken with respect to having and raising children. But most of life is spent by most people in doing other things. What about all the other activities of Christian life?

The answer is that every good human act issues in some human good in some person or persons. A teacher obviously plays part of a parental role; so does a priest; so do physicians and nurses, cooks and sanitary workers, and so on. If one only looks at what one is doing, even at one's labor when it appears quite meaningless, one can find some way in which it does contribute or can be made to contribute to the fulfillment of someone, even if only of oneself. All of Christian life thus can be seen as an extension of Christian parenting, by which God's love is expressed in human goods which are intended to last, and with God's grace will last, forever.

The glory of God is the manifestation of His goodness in creation. To pursue lasting human goods for the love of God is to act for His glory. Thus one who does everything for God's glory is not merely scribling or muttering a pious slogan, but is living a life worthwhile now and forever. Similarly, all these goods will contribute to the completion of all things in Christ, a completion in which Mary has a real, personal interest. Therefore, one who thoughtfully makes the morning offering and lives by its sense is finding meaning in life which is missing from the lives of those who do not understand their work as real and effective cooperation with the work of Christ.

The importance and richness of these points demands that they be unfolded, perhaps somewhat repetitiously, from several points of view. Indeed, the remainder of this work will be devoted to unfolding them. The following reflections are organized according to the principle of focusing upon distinct aspects of the complex interpersonal communion which constitutes completion in Christ: one's relationship to the Lord Jesus, to created persons other than oneself, to the Trinity, and to oneself.

L. The lasting-value of present Christian life in relational perspective

In chapter six, section F, I explained that love always involves priority for the one who has the initiative in forming the relationship. One who has such priority in some sense has authority--initiators are authors. In Christian life, our Lord Jesus has priority, not only insofar as He is God but also insofar as He is man. He loves us first. Our response to Him must be in a relationship He shapes. The completion of everything in Him is His before it is ours. And thus it is our responsibility to follow Him--to march with Him--and it is His to look out for us (cf. Eph 5.22-29).

One who submits to the authority of Christ is no more a slave than He, within the Trinity itself, is a slave of the Father. The personal self-communication of Jesus to

us has made us friends and sharers in His life and work. The fruit of submission is not alienated labor but perfect fulfillment--joy. And so if we love Christ we must keep His commandments. These are not arbitrary impositions. Rather, they guide us toward the human fulfillment of others and of ourselves, and this fruit will last (cf. Jn 15.9-17).

If one loves Jesus--and one should love Him considering what He is doing for us--then one wishes to be like Him. He set aside His divine glory, obeyed the Father, impoverished Himself for us, died for us (cf. LG 42). Out of love for Him, we should seek to be like Him in these ways too (cf. LG 40). To try to be so will yield a rich harvest of good which will last forever.

Thus, one way of looking at present Christian life is that in it we are building up a relationship with Jesus, a relationship which will last. And this relationship is not empty. Rather, it is filled with all the richness of the human lives He and we can share with one another and together foster in other human persons. Part three will center upon Christian life considered in this perspective.

If we love Christ, we must love the Church, since the Church is His Body, and is called to be perfected into His heavenly fullness (LG 48-49). All love of neighbor is shaped by one's neighbor being (or being called to be) in Christ--something everywhere expressed by St. Paul, but already implied in Matthew (cf. Mt 25.31-46). The unity of the Church is modeled after that of the Trinity itself; therefore, this unity should be one of love (cf. LG 4).

If one loves one's neighbor from this perspective, one's love is directed primarily but inclusively to one's neighbor's religious well-being. One seeks to communicate the Gospel in all its richness, and to increase the life of Christ in those who already enjoy it. To do this involves both words and deeds--as revelation always does (cf. DV 4). One who bears Christ in himself or herself reveals this treasure by kindly words and virtuous life. Thus Christian life as a whole becomes a form of proclamation (cf. AA 6, 8; GS 21, 93). Martyrdom is a supreme act of love of neighbor, since it is proclamation of the Gospel par excellance (cf. LG 42). One does not die for a mere idea.

This apostolic or missionary dimension of Christian life flows from the very nature of love. For love is out-going; the missionary work of the Church is rooted in the missions which the Father gave the Son and the Spirit to carry out His will to expand the divine family (cf. AG 2). Every Christian must seek to be faithful like Mary, and so help God's love to become incarnate in the world (cf. LG 65).

Thus a second way of looking at present Christian life is that in it we are building up the Body of Jesus, the Church. We are sharing with others the goods we enjoy in Christ. These goods are shaped by faith and a Christian interest in expanding the community of faith, but they are not limited to religious goods, since the deeds of a virtuous life--which can include the fostering of any true human good--also are necessary to proclaim the faith. One's relationship to those whom one serves in Christ is destined to last, and so are the goods in which they are fulfilled by one's efforts. Part four will center upon Christian life considered in this perspective.

The life of Jesus is a sacrifice offered to the Father. The work of the Church extends and perfects this sacrifice, by making it present always and everywhere. Sacrifice is a gift to God; a gift is a sign and means of communicating oneself to another. Thus Christian life can be looked at as an offering of oneself in love to God (cf. 2 Tm 4.6-8).

God gives Himself to us, gives all that He is: His very divine life. Our return in love is to give Him all that we are: our human life. From this point of view, Christian life is liturgy--not alienated labor of mumbled phrases, but a willing work of selfless service to God by prayer and to one's neighbor by good works of all sorts.

Considered from this perspective, Christian life necessarily has a somber aspect. God's first gift to humankind is forgiveness of sin. Our gifts to Him must always be colored by repentance--or, at least, by a love like that of Jesus which makes reparation for the sins of others. But reparation is not a useless formality. It is the only way to overcome the privation evil is. Reparation repairs. It makes holy by restoring wholeness to a creation mutilated by the black holes of sins.

Our lives in Christ, offered to the Father, make an acceptable gift, holy and pleasing to Him. The gift is filled with all the richness of the human goods realized in oneself and one's neighbor in proclaiming the Gospel out of love of Christ. In part five, the focus will be on this perspective; the inner life of Christ, His human heart, will be described as a model for Christian character.

One can touch oneself and society only by one's action. One can bring the love of God into touch with all of oneself and all of society only by involving all of oneself and society in actions done out of love of God. Love grows and becomes perfect if the commandments are kept (cf. 1 Jn 2.5). Sincerity in love is expressed by faithfulness (cf. 2 Cor 8.11; Phil 3.12; 1 Jn 3.18-19). Christians ought to make themselves through and through faithful instruments of God's love (cf. Rom 6.12-14).

This process of total involvement not only requires that one shun evil but also demands that one detach oneself from goods (cf. Mk 10.17-31). Even those who enjoy the goods of this world should realize that in one respect these goods are passing away (1 Cor 7.31; LG 42). This respect is that in which this world's goods are <u>this</u> world's--that is, are not yet integrated totally with the love of God. It is incumbent upon every Christian to work for such total integration. Nor is this approach to Christian life centered exclusively on individual sanctification; it includes an effort to penetrate the whole world by the spirit of the Gospel (cf. AA 5).

St. Paul talks movingly of his eagerness to reach his heavenly dwelling. He considers it a reality which is present but invisible, lasting rather than temporary. Bodily life is waning, but the inner life, which is a self built up by deeds of love, is waxing. What is most important is that this mortal life be transformed by being drawn into immortal life (cf. 2 Cor 4.16-5.5). This view usually is considered "other-worldliness," and in one sense it is. But the otherness of the other world must be understood accurately. It is the hidden reality of this world. Nowwhere does Paul suggest that human fulfillment achieved now through a totally dedicated life in Christ belongs to <u>this</u> world.

Christian life is a pursuit of perfection. Perfection is totalization--complete involvement in the love of God which has been poured forth in one's heart. Complete involvement does not mean an exclusive and fanatical concentration upon religion. It means employing all of oneself and using all of one's resources in the service of faith working through love, so that none of oneself will be apart from love. It means bringing to every aspect of human good one's Christian action, so that no aspect of human good will remain untouched by the love of God. This perspective will be considered especially in part seven, in which I will treat the growth of Christian life by the integration of all of one's actions through prayer and the sacraments.

In sum, there are at least four different perspectives in which to view the integration of all human goods into a life of Christian love. One pursues them (1) to be more like Christ, (2) to contribute to one's neighbor's true and rich fulfillment, (3) to provide abundance to offer to God, and (4) to make one's whole mind and heart and soul and strength be filled with one's love of God. In all four of these ways, one does all for God's glory, all in communion with the redemptive love of Christ. And in all of these ways, one finds fulfillment now in human goods, helps others to do so, and by this very fact stores up treasure which will last forever.

M. In what sense the Christian merits

A contemporary hymn says that we give God all that we are and all that we have, and it asks that He take and sanctify these gifts. So far, so good. But it then goes on to suggest that the knowledge that we love and serve God is a sufficient reward. This suggestion, no doubt a well-meant effort to get beyond a too-narrow conception of merit, gravely errs. It is an echo of the Stoic sentiment that virtue is its own reward. Any morally serious person knows that this is false, since virtue is its own punishment, as Jesus suggests (cf. Jn 15.18-20; Lk 21.17). There is hardly likely to be peace on earth for those called from darkness into the marvelous light of Christ, because the world enjoys the Enlightenment of those who love darkness (cf. 1 Pt 2.9; Jn 3.19).

A correct Christian view of the matter is that no reward short of heavenly fulfillment in Christ will be enough. This fulfillment will include the supreme good of the experience of divine life; it also will be enriched with every human good, enjoyed in the communion of Christ and the heavenly Church in an eternal wedding banquet. There is a sense in which none but Christ merits this; for us it is all grace. Yet in a true sense there is merit--a point not only defined by the Church's teaching but unmistakably taught in Scripture, including the epistles of Paul (cf. Rom 2.6; Gal 6.7-9; 2 Cor 5.10; also Rev 20.14.)[8] God's grace is so great a gift that by it we have our own power to act, our own good actions, our merit for doing His will. Merit itself is a grace, a fruit of the primal grace of the love of God in us.

There really is merit in the sense that Christian life here and now makes a real contribution to heavenly fulfillment. Even now, one is part of completion in Christ. If one's role is small, still one is part of the company acting out the drama of salvation. To exclude even a bit player from the great celebration of a play's opening-night's overwhelming critical success would be to spoil the triumph itself. Every member of the cast is part of the success with a right to share in the glory. So with Christian life. None united with Christ can be left out.

More literally, on the account I have given, present Christian life is meritorious because it is a part of the reward, and every part calls out for its completion. God makes nothing to be mutilated. Moreover, present Christian life in response to the love of God is faithfulness to His own offer of intimacy. One who responds as faithfully as one can to even a completely gratuitous offer of friendship truly deserves the intimacy which the offer promised. If one did not receive the intimacy God promises, He would be unfaithful, which is impossible.

What is excluded on the account I have given is the idea that Christian life in this world is an arbitrarily imposed labor. God is not making us do tricks to obtain biscuits. Rather, he asks us to live each day and every day of our lives in this world in a rich and fully meaningful way, and promises us that if we do so, then we shall live each age and every age in a new heaven and earth in an even richer and more meaningful way, world without end.

N. In what sense Christian bodiliness lasts

I come now to the third and last of the levels distinguished in section H, the level of bodily reality. We expect to die; we watch a world passing away and divinely scheduled for an eventual end. We look for resurrection and life everlasting. And so we tend to assume that nothing of the bodily reality of Christian life here and now will last. This assumption often leads Christians to belittle properly human goods, since these goods are incarnate in human, bodily persons. The teaching of Vatican II about after we have served Christ on earth and nurtured here all the goods of our nature and fruits of our work (cf. GS 39) clearly forbids us to belittle human goods on the basis of their bodiliness. Resurrection will be an inclusive renewal of our human world. Human goods will last in the same sense in which human bodily persons will last.

But in what sense is the fleshly reality of the Christian to last? Death is a profound transformation, in some sense a real destruction of the bodily person. Resurrection is a re-creation. While this re-creation is not creation out of nothing--since resurrection is resurrection from death--the death-resurrection sequence seems more discontinuity than continuity. Thus the resurrection life for which we hope seems altogether part of what is not yet, and in no way part of present Christian life. It seems to me that this appearance is largely correct, but not wholly correct. I now try to show why it is not.

In the first place, Jesus and Mary already have the bodily life they will enjoy forever. By our union with them, we now share in resurrection life. I already explained in section I why, on this basis, we already commune with God in glory by participation in their communing, although we do not individually have the full experience they enjoy.

In the second place, we now are bodily incorporated in the Body of Christ. I discussed this point to some extent in chapter four, section L. In chapter five, section J, I argued against the dualism which tends to make people think that bodily life is something extrinsic to persons, and so extrinsic to the human individuality of our Lord Jesus. If one puts these two considerations together, one sees more clearly that if bodily human persons are to enjoy any real solidarity with the Word made flesh then some sort of bodily communion is not only fitting but unavoidable.

Most fittingly, our Lord provided for this necessity with the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, in which even now we are in bodily communion with Him (cf. Jn 6). For this reason, we not only have already died with Christ in baptism, but also have already risen with Him and dwell with Him in His completion (cf. Eph 2.5-7; Col 2.12-13; 3.1-4). This statement is not merely a metaphor; it is a statement of fact, and part of the fact is real, present, bodily communion with our Lord Jesus in His resurrection life. To the extent that this life is the present bodily life of a Christian, the Christian's present bodily life is part of what will last forever.

Moreover, resurrection is of one's <u>own</u> body, which is a unique, personal body. The Church clearly teaches this truth (cf. DS 801/429), and it is a serious mistake to think--as I suspect many people do implicitly think--that at resurrection one's soul gets a new body very much as one's wrecked car is supplied with a new body, only the chassis being saved. My body is not all of myself, but it is an essential and intrinsic part of myself; if I did not live forever in my very own body, then I would not be saved, but only my soul fitted out with a body not mine. It would be like living not only with false teeth and a wooden leg, but with an entire bionic replacement for one's bodily self, including one's heart and one's brain.

Therefore, the aspect of the Christian's bodily reality in which this unique body is personal also is destined to last. What will not last is the mortal organic life which at present constitutes one's bodily self; this will be transformed into immortal organic life like--because still in full communion with--the glorious deified flesh of our Lord Jesus.

O. <u>How the givenness of bodily life is transcended</u>

During His earthly life our Lord Jesus did many things which cannot be said to be done by Him <u>as</u> God or <u>as</u> man, but must be said to be done by Him who is both God and man precisely insofar as He is one Person in both natures. Examples are His miracles, His forgiving of sins, and His instituting of the sacrament of the Eucharist. Now, just as one must not say that Jesus lacks either a human or the divine nature, and one must not say that the two natures in Him are somehow homogenized into one, so one must not say that Jesus lacks either a human or the divine will and willing, and one must not say that these two powers and operations in Him are in any way commingled or collapsed into one (cf. DS 556-557/291-292). The problem therefore is: How can we understand acts of Jesus like those mentioned--for example, His raising of Lazurus--which clearly must be said to be done by Him who is both God and man precisely insofar as He is one Person in both natures?

This problem is a very important one, especially for moral theology, because the life of the Christian is like that of Christ. If, then, one gives a mistaken answer to this question, one will have a mistaken idea of the unity of the love of God and human love, the goodness of God and human goods. For this reason, I will consider this question with some care in part three. For the present, I assume what I will try to show, that the acts of Jesus, such as the raising of Lazarus, are done by Him precisely insofar as He is one Person <u>in two natures</u>. <u>In this sense</u>, the miracle must be attributed to Jesus not only insofar as He is God but also insofar as He is man. The <u>action</u> is one action, at once human and divine, although in it are two willings, His divine willing and His human willing, and these remain distinct and in no way confused even in their perfect unity.

Assuming what I have said, the action of Jesus in raising Lazarus truly is a human action, not as if it were not a divine action, but because the one action is divine-human. This statement might seem to have been solemnly condemned (cf. DS 557/292; see also 515/268), but in part three I shall try to show this appearance to be unreal.

Now, Jesus in a certain sense rises from the dead by His own action. Jesus asserted He would raise up the temple of His body when it would be destroyed (cf. Jn 3.19-20). He also said of His own life: "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again" (Jn 10.18). St. Thomas explains that there is a certain sense in which, even in death, Jesus raises Himself.[9] Thus the resurrection of Jesus is not exclusively a divine work; it also is the human work of Jesus Himself.

Having risen in glory, Jesus in heaven continues the work of building the new creation, of which He Himself is the cornerstone (cf. LG 7-8). The coming of the Son of Man in glory, for which we hope, will complete this work, for He will raise the dead, judge, and complete the mission the Father gave Him (cf. Mt 13.41; 16.27-28; 24.31-46; 1 Thes 4.16). When death, the last enemy, is destroyed, Jesus will hand over the kingdom to His Father (cf. 1 Cor 15.20-28), not as if He will resign His kingship, but inasmuch as He will have finished the work of bringing all things to completion in Himself (cf. DS 3350-3352; 3675-3679/2194-2196).

The book of Acts makes clear that Christians, in unity with Christ and never apart from Him, can bring divine power to bear by miraculous acts, which also are their own human acts. For example, when Peter raises the cripple, he says: "'I have neither silver nor gold, but what I have I give you! In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean, walk!'" (Acts 3.6). Peter <u>both</u> acts in the name of Jesus <u>and</u> gives what he himself has to give. Jesus had said: "'The man who has faith in me will do the works I do, and far greater than these'" (Jn 14.12). Peter is doing a work Jesus does--this one not greater than those Jesus did during His earthly life.

When Christ comes again, the "human race as well as the entire world, which is intimately related to man and achieves its purpose through him, will be perfectly re-established in Christ (cf. Eph 1.10; Col 1.20; 2 Pt 3.10-13)" (LG 48). The new heavens

and the new earth are therefore the work of our Lord Jesus. Through Him, as Word of the eternal Father, all things are created (cf. Jn 1.3). The new heavens and new earth also are part of creation; as such they are solely the work of the Trinity-creator, and so the work of our Lord only insofar as He is the divine Word. But the new heavens and new earth are also His work as incarnate Word, and so are brought about by His human act just as were His smaller-scale earthly miracles.

Mary reigns now in splendor with Jesus. "She was exalted by the Lord as Queen of all, in order that she might be the more thoroughly conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords (cf. Rv 19.16), and the conqueror of sin and death" (LG 59). Not by herself, but in unity with Jesus and never apart from Him, Mary shares in His work. No doubt the new heavens and the new earth, including our resurrection, will be an act of Jesus which will include her act--her full, motherly, joyful cooperation. Were this not to be so, she would be involved less than Peter when he cured the paralytic.

At present, we ourselves can unite our own lives to Christ's life. In offering our lives with His sacrifice in the Eucharist, we do precisely this (cf. LG 7). So we too have a share in the re-creation of all things. Thus our Christian lives in Christ not only make a material contribution to the new heavens and the new earth, they even share in the work of bringing this hope to fruition. For each Christian, an important part of this hope is for the resurrection of his or her own personal body: one's me. And so there are two principles by which one's present bodily existence is to last. One of them is one's bodily incorporation in Christ, which already is established and is destined to last. The other is one's share in His work of bringing about the resurrection, a share by which one acts upon one's own present body, precisely as it is uniquely personal. In this respect death in Christ not only surrenders but at the same time renders unbreakable one's own attachment to one's own body.

In our present life, we find ourselves in many ways constrained by the universe which was here prior to our arrival. Our bodily existence, in particular, is a pure fact. In heaven, we shall not be thus constrained, for having died with Christ, we will have freely exchanged the mortal life we were given willy-nilly for a life we cooperate in re-creating. Only the Trinity is creator; we always are and shall be creatures. But in the re-created world to come, nothing of our creatureliness will be ours willy-nilly.

Having freely accepted God's offer of a share in His own divine life, having freely constituted our human existential selves by our own choices, and having freely shared in the work of re-creating everything else in Christ, we will be revealed fully as adopted children of God, whose whole being will express the glorious freedom proper to such children (cf. Rom 8.19-21). In dying, and only by dying in Christ, can we be born again to eternal life.

P. A comparison with other views of the ultimate significance of this life

For secular humanists the ultimate significance of this life is both absolute and nil. It is absolute in the sense that this life is the only life there is; whatever human fulfillment there ever will be must be had here and now. It is nil in the sense that this life points to nothing beyond itself; it is a tale told by a computer full of sound and fury signifying nothing.

In one or both of two ways, secular humanists seek to avoid the ultimate dreadful consequences of their view. Sometimes they emphasize the satisfactions people can enjoy here and now. This emphasis leads to hedonism. Hedonism leads to selfishness, to individualism, to hypocrisy, to vanity. As Americans we can see what hedonism means; it is all around us and like a cancer it is destroying our society. At other times, secular humanists seek to avoid the emptiness of life by claiming that the present is important as a means to a brighter future for humanity. They project the new heavens and new earth in this world, and say that present toil and misery will bring it into being--for example, by violent revolution. This emphasis leads to totalitarianism and brutal repression. Communism clearly illustrates what this form of secular humanism does to human persons.

Either form of secular humanism spells death for humankind. The secular humanist prophet proclaims death and more abundant death. Having ridiculed the Good News of Christ for its promise of eternal life--"pie in the sky when you die"--the secular humanist delivers the bad news of death by propaganda and other perverse uses of the media, and delivers the deeds which go with this poison: the destruction of hundreds of millions of people already in this present century, the continuing destruction by abortion of tens of millions of Christ's littlest ones every year, and the planned poison of atomic warfare by which probably one day the majority of the earth's population will die.

Some theologians and religious people currently accept a compromise with secular humanism. The moral theory of the compromise position fits best with some sort of process theology or finite-god position in contemplative theology. A careful examination of such theologies and of all the compromise moral theologies which go with them will make clear that they incoherently combine the vices and lose the virtues of any sort of consistent secular humanism and even a badly articulated version of Christian faith. Teaching that the end justifies the means, that evil may be done that good might follow therefrom, many Catholic moral theologians today treat human goods precisely as secular humanists do.[10] They ignore the fact that such goods are sacred because they fulfill human persons, contribute to completion in Christ, and are intended by God to last forever. Well intentioned as these men might be, they are leading Christ's little ones to disregard the wise teaching of holy mother Church, to abandon Christ's way of life, and to follow the secular humanist way of death.

Some forms of modern humanism are pantheistic. Hegel's philosophy is a form of pantheism, and the vision of Teilhard de Chardin tends to pantheism. (The latter probably was a better Christian than thinker.) If everything is god, then nothing is God--pantheism ends in secular humanism. For this reason, a Christian account of the deification of human persons must take scrupulous care to avoid breaking down the distinction between creator and creatures, between the invisible God and the visible world-process, between the eternal Word (who was with God in the beginning) and His sacred humanity

(which is a creature among creatures). If this distinction is broken down, then it becomes impossible for Christians here and now to sin. Such an impossibility sounds like the best of good news. Actually, it is very bad news, for if we cannot sin, then we can do absolutely anything without guilt, we need never repent, and we can forget that our Lord Jesus lived, suffered, died, rose, and will come again to overcome our sin. One can see today in the Catholic Church the devastating effect for Christian life of much popular teaching and writing tinged with pantheistic thinking.

The teaching of St. Augustine and other great saints and doctors of the Church tended to make Christians think that life in this world is nothing but a means for getting to heaven. Whether Augustine really thought or said this is not my concern here; that question is one for historians of theology.[11] My point is that whatever Augustine really had in mind, his view of Christian life--in many ways accurate and beautiful --has widely been understood as a sort of other-worldly hedonism. Human persons are made for happiness (meaning by "happiness" enjoyment); they will not find it in this world but will find it in heaven. How will they find it there? By gazing upon God who is beauty itself.

This conception of heaven, so heavily influenced by neoplatonic philosophy, is an intellectual's delight and an ordinary person's eternal bore. "Beatific vision" must remain mysterious to us, <u>because it is mysterious</u>. Moreover, in practice this mysteriousness is important, because it keeps heaven intriguing and appealing to people of every taste and temperament, and because it prevents heaven from becoming an alternative to the love of human goods.

Many passages of Vatican II, including virtually the whole of <u>Gaudium et spes</u> (cf. especially 21, 34, 39), liberate Catholics from the limitations and defects of this way of thinking. Life here and now is not merely instrumental. It is by no means extrinsic to heavenly completion in Christ. The situation is not like that of the first young man in my parable.

Observing that the end (purpose) of a knife is to cut and the end of an eye to see, Aristotle asked what is the end of man. His answer was: to think about the best and the highest things, the principles and the order of the universe, and to shape society as reasonably as possible. St. Augustine later stated a great Christian truth in an immortal formula: Our hearts are made for God and never will rest except in Him. This is true precisely in this sense: God knew what He was doing when He fashioned humankind; He knew we were to be His adopted children; and, in fact, human persons cannot live good human lives without redeeming grace, which also is deifying grace. But St. Thomas Aquinas synthesized Aristotle's concern about the end of man with St. Augustine's articulation of our hunger for the destiny for which God created us. He concluded that human persons naturally desire the Beatific Vision and described heaven primarily in terms of intellectual knowledge of what God is.[12]

This conclusion and description has led to many of the difficulties I have tried to surmount in this part of this work. According to my view, the human heart is <u>not</u> naturally oriented to adoption as a child of God and to the heavenly inheritance which goes with this status. The human heart is naturally oriented toward human fulfillment, which is found in open-ended goods, goods which naturally can be participated in more and more, in ever-growing flourishing. If God could have created and had created human persons without calling them to adoption and if human persons could have lived and had lived good lives in such a condition--a set of contrary-to-fact conditions whose truth or falsity in themselves is of no interest at all--then, it seems to me, our hearts would have been no more restless than they need to be to keep us growing and progressing endlessly. But having been created to be adopted children of God and having fallen into the miserable condition of prodigal children, human persons do have restless hearts which cannot rest except in God.

However, rest in God is not an alternative, as Augustine seems to have thought, to the effort to bring about and share in a full and rich human life in this world. The experience of life with God as God Himself experiences--the Beatific Vision which Scripture promises and the Church teaches us about--is a mysterious and indescribable blessing which transcends merely human fulfillment, although the radical open-endedness of human love of human goods renders this supernatural fulfillment compatible with human nature and ultimately perfective of every human good.

Nevertheless, rest in God demands not only reverence for human goods--which Augustine clearly realized--but dedication to them, a determined effort to promote them, a tremendous concern for human life in this world. Reverence for human goods can be maintained merely by not attacking them; one reverences life when one refrains from killing. Dedication demands positive service. And every human effort and success of those who love God will last forever. If this were not so, heaven would not be heaven. If heaven excluded human fulfillment or limited it to a single good--the good of the intellect--then love of God would be dehumanizing, and Christians would be immoral to hold and live their faith, and irresponsible and antihuman to propagate it.

Thus the great good and blessing of the Christian wisdom of St. Augustine and St. Thomas--a wisdom so rich in the truth both of the Gospel and of human experience and reason--not only is incomplete but, if I am right, is marred by a serious error. Personally, I would not dare to think such geniuses and saints mistaken did I not think that the Church herself, especially teaching in Vatican Council II, compels us to think this. If I am right, then all of our thinking about Christian life needs to be examined and perfected in the light of a richer conception of the destiny of creation: namely, the conception of completion in Christ rather than the conception of the end of man. The present work is an attempt to begin to meet the need for such reexamination and perfecting of our thinking about this very important subject.[13]

The classic view of the end of man generated the tension which led to the split between secular humanism and fideistic supernaturalism. Excessive otherworldliness generates too great a concentration upon one human good--that of religion. Such concentration in turn takes shape in forms of Christian life and devotion which at least shirk human responsibilities and at worst lead to religious fanaticism, such as the burning of heretics. An inhuman thesis demands a humanistic antithesis. But post-Christian

humanism cannot forget the possibilities and ideals Christian faith teaches about the human person. Thus secular humanism develops; it seeks to achieve the kingdom of God without God, and in doing so it furthers the work of the devil in creating hell upon earth.

For Augustine, Christian life in this world at least served as an instrument for getting to heaven. Life in this world was at least the rocket which puts us in orbit, even if it is doomed to fall in flames as it does so. Luther and others observed that Christian life cannot be the rocket which puts us in heavenly orbit. We are saved not by our works but by the grace of God. This essential insight is perfectly correct, and the Catholic Church definitively teaches it, as I have explained in section G. But misled by his understanding of the classic conception of the relationship between human life in this world and completion in Christ, Luther made several serious mistakes.

He denied that Christian life in any real way contributes to our redemption. Jesus made clear that without Him we can do nothing; Luther added that even with Christ we can do nothing. All we can do about our eternal salvation is to sin and to rely on God's mercy. Even human activities such as the liturgy, contemplative prayer, and the life of consecrated virginity--activities which fulfill the specific human good of religion--are without saving value according to the Protestant theology influenced by Luther. Thus all these great goods are swept aside; Protestantism, which begins in faith, ends by nullifying Christianity as a religion. All that is left is faith and reliance on God's mercy to bring one to heaven--or, more clearly, to keep one out of hell. For on a theology of this sort heaven comes to have no humanly fulfilling content, and so can have no human appeal, but hell's torture remains humanly significant and compelling.

As for the pursuit of human goods, such a theology consigns mundane work to the secular sphere. In this way, fideistic supernaturalism contributes to the growth of secular humanism. In morals, it is no accident that situation ethics was developed by theologians working in the Lutheran tradition. According to this ethics, one may do moral evil to avoid a greater evil; in this broken world, one sometimes must sin to fulfill the requirement of love of neighbor.[14] After all, human goods lose their sanctity when they have no intrinsic relationship to the love of God.

The ultimate outcome of such Protestant theology is that it renders nugatory the Incarnation and redemptive work of Christ. If everything depends on God's mercy, how is Christianity the fulfillment of the Old Testament, in which God's mercy already was at work? Doctrines which seem pointless call for demythologizing reinterpretation. Thus liberal Protestantism. Nevertheless, the word of God is living and at work among Protestants. Many cling to it with generous faith and by the grace of the Spirit flourish in Christian holiness. Without knowing it, they are Catholics, often better ones than we. Yet how desperately our separated brothers and sisters need to return to full participation in the Body of Christ, to come home to the Catholic Church, where alone they can commune fully with our Lord Jesus whom they love and where alone they can share fully in proclaiming His Gospel to all nations.

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The drafting of this part is being completed on Labor Day. The prayers which the Church provides for opening the Mass today make a suitable summary of the part. We ask God our Creator to make "the work we begin bring us growth in this life and help to extend the kingdom of Christ." Or we ask God our Father to "give all men work that enhances their human dignity and draws them closer to each other in the service of their brothers." Or, in alternate years, we ask God our Father, who has "placed all the powers of nature under the control of man and his work," to "bring the spirit of Christ to our efforts and work with our brothers and sisters at our common task, establishing true love and guiding your creation to perfect fulfillment."

The liturgy of the Church contains a purer expression than theology of the meaning of faith for Christian life. Thanks to our Lord, the Spirit, for this, and also for the fact that all the faithful can share in the liturgy every day but are disturbed by theology only occasionally when some imprudent homilist brings to attention the gropings of theology for understanding of God's mysterious and wonderful revelation. Such gropings have their use and their place, but it is not in the liturgy.

A homiletic commentary on today's Mass also makes a good point. Work and prayer are like two oars by which the boat of Christian life must be propelled. Both stem from living faith--the gift of the Spirit--and express it. Pull on either oar by itself and neglect the other, and the boat goes in circles--either the circles of an empty religiosity or the circles of humanism without heavenly destiny. Pull steadily on the two oars together and the boat glides smoothly, impelled by the Spirit's strength, toward its landing at the slip of God's resort, where we are invited to enjoy an endless vacation.

At this point, I ask the reader to reread chapter one, section A. The meaning of what I said there ought to be somewhat clearer now. It is an attempt to begin to restate in contemporary language what St. Paul so beautifully expressed:

> . . .I kneel before the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name; and I pray that he will bestow on you gifts in keeping with the richness of his glory. May he strengthen you inwardly through the working of his Spirit. May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith, and may charity be the root and foundation of your life. Thus you will be able to grasp fully, with all the holy ones, the breadth and length and height and depth of Christ's love, and experience this love which surpasses knowledge, so that you may attain to the fullness of God himself.
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> To him whose power now at work in us can do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine--to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations, world without end. Amen.

Notes to chapter seven

1. Any standard theological treatise on Christology summarizes the various heresies, some of which deny the humanity, others the divinity, others the personal unity, others the truly distinct aspects of the complexity of Christ. A fuller treatment of the development of Christology than that in the usual treatise is Aloys Grillmeier, S.J., Christ in Christian Tradition, vol. 1, From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451), trans. John Bowden (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975).

2. St. John Chrysostom, Commentary on Saint John the Apostle and Evanglist, Homilies 1-47, trans. St. Thomas Aquinas Goggin, S.C.H. (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1957), pp. 100-101 (homily 10).

3. Cf. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, art. 75.

4. There is a good chapter on theological problems and possibilities regarding infants in E. J. Fortman, S.J., Everlasting Life After Death (New York: Alba House, 1976), pp. 143-155.

5. Cf. St. Thomas, Summa theologiae, 1, qu. 19-20.

6. St. Thomas, Summa contra gentiles, 3, ch. 122, rejects as an argument against simple fornication that it injures God, saying that this "would not seem to be an adequate answer. For we do not offend God except by doing something contrary to our own good, as has been said."

7. Concerning actual grace, see Michael Schmaus, Dogma, vol. 6, Justification and the Last Things (Kansas City and London: Sheed and Ward, 1977), pp. 9-41; Henri Rondet, S.J., The Grace of Christ: A Brief History of the Theology of Grace (Westminster, Maryland; Glen Rock, New Jersey: Newman Press, 1967), pp. 313-364. A treatment of actual grace having some affinity with my own, yet one with which I cannot wholly agree, is by Charles R. Meyer, A Contemporary Theology of Grace (Staten Island, N. Y.: Alba House, 1971), pp. 151-181.

8. Schmaus, op. cit., pp. 138-145, provides a brief summary of the essential doctrine on merit; see also Robert W. Gleason, S.J., Grace (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1962), pp. 173-184.

9. St. Thomas, Summa theologiae, 3, qu. 53, art. 4.

10. The theory that any kind of action can be morally right if the results are good enough is called "consequentialism" by philosophers. For a philosophic analysis and criticism of this theory, see Germain Grisez, "Against Consequentialism," American Journal of Jurispurdence, 23 (1978), pp. 21-72. The theory will be analyzed and criticized theologically in a later chapter of the present work.

11. A question which historical inquiry would have to solve is: How did the theology of St. Augustine and other Fathers--in some ways dangerously influenced by neoplatonism but still more balanced and nuanced than its popularizations--come to have so strong a hold upon Christian thought? I suspect that the answer would be found in the very great emphasis upon the divinity of Christ which was necessary to combat Arianism. With this emphasis, the humanistic implications of Christianity tended to be obscured. To the extent that some current Christologies are neo-Arian, there is a danger that a similar phenomenon will occur again among the faithful who will oppose (quite rightly) anything which derogates from the divinity of our Lord Jesus.

12. See Germain Grisez, "Man, the Natural End of," The New Catholic Encyclopedia, vol. 9, pp. 132-138, for a brief presentation of the development to St. Thomas, and a summary of the difficulties in his synthesis, with references both to his works and to secondary literature.

13. I by no means wish to suggest that the present effort is a beginning without antecedents. Vatican II was preceded by a great deal of work developing during a century and more a Catholic theology of integral Christian humanism. Much of this work contributed to the unfolding of theological reflection upon history. A student might find useful as an introduction to this area: James M. Connolly, Human History and the Word of God: The Christian Meaning of History in Contemporary Thought (New York and London: Macmillan, 1965). The work of Jacques Maritain deserves special mention; he did much to bring the revival of Thomism to fruition.

14. An extreme, popular version of situationism is that of Joseph Fletcher, Situation Ethics: The New Morality (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966). Fletcher's theory is indistinguishable from secular humanism. The more theological versions, common among earlier Protestant thinkers, did not regard the situation as justifying an immoral act, but only as sometimes requiring that one do it despite its sinfulness. Their thought was deeply grounded in Luther's theology. For a brief introduction with references to some important figures, see Edward LeRoy Long, Jr., A Survey of Christian Ethics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 146-157.

Questions for study and review

1. Some today say that one's fundamental choice is between divine goodness and finite goods. Criticize this view on the basis of what is explained here about the relationship between divine and human goods.

2. Explain how the love of human goods and the love of God are involved in the act of living faith.

3. Explain why love of God requires love of neighbor.

4. If we really share in divine life, how can we sin? If we cannot lose the love of God, how is hell a real possibility for us?

5. Summarize the Church's teaching on actual grace and on merit.

6. Explain the difficulties in some theological accounts of actual grace and of merit, and show how the account provided here obviates these difficulties.

7. In what respects is the divine life we now enjoy by the gift of the Spirit destined to last? In what respects is it not?

8. Why is it so important for Christian life that human acts will last?

9. Summarize the various ways in which one can articulate the significance of human moral life lived in this world in Christ.

10. In what respects is human bodiliness destined to last? How does the novelty of the new heavens and the new earth enhance the dignity of those who will die in Christ?

11. Summarize the criticism of alternative views of the significance of this life. Compare this criticism to chapter three, sections B-E, and chapter four, sections B-D.