

THE TRUE ULTIMATE END OF HUMAN BEINGS: THE KINGDOM, NOT GOD ALONE

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The author argues against the view that the true ultimate end of human beings is only in God, attained by the beatific vision. The alternative proposed is that human beings' true ultimate end is fulfillment in God's kingdom, a communion of divine Persons and created persons, in which human members will be fulfilled with respect to all the goods proper to their nature. On this view, beatitude has various degrees, and the fulfillment of the blessed will continue increasing forever.

THOMAS AQUINAS HELD that the true ultimate end of human beings is God alone, attained by the beatific vision (a thesis I will call "TUEGABV"). In this article, I first set out his case for that thesis. Next, I describe an earlier attempt of mine to refute it and deal with three critics' responses to that attempt. I then offer five arguments to show either that Thomas's case for TUEGABV is unsound or that the thesis itself is untenable. Finally, I sketch out my views on what can be known naturally about the ultimate end toward which human beings should direct their lives and what divine revelation adds.

THOMAS'S CASE

The following six paragraphs summarize those elements of Thomas's treatise on beatitude in the *Summa theologiae* that are essential to understand his defense of TUEGABV and the arguments I propose against it.

(1) Thomas argues that human beings always act for an end, and that, while proximate ends often are sought for the sake of ulterior ends, human beings must always act for some ultimate end.¹

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¹ See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* (hereafter, *ST*) 1–2, q. 1, aa. 1, 4, 6.

(2) In proposing the first of three arguments to show that individuals cannot will more than one ultimate end at the same time, Thomas argues that it is necessary that human beings' ultimate end so fulfill their whole desire (*appetitus*) that nothing more remains to be desired.²

(3) Thomas says that the expression *ultimate end* refers to both the idea (*ratio*) of the ultimate end and to the reality in which that idea is found (*id in quo finis ultimi ratio invenitur*). He explains that, "as to the idea of the ultimate end, all agree in their desire of the ultimate end, since all desire their own perfection to be fulfilled—which is the idea of the ultimate end, as I have said. But as to that in which their perfection will be found, not all agree, for some desire riches as the consummate good, others pleasure, and still others something else."³

(4) Again, Thomas distinguishes between two senses of *end*: the reality in which the idea of good is found (*res in qua ratio boni invenitur*) and the use or attainment of that reality; for instance, we say "an avaricious person's end is either money (as the reality) or having money (as the use)." Thomas holds that God is the ultimate end of all creatures in the sense that all of them are directed toward divine goodness, but not all in the same way. Only rational creatures, including human beings, attain their ultimate end by knowing and loving God.⁴

(5) Thomas argues that the good that ultimately fulfills human beings—the good whose attainment he calls "beatitude"—is in God alone:

The beatitude of human beings cannot possibly be in any created good. For beatitude is the perfect good, which completely satisfies desire; it would not be the ultimate end if it left something more to be desired. But the object of the will, which is the human appetite, is the good universally; just as the object of the intellect is the true universally. Plainly, then, nothing can satisfy the human will except the good universally. And that is not found in anything created, but only in God, since every creature has participated goodness. So, only God can satisfy the human will. . . . Therefore, the beatitude of human beings is found in God alone.⁵

(6) Thomas argues that, for their beatitude, human beings must attain God by an intellectual vision of the divine essence. One premise of that argument is, again, that "a human being cannot be happy as long as there is something more for him or her to desire and seek." The other premise is that the human intellect, made aware by created realities that God

² See *ST* 1–2, q. 1, a. 5, c.

³ *ST* 1–2, q. 1, a. 7, c. Translations of this and other quotations from Latin-language sources, other than Vatican II, are my own.

⁴ See *ST* 1–2, q. 1, a. 8, c.

⁵ *ST* 1–2, q. 2, a. 8, c. *Beatitudo* may be translated "happiness," provided happiness is understood not as a subjective mood, but as an objective fulfillment that perfects or completes human beings by realizing their potential: see *ST* 1–2, q. 3, a. 2, c.; and 1, q. 62, a. 1.

exists, would remain unsatisfied if it did not understand what God is in himself.⁶

DISCUSSION OF AN EARLIER PAPER

In a 2001 symposium, I sketched out an account of natural law and dealt with, among other things, TUEGABV.⁷ Toward the end of that paper, I focused on Thomas's claim that people necessarily tend toward fulfillment in a good they expect will satisfy them so completely that they will be unable to desire anything more. That proposition is a premise in Thomas's arguments both for (2) in the summary above—his first argument that people cannot will more than one ultimate end at the same time—and for (5) and (6), which he thinks establish TUEGABV.

The premises of Thomas's first argument that people cannot will more than one ultimate end at the same time are: "Since everything tends to its own perfection, what human beings tend toward as their ultimate end must be something that they tend toward as a good that is perfect and utterly fulfills them. . . . So, it is necessary that the ultimate end fulfill the human person's entire appetite in such a way that nothing more is left to be desired—which is impossible if something more is required for the person's perfection." The conclusion is: "Consequently it is not possible for one's appetite to tend to two things as though each were one's perfect good"—that is, one's ultimate end.⁸

I tried to refute that conclusion by offering four examples of people who seem to will more than one ultimate end at the same time. The examples were (1) a Christian boy who is interested in many things for their own sakes without relating them to his faith and hope; (2) a politician who lives for both power and sexual pleasure; (3) a devout Christian woman who commits herself by a single choice to live in an adulterous relationship and to strive to hold fast to her faith and hope; and (4) people living in God's love who commit venial sins.⁹

In criticizing my paper, Scott MacDonald suggests that Thomas's thesis that the ultimate end is so absolutely fulfilling that it leaves nothing more to be desired necessarily follows from the idea of *ultimate end* Thomas is using; MacDonald asserts: "The single ultimate end that any person desires at any given time, on Aquinas's view, is something general and abstract: happiness, or a life that is complete in goodness, or living well." MacDonald

⁶ See *ST* 1–2, q. 3, a. 8.

⁷ Germain Grisez, "Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment," *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 46 (2001) 3–36.

⁸ *ST* 1–2, q. 1, a. 5, c.

⁹ Grisez, "Natural Law" 28–32.

regards my four counterexamples as irrelevant because they concern people who intend different concrete ends, whereas Thomas's conclusion, MacDonald thinks, concerns the "formal character of the ultimate end."¹⁰ In support, he quotes Thomas's distinction between the *ratio* of the ultimate end and that in which the *ratio* is realized: "We can speak about the ultimate end in two ways: [i] in accordance with the formal character (*rationem*) of the ultimate end and [ii] in accordance with that in which the formal character is realized (*invenitur*) (*ST* 2–2, q. 1, a. 7)." MacDonald points out that Thomas says that in respect to (i) all agree in their desire of the ultimate end, since all desire their own perfection to be fulfilled, but not all agree in their desire in respect to (ii); he concludes that "it's true to say that all human agents (and not merely a particular agent at a given time) desire a single ultimate end."¹¹

However, when Thomas states his conclusion—that people cannot will more than one ultimate end at the same time—by saying that "it is not possible for one's appetite to tend to two things as though each were one's perfect good,"¹² the words "two things" refer to two realities in which the *ratio* of the ultimate end (signified by "its perfect good") might be found. So, Thomas thinks, the one thing toward which appetite must tend cannot be the *ratio* of the ultimate end but must be something in which one expects to find perfect good.

Two other elements of the same article confirm that Thomas is not merely explaining that people have one and the same idea of the ultimate end, but that they can will only one concrete ultimate end at a time. In the *sed contra*, Thomas quotes St. Paul concerning people whose god is their belly, and explains that gluttons put their ultimate end in its pleasures. The first objection is based on Augustine's report that some people put their ultimate end in four things: pleasure, repose, the gifts of nature, and virtue. Thomas replies that those who put their ultimate end in those four things consider them to constitute one perfect good. Both that *sed contra* and that objection and reply would be irrelevant if Thomas were only trying to prove, as MacDonald thinks, that the single ultimate end that any person desires at any given time "is something general and abstract: happiness, or a life that is complete in goodness, or living well." Consequently, Thomas plainly thinks he is proving that people can will only one *concrete* ultimate end at a time, and MacDonald's interpretation is unsound.

Still, I agree with MacDonald that Thomas's conclusion that a human agent's ultimate end must be (or be thought to be) completely fulfilling

¹⁰ Scott MacDonald, "Aquinas's Ultimate Ends: A Reply to Grisez," *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 46 (2001) 37–49, at 45.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 45–46.

¹² *ST* 1–2, q. 1, a. 5, c.

follows from Thomas's notion of *ultimate end*. But I think that notion is faulty in assuming that human fulfillment can be perfect.

Another critic, W. H. Marshner, argues that Thomas uses *ultimate end* analogously, and that his thesis that the ultimate end is so absolutely fulfilling that it leaves nothing more to be desired is true of it in one sense but not in another. "In the first sense, an 'ultimate purpose' is that which is thought to verify the predicate 'is complete good' *formaliter* (as an animal verifies 'is healthy' *formaliter*). Call this a UPF. In the second sense, an 'ultimate purpose' is that which is thought to cause or deliver complete good (as a diet verifies 'is healthy' *causaliter*). Call this a UPM." A UPF, Marshner says, "is a *set of goods*—a package of goods or benefits that human beings can find complete. So a UPF is a union of goods willed as an ideal." But a UPM "is an achievable arrangement (getting drunk, getting rich, getting to heaven) . . . in which one thinks to find the goods in one's UPF."¹³ According to Marshner, Thomas held that people can have only one UPF at a time, while my examples show only that they can intend more than one UPM at a time.¹⁴

Is the distinction Marshner makes between UPF and UPM Thomas's distinction? Marshner thinks it is; he cites Thomas's distinction between the *ratio* of the ultimate end and that in which the *ratio* is found¹⁵—the same text MacDonald quotes to support his view that the single ultimate end one must will is, for Thomas, merely general and abstract. Marshner, however, claims that the distinction drawn in that text is "not between the mere *ratio* and what is intended under it (God, money, whatever)," but between "two different senses of 'ultimate end', both fully capable of being *objects intended*."¹⁶ However, MacDonald accurately quotes the text, and it verifies his statement that the first member of the distinction is the *ratio* of the ultimate end. Marshner also claims that one can find his UPF/UPM distinction in Cajetan's commentary on the preceding article.¹⁷ But Cajetan says nothing about a UPF that is a set of goods capable of being an object intended; rather, he speaks of the formal *ratio* of being self-perfective under which, he says, one wills whatever one wills.¹⁸ So, while MacDonald's argument from the text that both he and Marshner cite is unsound, MacDonald's interpretation of it is sound, while Marshner's is mistaken.

In fact, rather than being like Thomas's distinction between the *ratio* of the ultimate end and that in which the *ratio* is found, Marshner's

¹³ W. H. Marshner, "Implausible Diagnosis: A Response to Germain Grisez," *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 46 (2001) 91–112, at 110–11.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 111–12.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 111 n. 33; the reference is to *ST* 1–2, q. 1, a. 7.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 110.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 110–11.

¹⁸ For Cajetan's commentary on *ST* 1–2, q. 1, a. 6, see Thomas Aquinas, *Opera omnia*, Leonine edition, vol. 6 (Rome: n.p., 1891) 15.

UPF/UPM distinction is like Thomas's distinction—step (4) in my summary above—between two senses of *end*: the thing in which the idea of good is found (*res in qua ratio boni invenitur*) and the use or attainment of that reality.¹⁹ Since Thomas says that people can think that they will find their fulfillment in a set of goods, Marshner's UPF corresponds to Thomas's thing in which goodness is found (for example, money, God, or a set of goods such as pleasure, repose, the gifts of nature, and virtue) and Marshner's UPM—"an achievable arrangement" (getting drunk, getting rich, getting to heaven)—corresponds to Thomas's use or attainment of that reality (getting rich, seeing God). However, unlike Marshner's UPF/UPM, the ends in Thomas's two senses of *end*—the reality in which goodness is found and the use or attainment of that reality—are intended in the same act. For example, in making choices to achieve their ultimate end, those who are avaricious, in intending to have money, intend both the money and their possession of it, and, according to Thomas, upright people intend both God alone and the beatific vision. Thus, the referents of those two senses of *end* cannot be the objects of two different ultimate intentions. Consequently, Marshner's UPF/UPM distinction is not among the distinctions Thomas makes.

A third critic, Fulvio Di Blasi, like MacDonald, claims that Thomas "is referring to the common (formal) notion of ultimate end" when he answers the question, "Can a man have several ultimate ends?" But while Di Blasi appeals for support to the same passage in Thomas to which MacDonald and Marshner appeal, Di Blasi, rather than arguing for his interpretation, simply asserts it.²⁰ He does discuss my four examples. About venial sin, he says:

I think all "faithful Christians" will agree with me that when we commit a venial sin, we do not think even for a second that God is not our ultimate end. Simply, the search for our happiness becomes disordered. We refuse to think that we are really going against God. And with this secret, unexpressed idea, we break a little the harmony between the formality of the ultimate end and our habitual understanding of it. Nevertheless, our love of concupiscence is still not so strong as to change our basic habitual attitude of loving God more than ourselves.²¹

Di Blasi thus asserts Thomas's assumption (which my argument did not challenge) that those living in God's love who commit venial sins do not thereby cease regarding him as their ultimate end, but Di Blasi begs the question by assuming, as if evident, the falsity of what I tried to prove, namely, that people can choose to commit a venial sin only if they *also* intend some ultimate end other than God.

¹⁹ See *ST* 1–2, q. 1, a. 8, c.

²⁰ Fulvio Di Blasi, "Ultimate End, Human Freedom, and Beatitude: A Critique of Germain Grisez," *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 46 (2001) 113–35, at 115.

²¹ *Ibid.* 121.

I will not respond to Di Blasi's comments on my first three examples because other symposium participants' arguments convinced me that Thomas could deal with them. He could say that (1) Christian children who live in God's love can take as their ultimate end a set of goods including both God and other objects of innocent interests, because they mistakenly but blamelessly suppose that God alone will not completely satisfy them; (2) sinful people who live for power, sexual pleasure, and perhaps any number of other things take that whole set of things as their ultimate end; and (3) the devout woman who commits herself by a single choice both to live in an adulterous relationship and to strive to hold fast to her faith and hope wrongly takes as her ultimate end a set of goods including that relationship and God. However, Thomas could not similarly explain how people who live in God's love and commit venial sins can intend only a single ultimate end, for Thomas holds that the true ultimate end is God alone, and so Thomas cannot say that the ultimate end intended by those living in God's love who commit deliberate venial sins is a set of goods made up of God and whatever they ultimately intend in sinning.

ARGUMENTS THAT TUEGABV IS UNSOUND

Since the critics failed to refute my argument about those living in God's love who commit venial sins, I now restate and develop it as my first argument that Thomas's case for TUEGABV is unsound. My argument is meant to show that Thomas is mistaken in concluding that at any one time a person's will must be directed to a single ultimate end in willing whatever it wills. But that conclusion does follow from Thomas's premise that only something one regards as a perfect good, leaving nothing to be desired, can be taken as one's ultimate end. And that, in turn, follows from the basic assumption that an ultimate end must be absolutely fulfilling. So, that basic assumption is false if venial sinners can will two ultimate ends at once. But if that basic assumption is false, the arguments for TUEGABV in which Thomas uses the assumption as a premise are unsound. Therefore, if the following argument shows that someone living in God's love who chooses to commit a venial sin must also intend an ultimate end other than God, it thereby shows that Thomas's arguments for TUEGABV are unsound.

Thomas holds that, when people who have taken God as their ultimate end commit a mortal sin, they thereby take something else as their ultimate end, while those who commit only venial sins, even deliberate ones, still intend God as their ultimate end. That position raises a question that Thomas never directly addresses: What ultimate end do those living in grace intend in choosing to commit deliberate venial sins?²² He cannot say

²² See *ST* 1-2, q. 88, aa. 1-2. For references to some attempts to deal with this

that someone choosing to commit a deliberate venial sin need not intend any ultimate end at all, for he has shown that to be impossible.²³ But in trying to explain how people who commit venial sins can remain in God's love, Thomas says: "Those who sin venially involve themselves with a temporal good not as enjoying it, since they do not take it as their end, but as using it, while referring it to God not actually but habitually."²⁴ Again, he says that "what is loved in a venial sin is loved habitually for God's sake, even if not actually."²⁵

Those remarks do not tell us what ultimate end people in grace intend in committing venial sins unless they mean that even in those sinful choices such people intend God as their ultimate end. But that will not do. Something loved habitually can function as a human agent's end only if, although not brought to mind, it is the real reason why that agent chooses to act for a proximate end. But since even a venial sin, insofar as it is a sin, is evil, divine goodness cannot in any way be promoted or attained by deliberately committing a venial sin; so God cannot be the real reason for pursuing any proximate end by choosing to commit a venial sin. In technical language, if one has a single ultimate end, it must be the per se final cause of everything one does. God loved habitually cannot be the per se final cause of sinning—cannot be one's real reason for choosing to do anything sinful.²⁶

The point can be clarified by an example showing how a Christian living in God's love can habitually, even if not actually, make all her good choices for a single ultimate end, and how she has another ultimate end in choosing to sin venially.

While preparing for confirmation at age 17, Miriam had a conversion experience and decided to live for God's kingdom by striving always to discern and do the Father's will. Eventually she discerned the call to marry and have children. Most of her time and energy are devoted to fulfilling the responsibilities pertaining to her state of life. So, usually she is not thinking about God and the kingdom. The ends she intends in making most of her choices are to meet various needs of her husband, her children, and herself. So, when she sets out for the grocery store, she actually intends to get the groceries she needs, in order to make some modest but healthful meals, in

problem and a fuller treatment of the context of Thomas's view about the ultimate end of venial sins committed by persons living in grace, see Germain Grisez, *Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol. 1, *Christian Moral Principles* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1983) 390–93; 407 nn. 31–35.

²³ See *ST* 1–2, q. 1, a. 4.

²⁴ *ST* 1–2, q. 88, a. 1, ad 3.

²⁵ *ST* 2–2, q. 24, a. 10, ad 2.

²⁶ Peter F. Ryan, S.J., carefully articulates this analytic point and uses it in refuting the most plausible efforts to solve the problem of the ultimate end intended in choosing to commit venial sins: "Must the Acting Person Have a Single Ultimate End?" *Gregorianum* 82 (2001) 325–56, at 349–54.

order to nourish the family and build up familial communion. But she intends that series of ends because they pertain to her role as wife and mother, and she chose to be a wife and mother for the sake of God's kingdom. So, when she sets out for the grocery store, she habitually intends to reach the kingdom.

Suppose that Miriam's twin sister, Aarona, single but inconveniently pregnant, has a botched abortion and emergency hysterectomy, repents and confesses to the hospital chaplain, and confides the truth to Miriam but tells their mother the surgery was necessitated by unaccountable hemorrhaging. Their mother—suspicious and confident that Miriam will know the truth—asks her by e-mail. Not having committed a deliberate sin in years, Miriam does not want to lie. She delays but her mother presses, and Miriam reluctantly replies: "I'm worried about Aarona, too, but I don't know what's going on with her these days. She hasn't been talking with me as she used to."

Miriam's reply is almost true, but she sends it after thinking: "Mother will be upset if I tell her the truth; she'll talk with Aarona, and *she'll* be really angry with me for snitching on her. God won't be pleased with my lying, but it's only a venial sin." Many people would tell Miriam that her lying is not a sin. But it certainly is a sin to do something, as she does, that one thinks is a sin.

What ultimate end does Miriam intend in choosing to lie? She intends to prevent her mother from being upset, in order to prevent her from talking with Aarona, in order to prevent Aarona's being upset, in order to protect their good relationship as sisters. That relationship is good in itself, but, in lying, Miriam intends solidarity with Aarona as good not only in itself but by itself—as a good to be promoted by a choice that she believes will not please God. Thus, in choosing to lie, Miriam, rather than intending her relationship with Aarona for the kingdom's sake, intends it as a distinct ultimate end.²⁷

My second argument against TUEGABV will show that Christians are mistaken if they expect the beatific vision to satisfy all their desires.

One can ask for things one does not really desire. For example, people sometimes ask for something solely to test another's willingness to give it.

²⁷ A critic might argue: "But there's really no separate good for Miriam to intend, for her relationship with Aarona can neither exist nor have any real value apart from God and his will for them. Of course, Miriam isn't perfect. Yet she still has only one ultimate end." The premises are true, but rather than leading to the conclusion, they explain how Miriam, while genuinely committed to seeking the kingdom by discerning and doing God's will, at the same time intends a second, partly illusory ultimate end.

But one cannot sincerely ask for anything without desiring it. When we pray to God for something, we ask God for it. So, we desire whatever we sincerely pray for.

In praying to Mary and other saints, we ask them to pray on our behalf. We want them to take an interest in us, desire for us what we need, and ask God for it. And they do intercede for us.²⁸ Therefore, although Mary and the other saints already enjoy the beatific vision, they desire something more: the benefits they desire God to give us. Not only do Mary and the other saints intercede for us; so does our Lord in glory: “He is always able to save those who approach God through him, since he lives forever to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:25).²⁹ In sum, the saints and Jesus himself, while seeing God, continue to have desires. Therefore, Thomas is mistaken in holding that those who attain God by the beatific vision have nothing more to desire.

Some will admit that intercession by Jesus and the blessed shows they have unsatisfied desires but say: “They currently desire benefits for others. But the beatific vision completely fulfills them. So, even now they desire nothing else for themselves, and after the last judgment they will desire nothing more at all.” But unless those making that argument deny that Jesus and the blessed currently enjoy the beatific vision, they must admit that the fact that Jesus and the blessed currently desire benefits for others falsifies Thomas’s position that attaining God by the beatific vision leaves nothing to be desired.³⁰

The third argument against TUEGABV begins from what Thomas says about unbaptized children who die without ever having personally sinned.³¹ He holds that they have the knowledge appropriate to a separated soul according to its nature, including the knowledge that it was created for beatitude and that beatitude consists in the attainment of perfect good. But they lack supernatural knowledge: they do not know that

²⁸ Although not solemnly defined, the fact that Mary and the other saints intercede for those still living on earth seems to me to be a truth of faith. It is presupposed by many of the church’s liturgical prayers and the virtually universal devotional practices of the faithful.

²⁹ Hebrews 7:25. This quotation and others from the Bible are from *The Catholic Study Bible, New American Bible including the Revised New Testament*, ed. Donald Senior et al. (New York: Oxford University, 1990).

³⁰ Responding to the argument that the angels rejoice over a repentant sinner (see Lk 15:10), Thomas explains that such “joy pertains to their accidental reward, which can be increased until judgment day” (*ST* 1, q. 62, a. 9, ad 3), but fails to explain how the desire presupposed by that “accidental reward” is compatible with angels’ perfect fulfillment by the vision of God.

³¹ Of course, many now think that all those who die without baptism but before committing any sin reach heaven. But few deny the possibility of limbo, and its possibility is enough to falsify TUEGABV.

beatitude consists in the beatific vision. Therefore, lacking it does not make them sad.³² Rather, they rejoice because they participate greatly in divine goodness and natural perfections.³³

Now, Thomas holds that those separated souls know that God exists. He also holds that anyone who knows that God exists naturally desires to know what God is.³⁴ However, not having the beatific vision, those souls have a desire to know what God is that remains unfulfilled. What, then, must they think about their own situation? They must think that they are attaining the true ultimate end available to them as human beings. Otherwise, they would be sad. But they know that they have a desire—to know what God is—that remains unfulfilled. So, they must not think that their true ultimate end as human beings is complete fulfillment, leaving nothing to be desired. Rather, they must think that, despite their unfulfilled desire, they should be satisfied with what they have: fulfillment in goods naturally available to them as human beings, including knowing the Creator as they do and being at peace with him. But if Thomas were right about beatitude, they would necessarily desire complete fulfillment that would leave nothing more to be desired, and they would be sad. So, if limbo as Thomas conceives it is even possible, his view of beatitude must be mistaken.

A fourth argument begins from what Thomas says about children who make their first choice without having been baptized. He says that all such children, on reaching the use of reason, must deliberate about themselves. If they turn toward God and direct their lives toward their true end, they receive pardon for original sin; if they fail to do that, they commit a mortal sin.³⁵

Thomas knows from Scripture that there are many false gods, and he hardly means that people should order their lives to any of them. He has in mind the true God, to whom the Scriptures bear witness. But a great many people have not known the true God. Many great philosophers and leaders of religious movements had views of the source and destiny of human beings very different from those of Jews and Christians. Plainly, the knowledge of the true God needed to direct one's life to God as one's ultimate end was not available to those philosophers and religious leaders. Yet some of them seem to have tried to find and live by the truth.

If what Thomas says about unbaptized children is true of those philosophers and religious leaders, and of their followers, all of them lived and died in mortal sin. However, Vatican II teaches that people who lack express awareness of God through no fault of their own receive the saving

³² See Thomas Aquinas, *De malo*, q. 5, a. 3, c. and ad 1.

³³ See Thomas Aquinas, *In II Sent.*, d. 33, q. 2, a. 2, c. and ad 5.

³⁴ See *ST* 1–2, q. 3, a. 8, c.

³⁵ See *ST* 1–2, q. 89, a. 6, c. and ad 3.

help of the Holy Spirit so that they can be saved.³⁶ Thus, for children in that situation, it is salvific, not sinful, to start out by taking as their ultimate end a life shaped by what they sincerely believe to be the truth about what is good for human persons and communities.

Someone might say that, by resolving to follow their God-given consciences, such people implicitly believe in and take God as their ultimate end. I grant that such a commitment is an implicit act of faith. But I deny that people who lack express knowledge of God can implicitly take God as their ultimate end.³⁷ Because hunters must guide their aim by what they see or think they see, only what is or seems to be visible can be a target. Similarly, because one can intend only something one intellectually knows or thinks one knows to be an attainable good, any end intended by someone making a choice must be understood, thought to be good in some definite way, and intended on the basis of that judgment. Therefore, nothing can be taken as an ultimate end without being explicitly known. When people lacking express knowledge of God through no fault of their own uprightly take something as their ultimate end, it cannot be God but must be a good or set of goods they understand.

The fifth argument against TUEGABV begins from Thomas's claim that the bodies and the friends of the blessed are not essential to their beatitude.

Thomas's argument that the body is not essential to beatitude begins by showing that a soul can enjoy the beatific vision without the body. He then argues: "Since the perfect beatitude of human beings consists in the vision of the divine essence, their perfect beatitude does not depend on the body. So, the soul can be blessed without the body."³⁸

Similar is Thomas's argument that the company of friends is not essential. The happiness of the present life described by Aristotle includes having friends. "But if we talk about the perfect beatitude that will exist in heaven, the company of friends is not necessarily required for beatitude, since human beings have the whole plenitude of their perfection in God."³⁹

In both cases, Thomas goes on at once to indicate the relationship between the beatific vision and the human good which he maintains is not essential to beatitude. The explanation in the case of the body is this:

One must consider that something can belong to an entity's perfection in two ways. In one way, by constituting the thing's essence, as the soul is required for the perfection of a human being. In another way, what is required for an entity's

³⁶ See *Lumen gentium* no. 16; *Gaudium et spes* no. 22.

³⁷ Habitually acting for something as one's ultimate end is not implicitly taking something as one's ultimate end. Habitually acting for anything as one's ultimate end, as Miriam generally does, presupposes an earlier choice, like her commitment, in which one consciously took that as one's ultimate end.

³⁸ *ST* 1-2, q. 4, a. 5, c.

³⁹ *ST* 1-2, q. 4, a. 8, c.

perfection belongs to its well-being [*bene esse*], as bodily beauty and quick-wittedness belong to a person's perfection. Therefore, although the body does not belong to the perfection of human beatitude in the first way, it does belong to it in the second way. For since a thing's operation depends on its nature, when the soul will be more perfect in its own nature, it will more perfectly have its proper operation, in which felicity consists. Thus, when Augustine asks "whether the highest happiness can be ascribed to the disembodied spirits of the dead," he answers that "they cannot see the Immutable Substance as the holy angels see it; either due to some more hidden reason or because there is in them a certain natural desire for managing the body."⁴⁰

Thomas employs the same distinction—between the two ways in which something belongs to a thing's perfection—in the case of friends: "The companionship of friends makes for the well-being of beatitude."⁴¹

This use by Thomas of the distinction between the two ways in which something belongs to a thing's perfection is fallacious. What contributes to anything's well-being tends toward making its fulfillment perfect. If something contributes to the well-being of perfect fulfillment, it further perfects fulfillment that already is perfect. But fulfillment that already is perfect cannot be further perfected. Therefore, since Thomas defines beatitude as perfect fulfillment, he cannot coherently claim that anything can be added to make for its well-being.

Still, Thomas says that the separated soul's vision of God cannot match that of the restored, bodily person; and he quotes with approval Augustine's suggestion that separated souls may well naturally desire that restoration. So, Thomas rightly holds that resurrection will make for the well-being of the beatitude of souls that enjoy the beatific vision. But to hold that truth coherently, he would have had to admit that the beatific vision leaves something more to be desired, which would have required a complete reconstruction of his treatise on beatitude.⁴²

⁴⁰ *ST* 1–2, q. 4, a. 5, c.; the Augustine quotation is from his *Super Genesim ad litteram* 12.35.

⁴¹ *ST* 1–2, q. 4, a. 8, c.

⁴² Moreover, *ST* 1–2, q. 4, a. 5, obj. 3 is: "Beatitude is a human being's perfection; but the soul without the body is not the human being; so, beatitude cannot be in the soul without the body." Thomas replies: "A human being's [*hominis*] beatitude is in respect to intellect; and, therefore, given intellect, beatitude can be present in him or her [*ei*]; just as an Ethiopian's teeth, in respect to which he or she is said to be white, can be white even after they are extracted" (*ibid.* ad 3). By assuming that the separated soul is a human being, that reply misses the objection's point, which is clear from Thomas's cogent argument elsewhere that, because the human person is a composite of soul and body, the ongoing, postdeath existence of one's soul without one's body is not the survival of oneself, but only of, as it were, a spiritual remnant of oneself: see *Super primam epistolam ad Corinthios lectura* xv, lect. 2, ad v. 19; see *Quodlibetum* 7, q. 5, a. 1, ad 3; *ST* 1, q. 75, a. 4, c. Indeed, Thomas himself argues that the beatific vision does not satiate human desire without the resurrection of the body: see *Compendium theologiae* 1, cap. 151.

Although one can desire something one can easily get without hoping for it, one cannot hope for anything without desiring it. The Nicene Creed ends with “we look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come,” and here “look for” clearly means hope for. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* treats resurrection and everlasting life in two separate articles and teaches, in accord with the whole New Testament, that bodily resurrection is an object of Christian hope: “We firmly believe, and hence we hope that, just as Christ is truly risen from the dead and lives forever, so after death the righteous will live forever with the risen Christ and he will raise them up on the last day.”⁴³

In his argument that the body is not essential to beatitude, Thomas affirmed what Pope Benedict XII later solemnly defined: that the souls of those who die in God’s grace and are perfectly purified enjoy the beatific vision even before the resurrection of the dead. Benedict also solemnly defined that the souls of the damned will rise.⁴⁴ So, neither resurrection nor everlasting life includes the other, and the two objects of hope are distinct. Since neither object of hope is a means to the other, the true ultimate end of Christian life must include not only attaining God by the beatific vision but having permanent bodily life; and the human body, raised in glory, remains a created reality.

In his argument that the company of friends is not necessarily required for the perfect beatitude of heaven, Thomas entertains the objection that charity is perfected in heavenly beatitude so that it extends to both God and neighbor. He answers that the perfection of charity is essential for beatitude only with respect to the love of God. “So, if there were only one soul enjoying God it would be blessed, without having a neighbor to love. But, given a neighbor, love of that neighbor follows from perfect love of God. Consequently, friendship is related to perfect beatitude as accompanying it.”⁴⁵ That argument overlooks the fact that heaven is communion

⁴³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Washington: United States Catholic Conference, 1996) no. 989. Article 11 (nos. 988–1019) concerns resurrection; article 12 (nos. 1020–60) concerns everlasting life.

⁴⁴ See Benedict XII, *Benedictus Deus*, in *Enchiridion symbolorum, definitionum, et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, ed. Henricus Denzinger and Adolfus Schönmetzer, 33rd ed. (New York: Herder, 1965) (hereafter DS) nos. 1000–2.

⁴⁵ *ST* 1–2, q. 4, a. 8, ad 3. Someone might argue that Thomas’s use here of a counterfactual assumption shows that he thinks that attaining God by the beatific vision is only a necessary and not a sufficient condition of the beatitude of members of the blessed community after the resurrection. However, because Thomas uses the counterfactual assumption to defend his position that friends are not necessarily required for beatitude as such but only for its *bene esse*, he is clearly trying to prove that attaining God by the beatific vision is the sufficient condition of everyone’s beatitude—defined as fulfillment that leaves nothing more to be desired.

not only with God but also with the company of the blessed. The beatitude for which faithful Christians hope always includes being with at least one man and one woman: Jesus and Mary.

The *Catechism's* treatment of life everlasting begins: "Those who die in God's grace and friendship and are perfectly purified live forever with Christ."⁴⁶ It then quotes Benedict XII's solemn teaching that those who die in God's grace and are perfectly purified enjoy the beatific vision. Even before they "take up their bodies again and before the general judgment," those souls "have been, are, and will be in heaven, in the heavenly Kingdom and celestial paradise with Christ, joined in the company of the holy angels." Since Jesus' passion and death, such souls "see the divine essence with an intuitive vision, and even face to face, without the mediation of any creature."⁴⁷

After quoting that definitive teaching, the *Catechism* at once goes on: "This perfect life with the Most Holy Trinity—this communion of life and love with the Trinity, with the Virgin Mary, the angels and all the blessed—is called 'heaven.' Heaven is the ultimate end and fulfillment of the deepest human longings, the state of supreme, definitive happiness."⁴⁸

That paragraph's first sentence makes it clear that perfect life with the Holy Trinity essentially includes communion of life and love not only with the Trinity but with Mary, the angels, and all the blessed. That communion among created persons instantiates the good of harmony among them, and that created good, even if it results from their sharing in the beatific vision, is not identical with it. So, that first sentence is incompatible with TUEGABV.

Still, by characterizing heaven as "supreme, definitive happiness," the paragraph's second sentence seems to support Thomas's view of beatitude as perfection that leaves nothing to be desired. However, essentially including communion among created persons, which instantiates the created good of harmony among them, the *Catechism's* supreme, definitive happiness cannot be an instantaneous event but must be an ongoing process, in which fulfillment will increase as more created persons enter into the communion of the blessed and as separated souls already sharing in that communion "take up their bodies again." So, unlike Thomas's beatitude, the *Catechism's* supreme, definitive happiness is not static. Although there is

⁴⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* no. 1023.

⁴⁷ *Benedictus Deus*, DS 1000. While Benedict XII teaches definitively that disembodied souls can have the beatific vision and that they "are truly blessed and have everlasting life and rest" (ibid.), he does not affirm or deny either (1) that their beatitude leaves nothing more to be desired or (2) that they continue hoping for, and so desiring, resurrection. Hence, *Benedictus Deus* leaves it open for those who agree with Thomas to assert (1) and for me to assert (2).

⁴⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* no. 1024.

nothing beyond it to be desired, it includes desires and their satisfaction.⁴⁹ Hence, with respect to created goods, the fulfillment of those who have already begun enjoying “supreme, definitive happiness” will increase.

In sum, while God is attained by the beatific vision, Jesus’, Mary’s, and others’ enjoyment of bodily life and of their human company with one another cannot be reduced to an aspect of their vision of the divine essence. It follows that, with respect to the reality in which the good is found, the true ultimate end of Christians must at least include the company of the blessed and the bodily life of human members of that company. Therefore, it is a mistake to hold, as Thomas does, that the true ultimate end of human beings “is not found in anything created, but only in God” and that human beings’ “ultimate and perfect beatitude can only be in the vision of the divine essence.”⁵⁰

MY VIEW OF THE ULTIMATE END

Although I hold that Thomas’s arguments for TUEGABV are unsound and that the thesis itself is untenable, I agree with him that a human agent must always act for some ultimate end. Moreover, while I have argued that people sometimes intend more than one ultimate end at the same time, I also agree with Thomas that there is something that all human beings should take as their sole ultimate end. So, to complete this article I will sketch out my views with regard to what can be known naturally about that ultimate end and what divine revelation adds to our understanding of what the true ultimate end is and how it can be realized.

Only God is absolutely perfect. As creatures, we can never hope for unlimited fulfillment. But the object of our will is any and every good, and the object of our practical thinking is any and every good that we think we might be able to do something about, help others do something about, or get others to do something about. So, unlike any subpersonal creature that tends toward some fulfillment fixed by its nature and environment, we develop new ways in which we can be fulfilled. Therefore, we never need to be satisfied with the fulfillment we already have, and we can intend something as our ultimate end without supposing that it ever will be realized in a way that will leave nothing more to be desired.

In making and carrying out choices, we intend to protect or promote some element of the well-being or flourishing of those for whose sake we

⁴⁹ Not only do the separated souls of the blessed hope for, and thus desire to, “take up their bodies again,” but, as my second argument above showed, Jesus, Mary, and other members of the company of the blessed currently desire benefits for people who seek their intercession.

⁵⁰ *ST* 1–2, q. 2, a. 8, c; q. 3, a. 8, c.

act. No possible action appeals to us unless it offers some benefit for ourselves. So, our ultimate end must include our own well-being or flourishing. However, since we are social by nature, we need others, and our own fulfillment requires us not to use them but to cooperate with them—to intend with them a common good that includes their good for their own sake, not just for ours. For example, spouses can flourish as spouses and enjoy a happy marriage only if each wants the marriage to be good for the other’s sake as well as for his or her own sake. Thus, self-giving is essential to authentic communion with others, which is necessary for one’s own well-being and flourishing.⁵¹ Therefore, in thinking about our ultimate end, we should consider all those whose good we ought always to take into account in making choices.

We also need to consider all the elements of people’s well-being or flourishing on which anything we could do might bear. Those elements include the fundamental goods of human beings: life, including health and bodily integrity; skillful work and play; knowledge and esthetic experience; harmony with God; harmony among human beings; harmony among a person’s own judgments, choices, feelings, and behavior; and marriage, including parenthood. Everyone naturally knows these goods by the self-evident principles of practical reasoning that direct actions toward them. Those principles do not say that the goods are to be realized in certain individuals or groups—for example, the principle that harmony with God is to be protected and promoted does not say it is to be protected and promoted in me or in church members. So, these first principles direct us indiscriminately toward the well-being and flourishing of ourselves and everyone else.⁵²

Finding ourselves contingently existing and naturally directed toward human well-being and flourishing, we can and should come to know God as Creator and provident Lord, and recognize the principles of practical reasoning as divine guidance.⁵³ But both as individuals and as community

⁵¹ *Gaudium et spes* no. 24: “Man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself.” I am using the translation found on the Vatican Web site, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html (accessed December 7, 2007).

⁵² For a fuller summary of the natural law theory briefly sketched here, see Germain Grisez, Joseph Boyle, and John Finnis, “Practical Principles, Moral Truth, and Ultimate Ends,” *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 32 (1987) 99–151.

⁵³ I sketched out an argument for this claim in Grisez, “Natural Law” 11–14, which is criticized in Marshner, “Implausible Diagnosis” 93–103; he cogently shows (98–102) that the fact that the principles of practical reason naturally direct human agents toward their good does not by itself establish the reality of a free and intelligent Creator and provident Lord. He then asserts that I am using the direc-

members, we also can and should recognize God as the source both of our unique sets of gifts—that is, of the particular sets of abilities and resources we have and can use to protect and promote goods—and of all our opportunities to use those gifts.⁵⁴

Even without revelation, in intending the human good of harmony with God, we can intend divine goodness in at least two ways. First, we can intend to give God his due by acknowledging, praising, and thanking him for creating us, guiding us, and giving us everything we accomplish and have. Second, we can examine the courses of action that are compatible with God’s general guidance in the light of our unique gifts and opportunities, strive to discern which of those courses of action pertain to God’s unique plan for each of us, choose those courses of action, and carry them out. If we do that, our entire lives will be marked by cooperation with God, and in cooperating with God we will intend a common good that includes whatever divine good God intends in providing guidance.

Suppose we eventually encounter extraterrestrials—rational creatures who are not human but with whom we humans nevertheless can communicate and cooperate or, at least, whom we can somehow benefit or harm in some or all the ways human persons can be benefited or harmed. If the extraterrestrials were bodily beings whom we could kill or injure, it seems obvious that we could not reasonably apply in dealing with them different moral norms bearing on life than those we think rightly apply in dealing with fellow humans. How to explain and defend that view is not yet clear to me. However, if it is correct, our thinking about the ultimate end must leave room for the goods of nonhuman, created persons.⁵⁵

Since the self-evident principles of practical reasoning direct us indiscriminately toward the well-being and flourishing of ourselves and everyone else, we reasonably take as our ultimate end an inclusive community of human persons along with other intelligent creatures and God—insofar as we know other intelligent creatures and God and can somehow cooperate with them and/or act for their good.

tiveness of the principles of practical reason to establish that reality “in a context where one is devoid of any independent reason to think of *D* [the Creator whose existence I tried to demonstrate] as intelligent at all, much less free” (102). However, in my article, I refer (12 n. 20) to an earlier work in which I gave reasons for judging it reasonable to hold as a hypothesis that the Creator is in some sense free and intelligent: *Beyond the New Theism: A Philosophy of Religion* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 1975) 230–72.

⁵⁴ This point and some others in what follows are treated more fully in Grisez, “Natural Law” 14–20.

⁵⁵ Thus, our ultimate end, even as we can know it naturally, enables us to cooperate with angels and act for their good insofar as our action can bear upon their well-being and flourishing.

Each of the fundamental human goods is only one element of human well-being and flourishing, and each realization of any of those elements in or by a freely chosen human action is only one part of an individual's or community's overall fulfillment. Since a whole is greater than its parts, the persons and communities for whom we act are always greater than any good for which we act in trying to benefit them. We love both. But we love persons and communities for themselves, while we love only as contributions to their good the benefits we seek. Therefore, our ultimate end should include all the benefits that can be realized by protecting and promoting all the fundamental goods of persons in every way compatible with loving all of them and all aspects of their well-being and flourishing.

Obviously, no possible course of action that any human person or human group can choose and carry out will promote and protect in every possible way all the fundamental goods in every person. How, then, can human beings include in their ultimate end all the persons with whom they can cooperate and/or whom their actions can benefit or harm, and all the benefits they might realize in protecting and promoting any of the fundamental goods?

Under harsh conditions, when family members heavily depend on one another for their very survival, the reality of a common good such as the ongoing survival of the whole family can be rightly intended by family members as an ulterior, although not ultimate, end whenever they choose to do something to protect or promote their own and one another's health, safety, or bodily integrity. Still, they cannot expect their particular acts to bring about and protect that common good as a whole but only to contribute to it in more or less limited ways.

Similarly, people can intend a more inclusive common good as an ultimate end. For instance, although it is impossible for idealistic young people with diverse gifts to undertake a career that will promote and protect all the fundamental goods in every human being, they can intend that reality as an ultimate end by committing themselves to some sort of service in order to make a difference in the world for the better.⁵⁶ Again, some people promote altruism, for example, by saying: "I expect to pass through this world but once. Any good, therefore, that I can do or any kindness I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way

⁵⁶ Because we can have at once more than one ultimate end, we can intend in some of our choices less noble ultimate ends while at the same time idealistically undertaking a career for the sake of an ultimate end that includes all the fundamental goods of everyone with whom we could cooperate or whom we might benefit in any way whatsoever.

again.”⁵⁷ Just as those who promote the eradication of an infectious disease can intend to contribute to the health of everyone in the world, those who sincerely promote altruism can intend as an end all its good fruit—any and every fundamental good in any and every person who can be affected by others’ actions—and can intend either that end or something ulterior to it as their ultimate end.

In sum: whenever one has a choice to make, one always has one or more options, among those available, that one can choose for the ultimate end that I will call “integral communal fulfillment”—divine good together with the well-being and flourishing of created persons in respect to all of their fundamental goods—and every choice should be made with the intention of that ultimate end. In other words, persons and groups making choices can and should always play their part in the vast community of persons by making their contribution to integral communal well-being and flourishing, and they always can and should avoid intentionally impeding or detracting from integral communal fulfillment.⁵⁸

Divine revelation corrects mistakes human agents make about matters they could naturally know. It also provides information they could not otherwise obtain, thus opening up otherwise unavailable possibilities for human choice and action. The revelation of the Fall and of diabolical activity explains distressing aspects of the human condition. God not only

⁵⁷ This statement is attributed to Stephen Grellet (1773–1855), born Etienne de Grellet du Mabilier, who was a Quaker missionary. See Elizabeth Knowles, ed., *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* (New York: Oxford University, 2004) s.v. Grellet.

⁵⁸ In “Natural Law . . . and Human Fulfillment” 17, I argued that the true ultimate end should be harmony with God. In that and earlier works, I did not regard integral human fulfillment (IHF) as a concrete ultimate end but as an ideal that rectifies the will; see *Christian Moral Principles* 184–89. In Grisez, Boyle, and Finnis, “Practical Principles, Moral Truth, and Ultimate Ends” 131, we define 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 now propose that human persons and groups can and should take integral communal fulfillment (ICF) as their concrete ultimate end. 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 God and created persons who are not human, 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 IHF; 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.

gives people guidance on how to live uprightly in the fallen world but gives them Jesus himself, as the way to do so, as well as the Holy Spirit, who enables those who believe in Jesus to cooperate with him by discerning and carrying out God's plan for their lives.

In teaching about the new earth and new heaven, Vatican II takes into account elements of New Testament eschatology previously hardly considered in the church's teachings and explains how promoting and protecting any fundamental human good is relevant to the kingdom.⁵⁹ Those who rightly serve human persons in any way "make ready the material of the celestial realm."⁶⁰ Resurrection will be communal and cosmic. Those who die in Christ will rise in him, and subhuman creation, which God created for humankind's sake, will be renewed. With respect to human goods, the council explains:

While we are warned that it profits a man nothing if he gain the whole world and lose himself,⁶¹ the expectation of a new earth must not weaken but rather stimulate our concern for cultivating this one. For here grows the body of a new human family, a body which even now is able to give some kind of foreshadowing of the new age.

Hence, while earthly progress must be carefully distinguished from the growth of Christ's kingdom, to the extent that the former can contribute to the better ordering of human society, it is of vital concern to the Kingdom of God.⁶²

For 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."⁶³ On this earth the kingdom is present in mystery even now; with the Lord's coming, however, it will be consummated.⁶⁴

Vatican II thus teaches that not only bodily life and the company of the blessed but "all the good fruits of our nature and enterprise"—every human good—will be found in the kingdom, and all those goods will somehow contribute to the fulfillment of those who find them there again.⁶⁵

Strictly speaking, God alone is not the ultimate end toward which we should direct our lives. That end is integral communal fulfillment in God's

⁵⁹ The *basileia* Jesus proclaimed is not only God's reign but his kingdom; see Raymond E. Brown, *The Churches the Apostles Left Behind* (New York: Paulist, 1984) 51–52.

⁶⁰ *Gaudium et spes* no. 38.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* no. 39 n. 22: "Cf. Luke 9:25."

⁶² *Ibid.* n. 23: "Cf. Pius XI, *Quadragesimo anno*, AAS 23 (1931) 207."

⁶³ *Ibid.* n. 24: "Preface of the Feast of Christ the King."

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* no. 39.

⁶⁵ Some are likely to cite Luke 20:27–36 and argue that the good of marriage will not be found again in the kingdom. For my reply, see Germain Grisez, *Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol. 2, *Living a Christian Life* (Quincy, Ill.: Franciscan, 1993) 607–9.

kingdom, which will be a marvelous communion of divine Persons, human persons, and other created persons. Every human member of the kingdom will be richly fulfilled not only in attaining God by the beatific vision but in respect to all the fundamental human goods.

That ultimate end is the same for every Christian, yet each can attain it only by participating in it in his or her unique way. The good fruits that the blessed will find again in the kingdom will include those realized in their unique selves, and those blessed selves will forever live diverse lives within the one communion among divine and created persons. Integral communal fulfillment—the ultimate end for all created persons—will therefore be realized in the kingdom as a whole. The ultimate proper good for each created member of the kingdom will be his or her unique participation in it.

If those who are ignorant of divine revelation understand integral communal fulfillment, take it as their only ultimate end, and use their gifts in unselfish service, they, without knowing it, prepare material for the kingdom. If they hear the gospel credibly preached, they welcome it and gladly take the kingdom as their ultimate end, for it is not alien to integral communal fulfillment but is an unimaginably wonderful specification of it. Because human nature is indeterminate, we have no natural tendency toward that specification of integral communal fulfillment. Yet our nature leaves us open to being fulfilled in that way.

What about the beatific vision? It is neither an act a human person can choose to do, nor a good that human persons can bring about. It is entirely a gift of the Father, Son, and Spirit—a sharing, somehow, in their own joy.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, the beatific vision will fulfill human persons. Integral

⁶⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* nos. 1721–22: “Beatitude makes us ‘partakers of the divine nature’ and of eternal life [n. 21: “2 Pt 1:4; cf. Jn 17:3”]. With beatitude, man enters into the glory of Christ [n. 22: “Cf. Rom 8:18”] and into the joy of the Trinitarian life. Such beatitude surpasses the understanding and powers of man. It comes from an entirely free gift of God: whence it is called supernatural, as is the grace that disposes man to enter into the divine joy.” Previously, I proposed, as theological hypotheses, that the beatific vision is not a human act but a gift that human persons receive only insofar as they share in the divine nature, and that created persons’ sharing in the divine nature is neither something created nor the Creator himself (Grisez, *Christian Moral Principles* 580–90, 592–94). I do not restate those hypotheses in this article because they are not necessary for its limited thesis, which I assert rather than propose as a hypothesis. However, I did summarize those hypotheses in Grisez, “Natural Law” 23–28, and they were criticized by MacDonald, “Aquinas’s Ultimate Ends” 47–49; Marshner, “Implausible Diagnosis” 103–8; and Di Blasi, “Ultimate End, Human Freedom, and Beatitude” 122–28. While I do not respond to those criticisms, I concede neither their cogency nor that of other criticisms of that paper which are irrelevant to the alternative I here offer to TUEGABV.

communal fulfillment includes human persons' harmony with God, a fundamental good of human persons that can be realized less and more. People of good will give God his due and follow his guidance. With divine revelation, that cooperation and good relationship develop into covenantal communion; participants love God by fulfilling their covenantal responsibilities. With the consummation of revelation in Jesus Christ, covenantal communion becomes personal friendship; love is more intimate, and Jesus' friends are born again or adopted by the Father. Children of God are told about the divine family's intimacy and promised a share in it. By their faith and hope, which fulfill them with respect to harmony with God, they accept that gift and anticipate enjoying it.

What about beatitude? Unlike perfection that leaves nothing more to be desired, human beatitude has various degrees; it is less and more.

Even living in the fallen world without Christian revelation, people can accept the Holy Spirit's grace and live uprightly. Those who do so attain harmony with God and within themselves, as much harmony with others as others will cooperate in realizing, and whatever other goods God gives them. While such people suffer greatly in diverse ways and do not understand the meaning of their sufferings, they are far happier than less upright people. People who receive and accept God's revelation understand more, begin to understand the meaning of their sufferings, and achieve more: "Happy are the people for whom things are thus; happy the people whose God is the Lord" (Ps 144:15).

Jesus teaches those who believe in him to follow him in selfless service, and says: "If you understand this, blessed are you if you do it" (Jn 3:17). Although grounded in what is to come, that true beatitude is available here and now: "blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven" (Mt 5:11–12). Yet at present, salvation must be worked out "with fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12). Even if they must still undergo some purification, then "blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. . . . Let them find rest from their labors, for their works accompany them" (Rev 14:13).

Still more blessed are they when, purified, they see God: even before resurrection, they "are truly blessed and have everlasting life and rest."⁶⁷ Human beings whose souls are already enjoying the beatific vision surely will be still more blessed when they are again complete persons in the new earth and new heaven; along with their glorified bodies, as Vatican II teaches, they will find again all the good fruits of their nature and effort that they promoted on earth.

⁶⁷ Benedict XII, *Benedictus Deus*, DS 1000.

What about after Jesus has handed over his kingdom to the Father? Even then, I do not think it will be true that the blessed have nothing more to desire. Rather, I think they will continue to desire, act, and be increasingly fulfilled, so that the heavenly wedding feast will never end and will always grow still more joyful.

If the true ultimate end of human beings is the kingdom rather than God alone, it does not follow that human beatitude is to be found in something apart from God. Even now, it is in God that “we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). God’s plan for the fullness of time is to unite all things in Christ,⁶⁸ and “when everything is subjected to him, then the Son himself will be subjected to the one who subjected everything to him, so that God may be all in all” (1 Cor 15:28). Therefore, while the created goods that pertain to fulfillment in the kingdom are and always will remain distinct from their Creator, those goods will not be things apart from God, and it seems to me reasonable to suppose that blessed creatures’ joy in created goods will somehow be within, although distinct from, their joyful intimacy with the divine Persons.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ See Eph 1:10.

⁶⁹ Thomas maintains that it is contrary to faith to hold that human beings’ beatitude is to be found in something other than God (see *ST* 1, q. 12, a. 1, c.). I distinguish. It is contrary to faith to exclude God from human beings’ ultimate end or to hold that created goods *apart from God* can contribute to authentic human fulfillment. But I hold it to be a truth of faith that human beings’ true ultimate end is the kingdom of God, not God alone.