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# Human Persons' True Ultimate End: The Continuity between the Natural End and the Supernatural End<sup>1</sup>

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**W**HAT HUMAN PERSONS SHOULD SEEK as the ultimate end organizing their whole lives is the most important ethical question for sound, unaided reason. (From here on, the word “reason” refers to sound, unaided reason.) However, reason cannot answer that question without an adequate ethical theory. I shall use the ethical theory developed by some friends and me.<sup>2</sup>

To identify the ultimate end to which reason directs human persons, one can begin by considering the intelligible goods that people naturally will. Those goods are not limited to what specifically differentiates human persons from things of other kinds but include whatever directly contributes to the reality and flourishing of human persons as individuals, families, and other communities.<sup>3</sup> (From here on, “human persons” refers to human individuals, families, and other communities, unless the context indicates otherwise.)

Regarding death and sickness as evil, most people strive to sustain and protect their own and their loved ones' lives and to promote their health. Reason affirms that, from conception to natural death, life and health are intrinsic goods of humans, regardless of their condition and prospects. Most people marry and bring up children, and reason affirms that faithful and loving marriage, and mutually loving parent-child relationships, are intrinsic goods of human persons.

Naturally curious, most people try to learn about and understand some objects of their curiosity, particularly persons and things they love or admire. Reason affirms that knowledge of truth is another intrinsic good of human persons, whether that truth concerns people,

natural things and processes, or God. Reason affirms two other, related though distinct, intrinsic goods of human persons: aesthetic experience and the use of their capacities and skills to do well something difficult, whether as work, play, a hobby, or fine art.

Peoples of almost all cultures have acknowledged the reality of a source of meaning and value transcending them, and the desirability of living in harmony with it, and reason affirms harmony with the Creator as an intrinsic good of human persons. The Creator directs humans toward what is good for them by giving them insight into the principles of practical reasoning, and reason affirms that it is intrinsically good for human persons to establish and maintain harmony between the truth about what is good for them, on one hand, and their feelings, choices, and actions, on the other.

Everyone wishes to live in a just, peaceful, secure, and prosperous society. Reason affirms that the largest such society would be a universal community, including all persons who can cooperate or be affected by one another's actions – thus, not only human persons now living, but future generations, other rational creatures, if any are known to exist, and the Creator.<sup>4</sup>

Particular realizations of all the preceding sorts of intrinsic goods can be sought for themselves. Indeed, when children begin choosing, the intrinsic goodness of what they choose often is their only reason for choosing it, so that many of the ends they intend are for them ultimate.<sup>5</sup> However, no set of realizations of any one intrinsic good can provide the ultimate reason for every possible good human act. So, no single good can reasonably be taken as the ultimate end to organize one's whole life, much less the whole, cooperative set of human lives required for a just, peaceful, secure, and prosperous universal community.

The true ultimate end must be the ultimate reason for pursuing and protecting all of every person's intrinsic goods.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, the single ultimate end identified by reason would not be a perfect good leaving nothing to be desired, because every human fulfillment, being finite, leaves more to be desired.<sup>7</sup> Neither would reason identify divine goodness as the ultimate end. For like any end, the ultimate

end must be something human action might affect or people might possess or both. But human persons cannot affect God's goodness and human nature has no capacity for infinite goodness.<sup>8</sup>

Reason therefore would identify the all-inclusive common good of everyone constituting the universal community as the ultimate end for organizing human persons' entire lives, including all their cooperation. I call that good "integral communal fulfillment."<sup>9</sup> Reason would direct us to intend that fulfillment not only proximately out of love for ourselves and one another but ultimately out of grateful love for the Creator, to honor that ultimate source of every good.<sup>10</sup>

Obviously, no single person can choose to do something that will fully realize integral communal fulfillment. But it could function as everyone's ultimate end if human persons made all their choices with the aim of contributing to its inevitably limited, yet always potentially greater, realization. With that single, ultimate intention, human persons' actions would conform to the Golden Rule's "do unto others" and never arbitrarily exclude anyone from the "others" whose goods must be respected. Human persons would never choose to impede, damage, or destroy any intrinsic good of anyone, and would prefer to suffer evil rather than do it. They would seek authentic self-fulfillment by using their talents and resources to promote goods and remedy evils not only in themselves and those near and dear to them but in selfless service to others, especially those in great need.

However, though integral communal fulfillment is the ultimate end that reason in ideal circumstances would identify, in the fallen human condition few human persons are likely to intend it as their single ultimate end.<sup>11</sup> But grace perfects nature in three ways: first by healing it; second, as will be explained, by providing integral communal fulfillment; third, by giving humans what never entered their hearts until Jesus' disciples experienced his love.

After exhorting his disciples to avoid the usual anxieties about the necessities of life, Jesus directed: "Seek first [God's] kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well."<sup>12</sup> Saint Thomas Aquinas understood Jesus to mean: Seek the kingdom as your

ultimate end.<sup>13</sup> The kingdom's centrality in Jesus' preaching supports that interpretation.

When Jesus began preaching the good news of the imminent arrival of God's kingdom, many people were electrified. In their synagogues, they had sung psalms about God's kingship and listened to readings from the prophets promising the coming of God's reign to save and renew not only Israel but the entire broken world. Jesus' works showed that the kingdom was arriving and even present in the midst of his hearers. Yet he also taught them that it would grow gradually and imperceptibly, and that it would be fully realized only in the future. He taught his disciples to pray for the kingdom to come and God's will to be done on earth as it always has been done in heaven. Dashing disciples' hopes, Jesus had to suffer and die to overcome sin and death.<sup>14</sup> But by his resurrection, he inaugurated the kingdom: bodily human beings living with God in a renewed and perfectly good creation.<sup>15</sup>

Unfortunately, influential Church Fathers replaced the New Testament's new heaven and new earth with an almost entirely spiritualized heaven.<sup>16</sup> Following those Fathers, Thomas mentions the kingdom only once in his treatise on beatitude in the *Summa theologiae*. When he presents the case for the view that exterior goods are required for beatitude – a view that Thomas of course rejects – the first argument for the view is that what is promised to the saints belongs to beatitude, and Jesus promises the kingdom in Matthew 25 (where he describes the last judgment).<sup>17</sup> Thomas replies that these corporeal promises are to be understood metaphorically, and that “kingdom” in that passage refers to “the elevation of humans to union with God.”<sup>18</sup>

Drawing directly on sacred scripture, Vatican II provided a concise but rich account of what God's kingdom is. The council teaches that Christ inaugurated the heavenly kingdom in this world because the Father sent his Son to reestablish all things.<sup>19</sup> The kingdom was manifested by Jesus' words and works, and especially in his very person. The Church is Christ's kingdom already present in mystery; she is the seed and beginning of the kingdom.<sup>20</sup>



Vatican II also teaches that the Church's end "is the kingdom of God, which has been begun by God himself on earth, and which is to be further extended until he brings it to perfection at the end of time, when Christ, our life (see Col. 3:4), shall appear, and 'creation itself will be delivered from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the sons of God' (Rom. 8:21)."<sup>21</sup> The Church's fulfillment will include the whole created universe:

The Church, to which we are all called in Christ Jesus . . . will attain its full perfection only in the glory of heaven, when there will come the time of the restoration of all things (see Acts 3:21). At that time the human race as well as the entire world, which is intimately related to man and attains to its end through him, will be perfectly reestablished in Christ (see Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:20; 2 Pt.3:10-13).<sup>22</sup>

Moreover, in explaining the completed kingdom's relevance to human activity in this world, Vatican II foretells a resurrection so comprehensive that every authentic good promoted and protected by people obeying the Lord will be salvaged and perfected along with them:

After we have obeyed the Lord, and in his Spirit nurtured on earth the values of human dignity, brotherhood and freedom, *and indeed all the good fruits of our nature and enterprise*, we will find them again, but freed of stain, burnished and transfigured, when Christ hands over to the Father: "a kingdom eternal and universal, a kingdom of truth and life, of holiness and grace, of justice, love and peace." On this earth that kingdom is already present in mystery. When the Lord returns it will be brought into full flower.<sup>23</sup>

Given that prospect for all the good fruits of our lives, one can see why the council also teaches that by selflessly serving others we can prepare material for the kingdom.<sup>24</sup>

In *Redemptoris missio* – a 1990 encyclical on the Church's mission to spread the gospel – Pope Saint John Paul II developed some aspects of Vatican II's teachings. The encyclical's second chapter is: "The Kingdom of God."<sup>25</sup>

There, John Paul affirms three things that make it clear that the kingdom is not entirely the same as heavenly beatitude: (1) "Jesus came to bring integral salvation, one which embraces the whole person and all mankind, and opens up the wondrous prospect of divine filiation"; (2) "The eschatological reality is not relegated to a remote 'end of the world' but is already close at hand and at work in our midst"; and (3) "Certainly, the kingdom demands the promotion of human values, as well as those that can properly be called 'evangelical,' since they are intimately bound up with the 'Good News.'"<sup>26</sup>

John Paul's teaching on the kingdom is also Christocentric.<sup>27</sup> He speaks of "the kingdom prepared for in the Old Testament, brought about by Christ and in Christ, and proclaimed to all peoples by the Church." Again, "The kingdom of God is not a concept, a doctrine, or a program subject to free interpretation, but before all else *a person* with the face and name of Jesus of Nazareth, the image of the invisible God."<sup>28</sup>

The teachings of Vatican II and John Paul II about the kingdom are complemented by several affirmations in the New Testament about Christ. All creatures were created through him.<sup>29</sup> All creatures also are for him, and in him everything holds together.<sup>30</sup> He is the heir of the whole of creation.<sup>31</sup> In the fullness of time, all creatures will be gathered up and united in him.<sup>32</sup> Having overcome every evil and gathered the whole renewed creation into himself, Christ as man will deliver the kingdom to the Father. And since the kingdom before all else will be Christ himself, with his humanity gathering in the rest of creation, his handing over of the kingdom will be his definitive self-gift to the Father, so that God may be all in all.<sup>33</sup>

Within the kingdom, Jesus' faithful disciples<sup>34</sup> will be united with him and one another in the communion of the new covenant between humankind and God. People enter into that communion when, by

God's grace, they reject sin, believe in Jesus, and are baptized. Jesus gives them the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit creates the oneness of the new covenantal communion,<sup>35</sup> which is unique and greater than any other oneness involving human persons. Without substantially changing the divine and human persons involved in the new covenant, it makes them into a supersubstantial unit.<sup>36</sup>

To share with his faithful disciples what belongs to him as divine, Jesus exhorts them to follow him in loving obedience.<sup>37</sup> In the eucharistic sacrifice, he makes his self-offering to the Father present and available for their cooperation, and directs them to consummate their oneness with him in the communion of the new covenant: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me."<sup>38</sup>

Thus, to his faithful disciples, Jesus truly gives his whole self, not bread and wine, in the eucharist.<sup>39</sup> By his self-giving and their receiving of him, faithful disciples become his members and members of one another.<sup>40</sup> Given their oneness with him in the communion of the new covenant, Jesus shares his eternal life with them and on the last day will raise them up.<sup>41</sup> Living because of Jesus who lives because of the Father, they share in the Father's life. And since the Father's life is the divine existence, and God's existence is his nature,<sup>42</sup> faithful disciples truly are children of the Father, sharing in his very divinity.<sup>43</sup>

Jesus' great human love for each fellow human motivates his faithful disciples to love him, and their love makes them want to know him better. That relationship is not mysterious, as sharing in Jesus' divinity is. Although Jesus is a divine person, he is truly human, and a human person's friendship with him is, on both sides, real human friendship. As in any true friendship, however, Jesus' faithful disciples want to know his inmost self – his person. But "no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."<sup>44</sup>

Jesus promises to satisfy the desire of faithful disciples to know him intimately:

Yet a little while, and the world will see me no more, but you will see me; because I live, you will live also. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.<sup>45</sup>

With Jesus' self-manifestation, his disciples will know not only their mutual indwelling with him but his being in the Father.

Passages in Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians and John's First Epistle deal with this knowing.<sup>46</sup> Paul contrasts *now* with *then* as childhood with adulthood. John contrasts already being God's children with something more that we shall be later. Paul contrasts seeing in a mirror dimly with seeing face to face. John contrasts being children of God, who has not yet appeared, with seeing him as he is. Paul implies mutual intimacy by contrasting knowing in part with knowing even as one has been known.<sup>47</sup> John implies mutual intimacy by saying we shall be like him. Although only the Father and the Son know each other, Paul and John assure faithful disciples that their participated divinity as God's children will be fulfilled by his gift of a share in the mutual knowing of the Father and the Son – and, of course, of the Holy Spirit.<sup>48</sup>

Ancient philosophers had no conception of the God who “chose to reveal Himself and to make known to us the hidden purpose of his will.”<sup>49</sup> Still, some Greek philosophers reasoned to a first principle of reality: the Good Itself, the Supreme Substance and Prime Mover, or the One. Also reasoning to the human soul's immortality and equating immortality with divinity, they regarded their contemplation of the first principle – of which they thought only an intellectual elite to be capable – as godlike and supposed it was the supreme human good.

Influenced by such philosophy, several Church Fathers developed the idea that the knowledge of himself and of the Father that Jesus promised his disciples would be an act of the human intellect contemplating the divine essence. They also expected that intellectual act to satisfy a natural appetite of human beings, an *eros* they thought

all people would experience were they not enmeshed in corporeal concerns such as surviving, marrying, and raising children. Here was the origin of what I regard as misunderstandings of the beatific vision and the restless heart – mistaken notions that have been prevalent in Catholic theology.

Saint Thomas developed those notions. While he holds that no created intellect by its own natural powers can see the divine essence, he maintains that created intellects can be empowered to do so by a supernatural, created light of glory, which makes the blessed Godlike. Consequently, he indicates no significant role for Jesus Christ in the question on the beatific vision and the five questions on beatitude in his *Summa theologiae*.<sup>50</sup>

I believe that the relevant texts of the New Testament call for a radically different account of the beatific vision and the restless heart.

Our human hearts are naturally restless, not for union with God but for the human fulfillment we lack due to sin and its consequences: we live in darkness and the shadow of death; we suffer due to natural evils, the evils others inflict on us, and our own guilt.<sup>51</sup>

The Word of God became one of us humans at least partly to carry out his saving mission, while God made us his children because, without sharing in the divine nature, we could not participate in the intimacy naturally enjoyed by the Trinity. Not as God but as a man, the Word suffered and died. Not as human but as divine, human persons will enjoy the beatific vision. Human persons cannot see God by an act of the human intellect or any other human power.<sup>52</sup> The beatific vision must be the act that fulfills children of God according to the divine nature in which they share by being united with Christ.<sup>53</sup> Rather than being a metaphysical accident inhering in and elevating the human intellect, the light of glory that elevates the soul to seeing God is Christ himself. He alone is the light in which divine light may be seen.<sup>54</sup>

In sum, created persons who abide in Christ's love will live forever in Jesus in the communion of the new covenant.<sup>55</sup> That communion will be the heart of creation perfected, with subpersonal creatures fulfilled by sharing in the glory of God's children. As Vatican II taught,

not only will our bodies be raised up, but all the good fruits of human nature and effort that we obediently nurtured on earth will be available to us, freed of all evil and perfected. Integral communal fulfillment will be abundantly, though always finitely, realized in God's kingdom; so that created persons living there forever will enjoy great and always increasing fulfillment according to the capacities of their created natures. Moreover, by their oneness with Jesus, human persons will find their fulfillment as God's children and will experience the truth of Saint Paul's affirmation: "All things are yours . . . ; and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's."<sup>56</sup>

Two questions remain to be answered. First, exactly why is the whole Christ – Jesus, the head, together with all created persons who abide in his love and the entire, renewed, subhuman universe – called "God's kingdom"?

Although God is eternally perfect and is unchanged by creating, he is a Creator only when there are creatures. Similarly, God reigns as king only when there are obedient subjects. God never desired manipulative, fearful obedience; he wanted only grateful, loving obedience. But the original leaders of the human race – our first parents – responded badly to God's love.

God's kingdom nevertheless gained beachheads on earth when Abram and others obeyed him, and, coming to do the Father's will, Jesus conquered the world for God's kingdom by his perfect obedience. With the first Holy Week and Easter, Jesus made citizenship in the kingdom available to every human being. Now, when disciples remain in Jesus, do the Father's will, and bear good fruit, the kingdom grows. Once Jesus has "put all his enemies under his feet," so that nothing remains at odds with God's plan, the kingdom will be complete.<sup>57</sup> "The holy city, new Jerusalem" will come "down out of heaven from God,"<sup>58</sup> and the will of God will be done universally on earth, just as it always has been done in heaven.

The second question is: How can we seek God's righteousness, as Jesus also directs us to do? In directing us to seek God's kingdom, Jesus plainly means for us to seek fulfillment in it proximately for ourselves, our fellow human beings, and himself as our human king.

But we should love God and ultimately seek his kingdom for his sake. Thus, Jesus tells us to seek God's righteousness, which in the new creation will prevail over sin and death. That divine righteousness is God's merciful, saving goodness, which will forever be manifest in the kingdom. That same divine goodness, considered simply as manifested by the magnificence and beauty of the new creation, is called God's "glory."<sup>59</sup> Thus, though righteousness and glory are different concepts, God's righteousness and his glory are really the same thing. So, we can take Jesus' directive to mean: As your ultimate end, seek the kingdom of God for the glory of God.

In Jesus, God fully gives himself for us and offers himself to us. We can fully give ourselves to God by discerning the personal vocation which is God's unique plan for each of our lives, carrying out that plan, and thereby contributing to the realization of his kingdom for his glory.<sup>60</sup> In this way, we will prepare material for God's kingdom. The material we prepare will contribute to the fulfillment of Christ the king and thus to God's fulfillment. Yes, God's fulfillment. Just as God was nursed when Mary nursed the infant Jesus, God is fulfilled when anyone contributes to the fulfillment of Christ the king.

For centuries, secularists have created facsimiles of God's kingdom without God, while unfaithful Christians have compromised with secularism. Some pastors and many theologians, wishing to stem the loss of faith, sought to make Christian life easier, cheapened grace, and either frankly denied the reality of hell or reduced it to a possibility so unlikely of realization in anyone's case that it can be safely ignored. And faithful Christians, impeded by their lack of an adequate understanding of the New Testament's teachings about the kingdom, for a long time failed to articulate clearly the beautiful gospel of God's kingdom.

During the twentieth century, however, both Catholics and other Christians gradually and increasingly focused on Christ and his kingdom. The teachings of Vatican Council II and Pope Saint John Paul II about the kingdom, the universal call to holiness, and personal vocation laid a good foundation for a new, sounder, and richer

evangelization. The new evangelization nevertheless will not bear fruit unless both cheap grace and the theology that reduced the kingdom to a metaphor are discarded.<sup>61</sup> The Church's pastors must preach God's kingdom as the single ultimate end. And God's children must verify that preaching by discerning their personal vocations, taking up their crosses, and following Jesus all the way home.

¡VIVA CRISTO REY!<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> By "natural end" I mean the ultimate end to which sound reason unaided by divine revelation would direct; by "supernatural end" I mean the ultimate end to which divine revelation does direct. In what follows, I distinguish two senses of *end*: *finis cuius gratia* (the good that is one's reason for choosing) and *finis cui* (the person or persons in whom or for whom one intends that good to be realized). This paper further develops my treatment of the ultimate end begun with "Man, Natural End of," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1967 ed., 9:132-38; 2003 ed., 9:96-103, and developed in two articles: "Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment," *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 46 (2001): 3-36; and "The True Ultimate End of Human Beings: The Kingdom, Not God Alone," *Theological Studies* 69 (2008): 38-61. The first of the three articles neither dealt with the supernatural end nor offered any definite account of the natural end. The second of them had a different conception of the natural *finis cuius gratia* than that of the third of them and the present paper; the same conception of the supernatural *finis cuius gratia* is proposed in the second and third of those articles and the present paper. Only the present paper deals with the natural and supernatural *finis cui*. The three earlier articles are available at <http://www.twotlj.org/UltimateEnd.html>. My first and most extensive theological treatment of the supernatural ultimate *finis cuius gratia* was in *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol. 1, *Christian Moral Principles* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1983); especially chaps. 19 and 34. That entire work is available at <http://www.twotlj.org>. The same matters are treated with the same chapter numbering but without most of the scholarly apparatus and detailed explanations by Germain Grisez and Russell Shaw, *Fulfillment in Christ: A Summary of Christian Moral Principles* (Notre Dame,



Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991); trans. Charles J. Merrill, *La Vida Realizada en Cristo* (Madrid: Ediciones Palabra, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> My fullest presentation of our natural-law theory of ethics is theological, and was worked out with the help of Joseph Boyle. It is in *Christian Moral Principles*, chapters 2, 5, 7, 8 and 9. A good philosophical presentation of the theory can be found in several collaborative works if they are considered together: Germain Grisez, Joseph Boyle, and John Finnis, "Practical Principles, Moral Truth, and Ultimate Ends," *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 32 (1987): 99-151 (though I now think our treatment of ultimate ends was unsound); John Finnis, Joseph M. Boyle, Jr., and Germain Grisez, *Nuclear Deterrence, Morality and Realism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), chaps. 7, 9, 10, and 11; and John Finnis, Germain Grisez, and Joseph Boyle, "'Direct' and 'Indirect': A Reply to Critics of Our Action Theory," *Thomist* 65 (2001): 1-44. By carrying out a great deal of the philosophically necessary dialectic with more or less similar earlier positions and with counterpositions, John Finnis provided the best philosophical development and presentation of the theory in several works: *Fundamentals of Ethics* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1983); *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), chaps. 3-6; *Aquinas: Moral, Political, and Legal Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), chaps. 3-5 and 10; *Collected Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), vol. 1, *Reason in Action*, chaps. 1-13; vol. 2, *Intention and Identity*, chaps. 1, 4-10, 12, and 13; and vol. 3, *Human Rights and Common Good*, chaps. 1-3. Some aspects of the theory that bear on the theme of the present paper are discussed separately by Boyle, Finnis, and me in *Reason, Morality and Law: The Philosophy of John Finnis*, ed. John Keown and Robert George (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 56-72 (Boyle), 443-56 (Grisez), 473-75 and 577-82 (Finnis). As will be clear to those who carefully read the cited passages in that festschrift, Finnis and I differ about some elements of the theory. It has been criticized by several philosophers. The most extensive critique is Russell Hittinger, *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987); that critique has often been cited as if it were definitive in order to dismiss our work without dealing with it. How I would reply to Hittinger can be gathered from "Some Critical Notes on Russell Hittinger's book, *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory*," available at <http://www.twotlj.org/EthicalTheory.html>. A response to several critics is provided by Robert P. George, *In Defense of Natural Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 17-101.

<sup>3</sup> Saint Thomas holds that one naturally wills, not only what he regards as the object of the will (happiness) but the objects of other capacities, and that

reason naturally apprehends as good all those things to which one has a natural inclination (see *ST* I-II, q. 10, a. 1; q. 94, a. 2). In considering the ultimate end, however, he maintains that every other human desire will be perfectly fulfilled by the beatific vision: "Since God is the very essence of goodness, it follows that he is the good of every good. Therefore when he is seen, all good is seen . . . when he is possessed, all good is possessed" (*Compendium theologiae*, 2, cap. 9; also see, *SCG*, 3, cap. 63).

<sup>4</sup> While reason would recognize that it cannot understand the Creator's intrinsic good and that nothing can affect that good, reason also would consider conformity to the implications of the natural law to be cooperation with the Creator, so that one could will for the Creator's own sake the satisfaction of his interest in the goods of creatures. On this point, see my essay, "Natural Law and the Transcendent Source of Human Fulfillment," in *Reason, Morality, and Law: The Philosophy of John Finnis*, 443-56.

<sup>5</sup> It has been demonstrated that Thomas is mistaken in holding that, at any one time, a person's will must be directed to a single ultimate end in willing whatever it wills; see Peter F. Ryan, S.J., "Must the Acting Person Have a Single Ultimate End?" *Gregorianum* 82 (2001): 325-56.

<sup>6</sup> Thus, contrary to what Aristotle thinks (*Nicomachean Ethics* 10.7-8) and Thomas often maintains (for example, *In 1 Sent.*, q. 1, a. 1), the ultimate end of human life as a whole to which reason directs is not rational activity in accord with virtue or contemplating God. When people reject euthanasia and when they continue caring for dying loved ones who are no longer conscious, they bear witness to the truth that the life of human persons is good of itself, not just as a necessary condition for rational activity.

<sup>7</sup> Saint Thomas claims that people must seek as their ultimate end something they regard as a perfect good that will leave nothing to be desired (see *ST* I-II, q. 1, a. 5). In fact, however, people can only intend as an end, and so as an ultimate end, something they think might be possible, and experience teaches children, even before they make free choices, that satisfying desires regularly leaves more to be desired. That observation is later confirmed by the experience of making choices: every choice is between or among options promoted by desires, and so every choice involves leaving some desire or desires unsatisfied. Of course, people want all their desires to be satisfied, but while that fact lends plausibility to Thomas's claim, it is a mere tautology: wanting satisfaction is included in the *ratio* of desire. Moreover, Thomas's claim that people seek as their ultimate end something they think will be a perfect good leaving nothing to be desired is incompatible with his account of limbo in *De malo*, q. 5, a. 3, according to

which innocents dying without baptism would remain ignorant of the beatific vision and would be satisfied with human fulfillment that surely would leave more to be desired. Nor can the claim's implication that people can have only one ultimate end at a time be reconciled with a truth Thomas defends, namely, that the good of human nature is not completely destroyed in infidels – that is, people who sinfully refuse to accept the gift of faith – so that they need not sin in everything they do (see *ST* II-II, q. 10, a. 4, c. and ad 2; cf. q. 23, a. 7, ad 1; *In 2 Sent.*, d. 41, q. 1, a. 2). That truth implies that, besides the alternative to the true ultimate end that grounds infidels' refusal to believe in God – and which could not ground any good act – they do good acts for some good ultimate end, though obviously they do not expect from either part of their double life perfect fulfillment that leaves nothing to be desired. Following Aristotle and Saint Augustine, Saint Thomas also holds that everyone desires happiness (see *ST* I-II, q. 1, a. 7). I agree that people desire happiness, but not as a perfect good. People often talk about happiness in some aspect of their lives (a happy marriage) or happiness they expect to be transient (a happy birthday). Occasionally, they talk about general and lasting happiness. Then they seem to mean the significant attainment during a stretch of their life of the major goods in which they are interested, along with the absence of what they regard as serious evils. Recalling such happiness, they might say: “The 1990s were good years. The Cold War was over and prosperity was increasing. We were getting along fine. The children were graduating from college, getting decent jobs, and seemed to be marrying well. You still had a job you liked, and we hardly needed to see a doctor. We were happy then.”

<sup>8</sup> In *ST* I-II, q. 2, a. 8, Thomas argues that human happiness cannot consist in any created good but only in God, and besides relying on his thesis that the ultimate end must be perfect good leaving nothing to be desired, he asserts that, just as the object of the intellect is *universale verum*, the object of the will is *universale bonum*, which is only in God. I deny that divine goodness itself, which is not a good we understand, is the object of the human will. Instead, as Thomas rightly says repeatedly throughout his works, the object of the will is an *understood good*.

<sup>9</sup> In various earlier works of mine, I proposed integral human fulfillment (IHF) not as the ultimate end but as a key concept in a formulation of the first principle of morality; see, for example, my *Christian Moral Principles*, 184-89. In “Practical Principles, Moral Truth, and Ultimate Ends,” 131, Boyle, Finnis, and I defined IHF thus: “The ideal of integral human fulfillment is that of the realization, so far as possible, of all the basic goods in all persons, living together in complete harmony.” I remain convinced that people can,

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and indeed must, have an understanding of the first principle of morality and make other moral judgments before they can identify the single ultimate end. But I am not now concerned with formulating the first principle of morality. I am proposing that human persons can and should take integral communal fulfillment (ICF) as their single ultimate end. Besides belonging to different problematic contexts, IHF and ICF differ in several ways. (1) In IHF, “all persons” referred to all human beings, past, present, and future; in ICF, “every person” includes the Creator and created persons who are not human (if any are known to exist), but excludes created persons whom we can neither cooperate with nor affect by our actions. (2) By wishing for IHF (not intending it), morally good will was specified by it; by intending ICF, morally good will is specified by it. (3) Ideally, the fruit of morally good will would be a completely upright life; the fruit of taking ICF as their ultimate end by all the persons who do so is whatever well-being and flourishing their actions bring about in their community and in each of them. (4) With their wills specified by wishing for IHF, morally good persons settled for the happiness they had in benefiting themselves and others as they lived their good lives; with their wills specified by intending ICF, morally good persons hope for the happiness of increasing well-being and flourishing in themselves and others.

<sup>10</sup> Thus, the natural ultimate *finis cuius gratia* is integral communal fulfillment and the ultimate *finis cui* is the Creator gratefully honored, much as grateful children seek their own fulfillment to honor their good parents.

<sup>11</sup> Vatican Council II, *Lumen gentium*, 16, teaches that people who, without fault of their own, lack even explicit knowledge of God, can with the help of his grace strive to live a good life and be saved. But the council adds: “But often men, deceived by the Evil One, have become vain in their reasonings and have exchanged the truth of God for a lie, serving the creature rather than the Creator (cf. Rom 1:21, 25). Or some there are who, living and dying in this world without God, are exposed to final despair.” On this conciliar teaching, see Ralph Martin, *Will Many Be Saved? What Vatican II Actually Teaches and Its Implications for the New Evangelization* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2012), 7-92.

In this paper, I cite and quote the documents of Vatican II, Pope Pius XII, Pope Saint John Paul II, and Pope Benedict XVI from the translations provided on the Vatican website: <http://www.vatican.va>. On that website, all these documents except Pope Benedict’s audiences are divided into segments numbered with Arabic numerals, which I use in referring to them.

<sup>12</sup> Matthew 6:33. Luke 12:31 is similar but without mentioning God's righteousness. I use the Revised Standard Version, Catholic edition (RSV), for this and other quotations from the bible.

<sup>13</sup> "Man is obliged by natural law that he be first solicitous about his salvation, according to Mt 6:33, 'Seek first the kingdom of God.' For just as first principles naturally come under apprehension first, so the ultimate end naturally comes under appetite first" (*De malo*, q. 7, a. 10, ad 9). As I indicated in n. 9, above, I do not agree that the single ultimate end comes under appetite first.

<sup>14</sup> For the data of scripture summarized in this paragraph, see my *Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol. 4, *Clerical and Consecrated Service and Life*, "Chapter One: Theological Presuppositions," 1-16, at <http://www.twotlj.org/OW-4-Ch1.pdf>. Far more New Testament data are relevant to the kingdom than those I briefly summarize. See N. T. Wright, *How God Became King: The Forgotten Story of the Gospels* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012). Moreover, Jesus' being seated at the Father's right hand signifies the inauguration of the Messiah's reign as king of the created universe and, as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 664 teaches, fulfills "the prophet Daniel's vision concerning the Son of man [Dan 7.14]: 'To him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.' After this event the apostles became witnesses of the 'kingdom [that] will have no end.'" See also J. Heuschen, *The Bible on the Ascension*, trans. F. Vander Heijden, O. Praem. (De Pere, Wisc.: St. Norbert Abbey Press, 1965).

<sup>15</sup> See Revelation 5:9-10, 11:15, 21:1-5, 22:1-5. While the author of Revelation imaginatively envisages the kingdom, other New Testament texts and the Church's teaching amply confirm the features I mention.

<sup>16</sup> Benedict T. Viviano, O.P., *The Kingdom of God in History* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1988), holds (30-31, 38-44) that Saint Irenaeus was faithful to New Testament teaching while Origen, influenced by Platonism, was a major representative of a spiritual-mystical interpretation that lost sight of the kingdom's social, earthly, and justice-oriented aspects. Viviano thinks Saint Augustine, strongly influenced by neo-Platonic philosophy, held that the kingdom ultimately consists in eternal life with God in heaven, and identified the present kingdom with the Church partly to exclude a mistaken identification of it with the christianized Roman Empire. Viviano does not attribute that mistake to Eusebius of Caesarea but thinks his work fostered it (45-55). A helpful,

more detailed critique of Origen is provided by Douglas Farrow, *Ascension and Ecclesia: On the Significance of the Doctrine of the Ascension for Ecclesiology and Christian Cosmology* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1999), 88-106.

<sup>17</sup> “Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34).

<sup>18</sup> *ST I-II*, qq. 1-5 at q. 4, a. 7, ad 1. This reduction of the completed kingdom to union with God is Thomas’s considered position; in his first treatment of the matter, he held that the kingdom and beatitude are really identical and differ only in *ratio*, except insofar as “the common good of a whole multitude differs from the individual good of each of its members” (*In 4 Sent.*, d. 49, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 5, c.). Similarly, in *SCG*, 4, cap. 50, Thomas says that the kingdom is “nothing but the ordered society of those who enjoy the divine vision, in which true beatitude consists.” In saying that, Thomas should not be taken to exclude love from the beatifying union with God; he holds, for example: “In the vision of God, who is goodness and truth itself, there must be love or joyous fruition, no less than comprehension (*Compendium theologiae*, 1, cap. 165; see also 2, cap. 9). Still, regarding “kingdom” as a metaphor for the union of souls with God – rather than, as I shall explain, the gathering of creation into Christ – impedes appropriating the message of the gospel passage, namely, that Christ the king even now identifies himself so closely with very needy people that one must treat them as one would treat him if one is to have any hope of entering his kingdom.

<sup>19</sup> See *Lumen gentium*, 3.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 5; in article 5, Vatican II also teaches that the Church “receives the mission to proclaim and to spread among all peoples the Kingdom of Christ and of God and to be, on earth, the initial budding forth of that kingdom. While it slowly grows, the Church strains toward the completed Kingdom and, with all its strength, hopes and desires to be united in glory with its King.” Article 6 begins: “In the Old Testament the revelation of the Kingdom is often conveyed by means of metaphors,” which implies that the kingdom is among revealed realities rather than itself being a metaphor, as Thomas supposed.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 9. Article 9 is the first of chap. 2, “On the People God,” in which the council sets out its systematic treatment of the Church. It is therefore significant that here the council, rather than identify the kingdom with the Church, affirms that the Church is ordered to the kingdom *as to its end*. Aloys Grillmeier, in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol. 1, ed. Herbert

Vorgrimler (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966), 155, comments: "The history of the messianic people is a preparation for the full realization of the reign of God at the end of time. Since it is thus the instrument whereby the reign is brought about, it must expand on earth in a historical process."

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 48. While the council speaks of "tempus restitutionis omnium" and refers to the passage in Acts in which the Greek word *apokatastaseōs* occurs, Vatican II did not propose a theory of universal restoration like that of Origen.

<sup>23</sup> *Gaudium et spes*, 39; emphasis mine; the included quotation is from the Preface of the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ King of the Universe.

<sup>24</sup> Referring to the laity, the council says God calls them "to dedicate themselves to the earthly service of men and to make ready the material of the celestial realm by this ministry of theirs" (ibid.). The council's description of the kingdom rich in human goods goes far beyond anything that Christians have imagined they could lay up for themselves in heaven (see Matthew 6:19-20, Luke 12:32-33).

<sup>25</sup> Some Catholics' errors obviously provoked John Paul's chapter on the kingdom. In *Redemptoris missio* he grants that there are some positive aspects even in notions of the kingdom that are silent about Christ (17), that the Church is distinct from Christ and the kingdom (18), and that "the inchoate reality of the kingdom can also be found beyond the confines of the Church" (20). But he insists that a kingdom detached from Christ or the Church is not the one God reveals to us, that the Church is indissolubly united to both the kingdom, which it serves, and to Christ, who is its head; and that the kingdom's temporal dimension which is being realized in the present world outside the Church needs to be completed by the kingdom moving in the Church toward completion (18-20).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 10 (this article is the last of chap. 1, "Jesus Christ: The Only Savior"), 13, and 19. To a statement in 20, "She [the Church] is a dynamic force in mankind's journey toward the eschatological kingdom, and is the sign and promoter of gospel values," John Paul appends a footnote referring to *Gaudium et spes*, 39.

<sup>27</sup> Since Vatican II, many works on eschatology have focused on Christ. For example, Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1988), 234: Heaven "must first and foremost be determined christologically. It is not an extra-historical place into which one goes. Heaven's existence depends upon the fact that Jesus Christ, as God, is man, and makes space

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for human existence in the existence of God himself. [note omitted] One is in heaven when, and to the degree, that one is in Christ. It is by being with Christ that we find the true location of our existence as human beings in God. Heaven is thus primarily a personal reality, and one that remains forever shaped by its historical origin in the paschal mystery of death and resurrection.” In a fine textbook, Paul O’Callaghan, *Christ Our Hope: An Introduction to Eschatology* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011) strives to take Christ into proper account and in the book’s conclusion affirms: “it should be said that Christ in person is our *eschaton*” (330).

<sup>28</sup> *Redemptoris missio*, 12 and 18. Note that John Paul II here does not identify the kingdom with Christ (which would exclude from it created persons, all the good fruits of their nature and enterprise, and subpersonal creation) but states that the kingdom “before all else” is Jesus – which leaves room in the kingdom for everything else, gathered up, as will be explained, in Christ. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005), 11-25 (chap. 1: “God’s Plan of Love for Humanity”), summarizes many relevant teachings of Vatican II and John Paul II, and makes two things clear: (1) God’s saving work in Christ is meant for human individuals and societies integrally, and (2) everything will culminate in Christ, who unites created and uncreated perfection in his very Person.

<sup>29</sup> See John 1:2, Colossians 1.16, Hebrews 1:2.

<sup>30</sup> See Colossians 1:16-17, Hebrews 2:10.

<sup>31</sup> See Hebrews 1:2. This passage together with those referenced in the preceding two notes and Ephesians 1:9-10 seem to me to support the view that the Word would have become man even had human beings not fallen, a position held by Blessed John Duns Scotus (among others). Speaking of the “important contribution that Duns Scotus made to the history of theology,” Benedict XVI said: “First of all he meditated on the Mystery of the Incarnation and, unlike many Christian thinkers of the time, held that the Son of God would have been made man even if humanity had not sinned. . . . This perhaps somewhat surprising thought crystallized because, in the opinion of Duns Scotus the Incarnation of the Son of God, planned from all eternity by God the Father at the level of love is the fulfillment of creation and enables every creature, in Christ and through Christ, to be filled with grace and to praise and glorify God in eternity. Although Duns Scotus was aware that in fact, because of original sin, Christ redeemed us



with his Passion, Death, and Resurrection, he reaffirmed that the Incarnation is the greatest and most beautiful work of the entire history of salvation, that it is not conditioned by any contingent fact but is God's original idea of ultimately uniting with himself the whole of creation, in the Person and Flesh of the Son" (*General Audience*, 7 July 2010). While Saint Thomas generally holds that the Word would not have become man had human beings not sinned, he grants in his first systematic work that the contrary position can be held because the incarnation of God's Son "brought about not only liberation from sin but also the exaltation of human nature and the consummation of the whole universe" (*In 3 Sent.*, d. 1, q. 1, a. 3, c.).

<sup>32</sup> See Ephesians 1:9-10; cf. the opening of *Lumen gentium*, 48, quoted above, where Vatican II cites Ephesians 1:10; Colossians 1:20; 2 Peter 3:10-13. The *New Jerusalem Bible* translates the relevant words from Ephesians 1:9-10: The Father "has let us know the mystery of his purpose . . . that he would bring together everything under Christ, as head, everything in the heavens and everything on earth," and appends footnote j: "The main theme of this letter is how the whole body of creation, having been cut off from the Creator by sin, is decomposing, and how its rebirth is effected by Christ's reuniting all its parts into an organism with himself as the head, so as to re-attach it to God." The *New Jerusalem Bible* translates Ephesians 1:22-23: "He has put all things under his feet, and made him, as he is above all things, the head of the Church; which is his Body, the fullness of him who is filled, all in all," and appends footnote t: "The Church, as the body of Christ, 1 Col 12:12seq., can be called the fullness (*pleroma*; see below 3:19; 4:13) in so far as it includes the whole new creation that shares (since it forms the setting of the human race) in the cosmic rebirth under Christ its ruler and head, see Col 1:15-20seq." Also see Pierre Benoit, O.P., "Corps, Tête et Plérôme dans les Épîtres de la Captivité," *Revue Biblique* 63 (1956): 5-44.

<sup>33</sup> See 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; cf. Hebrews 2:5-9. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches: "Christ is Lord of the cosmos and of history. In him human history and indeed all creation are 'set forth' and transcendently fulfilled" (668, with n. 551: "*Eph* 1:10; cf. *Eph* 4:10; *1 Cor* 15:24, 27-28."); again: "The kingdom has come in the person of Christ and grows mysteriously in the hearts of those incorporated into him, until its full eschatological manifestation. Then all those he has redeemed and made 'holy and blameless before him in love' (*Eph* 1:4), will be gathered together as the one People of God, the 'Bride of the Lamb' (*Rev* 21:9), 'the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God'

(Rev 21:10-11)" (865); again: "The ultimate purpose of creation is that God 'who is the Creator of all things may at last become "all in all," thus simultaneously assuring his own glory and our beatitude'" (294; to the sentence quoted is appended n. 140, which refers to Vatican II, *Ad gentes*, 2; 1 Corinthians 15:28). N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: Harper One, 2008), 102, comments on 1 Corinthians 15:28 (God being all in all): "One day, when all forces of rebellion have been defeated and the creation responds freely and gladly to the love of its Creator, God will fill it with himself so that it will *both* remain an independent being, other than God, *and also* be flooded with God's own life. This is part of the paradox of love, in which love freely given creates a context for love to be freely returned, and so on in a cycle where complete freedom and complete union do not cancel each other out but rather celebrate each other and make one another whole." Nevertheless, Scott M. Lewis, S.J., "*So That God May Be All in All*": *The Apocalyptic Message of 1 Corinthians 15,12-34* (Rome: Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1998), 66-67, referring to "God will be all in all," states: "The exact meaning of this phrase is unclear. It is paralleled directly only in Eph 1,20-23 and Col 3,11. Throughout the Pauline and deutero-Pauline corpus, 'all things' usually refers to what God has created, or that over which God rules." Summarizing the opinion of many exegetes, Lewis says (68): "The consensus is that it [all in all] deals chiefly with God's undivided and total power over his creation."

<sup>34</sup> By "faithful disciples" here and hereafter I mean those who believe in Jesus and abide in his love, but I do not intend to exclude anyone well enough disposed, by God's grace and any free choices he or she may have made, to enter the kingdom.

<sup>35</sup> Jesus gives the Spirit to his disciples because as man Jesus cannot by himself establish and perfect the oneness of the communion of the new covenant; see 1 John 4:13-17 and the invocations of the Holy Spirit after the consecration in eucharistic prayers II-IV. Also see my *Christian Moral Principles*, chap. 24, qq. B-D.

<sup>36</sup> As marriage was created by God in the beginning and renewed by Jesus, its covenantal oneness is sufficiently similar to that of the communion of the new covenant that Christian marriage is a sacrament of that definitive covenantal union. (On the oneness of covenantal marriage, see Peter F. Ryan, S.J., and Germain Grisez, "Indissoluble Marriage: A Reply to Kenneth Himes and James Coriden," *Theological Studies* 72 [2011]: 369-415, at 377-85.) Both covenants are initiated by acts of the will: marriage is initiated by the bride's and groom's mutual consent; the communion of the

new covenant was formed initially by Jesus' humanly obedient self-offering and the Father's acceptance of it, and is entered by human persons' request for baptism and their being baptized by someone acting *in persona Christi*. The newlywed couple seals the marital covenant by their first marital intercourse, which unites them in one flesh. Jesus seals the new covenant by shedding his own blood, and the Father seals it by raising him from the dead; the baptized consummate their inclusion in the new covenant by offering themselves in the eucharist with Jesus' sacrifice and sharing in his resurrection by receiving his body and blood. While human acts are necessary in both cases, in neither case are they sufficient to bring about the covenantal oneness: God alone joins the couple indissolubly for as long as both live, and the Holy Spirit alone creates the far more inclusive and everlasting oneness of the new covenant. The lastingness of these bonds makes it clear that, once they exist, they are independent of any human act and irreducible to any metaphysical accident or set of accidents in either or both parties. Both covenants constitute the parties to them a supersubstantial unit, without compromising their distinct personal identities. Unsurprisingly, covenantal oneness has no place in Aristotle's philosophy.

<sup>37</sup> See Matthew 7:21, 10:38-39, 16:24-26; Mark 8:34-38; Luke 9:23-25, 14:27; John 8:51, 12:47-50; 14:15, 21-24; 15:10.

<sup>38</sup> John 6:56-57.

<sup>39</sup> See DS 1636-37, 1651-54. Jesus' whole self is present in the eucharist as long as the species last no matter what becomes of them. But just as a faithful spouse's self-gift in marital intercourse can rightly be accepted by the other only if he or she too is faithful, Jesus' self-gift in the eucharist can rightly be accepted – as Saint Paul makes clear (see 1 Corinthians 11:27-30) – only by disciples who are faithful to him.

<sup>40</sup> Saint Paul teaches about the oneness flowing from the eucharist as bodily. Thus a Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 6:19); the eucharist makes the many Christians into one body of Christ and members of one another (see 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 12:12-13; 15:22); also see John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 16-18, 22-24. Pius XII, *Mystici corporis Christi*, 60-77, explains well why the Body of Christ, which is the Church, should be called "mystical": Unlike members of a natural body, the Church's members, being persons, retain their substantial identity and existence; yet unlike other human societies, these members of Christ are really unified by the Holy Spirit, so that the Church has greater unity than any other society. But, Pius says, certain unnamed people "make the Divine Redeemer and the

members of the Church coalesce in one physical person, and while they bestow divine attributes on man, they make Christ our Lord subject to error and to human inclination to evil.” He says that these people “neglect the fact that the Apostle Paul has used metaphorical language in speaking of this doctrine, and failing to distinguish as they should the precise and proper meaning of the terms the physical body, the social body, and the Mystical Body, arrive at a distorted idea of unity” (86). I of course deny both that the mystical body is one person and that Christ is subject to error and human inclination to evil. I hold that “body” is predicated of the physical body and the mystical body analogously, not univocally. But it seems to me that in Jesus’ and Paul’s teachings about the eucharist and its effects, “body” is clearly not said metaphorically of the mystical body as it is, for example, when one speaks of the “body politic.”

<sup>41</sup> See John 6:51-58. On John 6:51-59, see Raymond E. Brown, S.S., *The Gospel according to John (1-11): Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, Anchor Bible 29 (Garden City: N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966), 281-93.

<sup>42</sup> See *ST* I, q. 3, aa. 3-4, where Saint Thomas cogently argues that God is the same as his essence or nature, which is the same as his very being; see q. 28, aa. 2-3, and q. 39, a. 1, where he cogently argues both that the three divine persons are really distinct from one another and that in God essence is nothing other than person; and see III, q. 2, a. 6, and q. 17, a. 2, where he cogently argues that there is only one personal *esse* in Christ, the divine *esse*, because the eternally existing Word really became human and his humanity is not a metaphysical accident.

<sup>43</sup> See not only 2 Peter 1:4; but John 1:12-13, 3:3-7; 1 John 3:1-2; Romans 8:14-23; Galatians 4:3-7. Jesus’ teaching that people must be born again to enter the kingdom makes it clear that they really share God’s nature; Paul’s teaching that people become God’s children by adoption makes it clear that the Spirit makes them God’s children; the Father does not beget them. These teachings together convey the uniqueness of being God’s children as Jesus offers that exalted status to fallen humankind. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 460: “The Word became flesh to make us ‘partakers of the divine nature’ (2 Pet 1:4); ‘For this is why the Word became man, and the Son of God became the Son of man: so that man, by entering into communion with the Word and thus receiving divine sonship, might become a son of God’ (St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 3, 19, 1: PG 7/1, 939); ‘For the Son of God became man so that we might become God.’ (St. Athanasius, *De inc.*, 54, 3: PG 25, 192B); ‘The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men

gods' (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Opusc.* 57: 1–4).” I affirm the Council of Trent’s teaching that fallen human beings, in being justified, are really changed by receiving the gifts of faith, hope, and charity (see DS 1530) and its solemn definition that grace and charity “are poured into their hearts by the Holy Spirit and inhere in them” (DS 1561). Those to whom God mercifully gives faith and hope are enabled by these graces to accept God’s revelation, commit themselves to him, and cooperate with him so as to share in his kingdom. The grace and charity in each disciple’s heart, it seems to me, is a single reality, which presupposes his or her inclusion in the oneness of the new covenant and is the disciple’s personal sharing, made possible by that oneness with Jesus, in his divine nature and so in his communion with the Father and the Spirit. Thomas holds that grace and charity are created qualities in the soul (see *ST* I-II, q. 110, a. 2); but since created qualities in the soul ontologically depend on and are subordinate to the substance they modify, I do not see how such a quality could provide created persons with a real share in the divine nature. Still, God’s reborn and adopted children are not divine persons. I do not think we can know precisely what grace and charity are, and I think it unreasonable to suppose we should be able to account for them within anyone’s metaphysical framework, no matter how well such a framework might account for natural entities; for an earlier and fuller – though perhaps too ambitious – attempt to deal with these matters, see my *Christian Moral Principles*, chap. 24, q. F and appendix 2; chap. 25, appendix 4.

<sup>44</sup> Matthew 11:27; cf. Luke 10:22, John 3:34-35.

<sup>45</sup> John 14:19-21. Contemporary exegetes I have consulted do not think Jesus is speaking here about the beatific vision. Some point out that the line about the world’s not seeing him and the disciples’ seeing him suggests that what follows refers to Jesus’ self-manifestation to his disciples during this life, perhaps with the coming of the Holy Spirit. But Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas think the passage concerns the beatific vision; for Augustine, see, *Tractatus on the Gospel of John*, 75; for Thomas, see, for example, *SCG*, 3, cap. 52 and 151; *ST* II-II, q. 27, a. 8, c.; *Super Evangelium S. Ioannis lectura*, cap. 14, lect. 5. For three reasons, it seems to me that they are right: (1) Jesus is promising he will make faithful disciples aware of his mutual indwelling with the Father, a promise that does not seem to be fulfilled in the present life; (2) the content of this passage fits well with that of the two classic ones on the beatific vision that I deal with in the next paragraph; and (3) “in that day” often refers to the eschaton rather than to a future time within history.

<sup>46</sup> “When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood” (1 Corinthians 13:11-12); “See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God’s children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:1-2).

<sup>47</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1070, says face to face “denotes intimacy of relationship and access” and affirms: “This intimacy is what [Paul] holds out as characterizing the eschatological goal for believers.” Günther Bornkamm, *Early Christian Experience*, trans. Paul L. Hammer (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 185: “The consummation consists in the fact that the cleft between knowing and being known by God is abolished.”

<sup>48</sup> That the promised intimacy is the fulfillment of Christians’ divine nature as adopted or reborn children of God also is implicit in its identification with eternal life in John 17:3. After quoting the passages from Saint Paul and Saint John, John Paul II comments: “Beyond the frontiers of history, then, the full, shining epiphany of the Trinity awaits us. In the new creation God will give us the intimate, perfect communion with him that the fourth Gospel calls ‘eternal life’, the source of a ‘knowledge’ which in biblical language is precisely a communion of love: ‘This is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent’ (Jn 17: 3)” (*General Audience*, 2 [28 June 2000]).

<sup>49</sup> Vatican Council II, *Dei verbum*, 2.

<sup>50</sup> In Thomas’s earliest treatment of the beatific vision, he uses ideas of Alexander of Aphrodisias and Averroes in explaining how it can be an act of the human intellect (see *In 4 Sent.*, d. 49, q. 2. a. 1, c.). He also interprets relevant New Testament passages in light of his philosophical ideas. In *ST I*, q. 12, a. 4, Thomas cogently argues that no created intellect by its natural powers can see the divine essence. In a. 5, he argues for the supernatural, created light of glory that makes the intellect Godlike and able to see the divine essence. In the *sed contra* of a. 5, he quotes the psalmist’s affirmation, “In thy light do we see light,” which he thought attested to the light of glory (in the bible Thomas used, the quotation is from Psalm 35:10;

in the RSV, it is 36:9). In explaining the beatific vision, Thomas uses some relevant New Testament passages to support his points, but nowhere does he mention Jesus or the sharing of his disciples' in the divine nature by rebirth or adoption. Only twice and incidentally is Jesus mentioned in the treatise on beatitude in the *Summa theologiae* (see *ST* I-II, q. 2, a. 3, ad 1; q. 5, a. 7, ad 2). Also twice (q. 3, a. 2, ad 1; a. 4, sed contra), in identifying eternal life as the last end, Thomas quotes part of John 3:17 – “This is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God” – while omitting “and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” With that omission of the humanity of Christ, all other created goods are omitted from eternal life. In the prologue to the third part of the *Summa theologiae*, Thomas indicates that its third and final part would have dealt with “the end of immortal life to which we will attain through him [Christ] by rising,” and in various places Thomas provides indications that his description of the final state of the blessed would have included goods that are treated as nonessential or even entirely ignored in the treatise on beatitude as ultimate end in *ST* I-II, qq. 1-5; on this, see Finnis, *Aquinas: Moral, Political, and Legal Theory*, 327-31. However, that second, unwritten treatise on beatitude would have dealt with it as the ultimate condition of the blessed rather than as the ultimate end of wayfarers. In this paper, it is the latter that I am concerned with.

<sup>51</sup> Two other factors partly account for the restlessness of our hearts. One is the fact that human fulfillment always is actually limited and potentially greater, with the result that people quite reasonably are never satisfied. The other, peculiar to believers, is that divine revelation itself, when received with faith, generates hope for freedom from evil and a good and close relationship with God. For that reason, although nobody can see God and live (see Exodus 33:20-23), faithful Israelites already longed in some sense to see God (see Psalm 11:7; 17:15; 27:4, 13; 42:2). On the relevant Old Testament passages, see Mark S. Smith, “Seeing God in the Psalms: The Background to the Beatific Vision in the Hebrew Bible,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 50 (1988): 171-83; Gary A. Anderson, “To See Where God Dwells: The Tabernacle, the Temple, and the Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition,” *Letter and Spirit* 4 (2008): 13-45; Benedict XVI, General Audience (16 January 2013). Plainly, not the beatific vision but the Old Testament’s sense of seeing God is what Philip and Jesus are talking about when Philip says: “Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied” (John 14:8), and Jesus answers: “Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father; how can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’” (John 14:9). Saint John clearly asserts: “No one has ever seen God; the

only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known" (John 1:18; cf. 5:37, 6:46).

<sup>52</sup> In striving to know complex realities, we usually first understand some aspects of them and only gradually, if ever, learn all about them. So, Thomas was aware of the difficulty in holding that finite intellects, which plainly cannot comprehend God's infinite essence, can nevertheless somewhat understand it, though it is absolutely simple. On this matter, also see Gregory Rocca, O.P., *Speaking the Incomprehensible God: Thomas Aquinas on the Interplay of Positive and Negative Theology* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 34-47; Rocca concludes: "How the finite creature can finitely know the infinite being of God must remain as mysterious as the Infinite Mystery itself" (47). To this, Rocca attaches n. 60: "Rahner realizes the problem Thomas has in proposing a direct vision of God, especially when we remember that God is seen as a simple whole and as incomprehensible: 'The assertion of the direct vision of God and assertion of his incomprehensibility are related for us here and now in a mysterious and paradoxical dialectic.'" The quotation from Rahner is from "An Investigation of the Incomprehensibility of God in St. Thomas Aquinas," in *Theological Investigations*, trans. D. Morland (New York: Seabury, 1979), 16:244-54 at 247. In n. 60, Rocca continues: "A. N. Williams also has some illuminating words on how Thomas resolutely grasps both sides of the paradox that the blessed possess an essential though noncomprehensive vision of God, and remarks that it is by this paradox that he protects God's unfathomable transcendence – the same transcendence that Gregory Palamas tries to secure by his distinction between God's essence and energies." The reference to Williams is *The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 47.

<sup>53</sup> Affirming as I do that we share by God's gift in the divine nature as straightforwardly as the Word shares in human nature by assuming it, and denying as I do that the beatific vision is the act of the human intellect or any other human power provoke metaphysical objections, such as: "If we really shared in the uncreated divine nature, which is identical with the divine persons, we too would be uncreated, divine persons – which is absurd." I appreciate the force of such challenges, but am convinced that our metaphysics, rather than our faith, must give way. If we did not already believe in the Incarnation of the Word, similar metaphysical objections would seem equally forceful: "If the Word really became a man who was born about two thousand years ago, God would be a created, human individual – which is absurd."



<sup>54</sup> Against the false opinion that the intellect by its natural power could see God, the Council of Vienne in 1312 definitively taught that the soul needs “the light of glory raising it to see God and to enjoy him beatifically” (DS 895). My point is that the soul needs union with Christ and his self-manifestation to see God and enjoy him beatifically – that the light of glory described by Thomas is as inadequate as the natural power that it is supposed to elevate. That Christ is the light of glory may also be suggested by New Testament texts that identify him as the light for humankind – for example, John 1:4-9, 3:19-21, 8:12, 9:5, 12:35-36; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Revelation 21:23-25. Sharing in God’s nature by his self-gift is an elevation of human persons but it is no more an elevation of their humanity than the Word’s self-emptying (see Philippians 2:7) assumption of human nature is a degradation of his divinity. The divine and human natures are distinct in both Christ himself and in those who in Christ are God’s children. Each nature is the principle of the acts and fullness proper to it, and what is grounded in one must not be confused with what is grounded in the other. Some will object that in a passage used above, Paul teaches that the beatific vision is an act of the human intellect when he says “I shall understand” (1 Corinthians 13:12, RSV). The Greek word translated in the RSV by “I shall understand” is *epignōsomai*, which most translators do not interpret as meaning “understand,” but in some sense *know* (see [http://biblehub.com/1\\_corinthians/13-12.htm](http://biblehub.com/1_corinthians/13-12.htm)). The word “understand” in English often suggests comprehensive knowledge, so that even in speaking of the beatific vision as Saint Thomas conceived it, to say that the blessed “understand” God could be misleading. About sixty years after Saint Thomas died, there was a controversy over the view that nobody will see God until the end of time when the dead are raised. To exclude that view, Benedict XII, in *Benedictus Deus* (1336), solemnly defined that “since the Ascension of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ into heaven,” the souls of those who are saved and who have completed purgation if it was needed, “have been, are and will be in heaven, in the heavenly Kingdom and celestial paradise with Christ, joined to the company of the holy angels. Since the Passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, these souls have seen and do see the divine essence with an intuitive vision, and even face to face, without the mediation of any creature” (DS 1000). Pope Benedict apparently was taking for granted Saint Thomas’s account of beatitude. But Benedict does not say that the vision is an act of the intellect or of any other faculty. He says the “soul” sees, meaning by “soul” the subject who died and has not yet been raised from the dead. He says that the vision is intuitive, meaning it is immediate and independent of any other act. That can be true of an act grounded in a created subject’s share in the divine nature. Candido Pozo, S.J., *Theology of the*

*Beyond*, trans. Mark A. Pilon, 5th Spanish ed. (Staten Island, N.Y.: St. Paul/Alba House, 2009), 352-55, deals with “the Christological meaning of eternal life” and, in doing so, answers some objections to regarding the humanity of Christ as mediating the beatific vision and provides some references to the theological literature. John Paul II teaches: “In the context of Revelation, we know that the ‘heaven’ or ‘happiness’ in which we will find ourselves is neither an abstraction nor a physical place in the clouds, but a living, personal relationship with the Holy Trinity. It is our meeting with the Father which takes place in the risen Christ through the communion of the Holy Spirit. It is always necessary to maintain a certain restraint in describing these ‘ultimate realities’ since their depiction is always unsatisfactory. Today, personalist language is better suited to describing the state of happiness and peace we will enjoy in our definitive communion with God” (General Audience [21 July 1999], 4).

<sup>55</sup> Considered apart from the four gospels, some passages quoted or cited above from the Pauline literature seem to suggest that every human person will be saved. That view, I am convinced, is falsified by the New Testament and the Church’s teaching. “God wills everyone to be saved, and those who are saved are saved by God’s grace. Entirely through their own fault, more than a few people will end in hell. But no one still alive and able to repent need end in hell” (Germain Grisez and Peter F. Ryan, S.J., “Hell and Hope for Salvation,” *New Blackfriars* 95 [2014]: 606-15, at 606).

<sup>56</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:21-23. Of course, Paul is making a different point than the eschatological one for which I apply his statement, but I think the application is warranted by Pauline texts I have cited bearing on eschatology.

<sup>57</sup> See 1 Corinthians 15:24-27 at 25.

<sup>58</sup> Revelation 21:2. In the new Jerusalem, “There shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall worship him; they shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads” (Revelation 22:3-4).

<sup>59</sup> Since Jesus said “*his* righteousness,” the relevant righteousness is not that of created persons or of entities such as codes of law but of God. But Jesus does not refer to the righteousness which is an intrinsic perfection of God, which, since not being something we can affect by our action, is not something we can seek. The righteousness we can seek is that which we hope for in the kingdom: “We wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:13). That righteousness is God’s inasmuch

he brings it about and it manifests his goodness, as does his glory in general. See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. 7, *Theology: The New Covenant*, trans. Brian McNeil, C.R.V. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989), 297-99, 437 (n. 6).

<sup>60</sup> God calls each Christian to make a unique contribution to the kingdom, for we are “his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). Each Christian’s personal vocation includes all the actions of the entire life God offers him or her. Vatican II explicitly mentions personal vocation only a few times, but one of them specifies a duty of pastors that very few have undertaken to fulfill: “Priests therefore, as educators in the faith, must see to it either by themselves or through others that the faithful are led individually in the Holy Spirit to a development of their own vocation according to the Gospel, to a sincere and practical charity, and to that freedom with which Christ has made us free.” *Presbyterorum ordinis*, 6; see also *Lumen gentium*, 11, 46; *Gaudium et spes*, 35, 43; *Unitatis redintegratio*, 6. Personal vocation is a central reality in John Paul II’s theology of Christian life; a few of the many places he treats it are: *Redemptor hominis*, 21; *Apostolic Letter on the Occasion of the International Youth Year*, 3; *Christifideles Laicium*, 57-59; *Pastores dabo vobis*, 40; *Message for the 38<sup>th</sup> World Day of Prayer for Vocations* (2001), 2; *Message for the 40<sup>th</sup> World Day of Prayer for Vocations* (2003), 3. While the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* often uses the word “vocation,” it nowhere deals with personal vocation; it should have been treated in part 3, “Life in Christ,” but the draft of that entire part circulated for comment to the bishops of the world was so poor that it was scrapped and replaced with one evidently drafted by a person or persons steeped in the thought of Saint Thomas, who, supposing that God is the single ultimate end of Christians in the state of grace, saw no need for a unique personal vocation to shape each Christian’s life toward his or her personal contribution to the kingdom. I treat personal vocation in *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol. 4, *Clerical and Consecrated Life and Service*, “Chapter One: Theological Presuppositions,” 185–221, available at <http://www.twotlj.org/G-4-V-4.html>; I treat responsibilities bearing upon personal vocation in vol. 2, *Living a Christian Life*, “Chapter 2: Hope, Apostolate, and Personal Vocation; Question E: What Are One’s Responsibilities in Regard to Personal Vocation?” available at <http://www.twotlj.org/G-2-2-E.html>; and Russell Shaw and I treat many aspects of personal vocation as well as its importance for renewal in the Church in our popular book,

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*Personal Vocation: God Calls Everyone by Name* (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, 2003).

<sup>61</sup> Considering the contrast between forms of religious expression that focus on the religious experience and forms of secularity that omit God, John Paul II formulated and answered a relevant question: "How, then, should we face this terrible conflict which divides the heart and soul of contemporary humanity? It becomes a challenge for the Christian: the challenge to bring about a new synthesis of the greatest possible allegiance to God and his will, and the greatest possible sharing in the joys and hopes, worries and sorrows of the world, to direct them towards the plan of integral salvation which God the Father has shown us in Christ and continually makes available to us through the gift of the Holy Spirit." (*Address to a Symposium on the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of "Provida Mater Ecclesia"* [2005], 4). Directing people to integral salvation, which includes integral communal fulfillment, requires Christians to bring about a new synthesis.

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