

Nature as Analogous: A Response to the Doak-Strand/ Conedera Symposium on Benedict XVI and the Natural Law

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THREE TRENCHANT ARTICLES about the views of Benedict XVI on the natural law have appeared in the English edition of *Nova et Vetera* in recent years. The first, by Vincent Strand in 2017, argues that *Caritas in Veritate* [CV] displays a “nakedly thin account of nature *qua* nature.”¹ In response, Kevin Doak, in 2020, posits a robust defense of Benedict’s appeals to the natural law.² In the same 2020 issue and as a response to Doak, Strand is now joined by Sam Zeno Conedera and argues that Benedict places himself in an unresolved dilemma.³ The authors, in amplifying the claim of Benedict’s suspicions about the natural law, assert that, nonetheless, he has no recourse but to use it in order to buttress the liberal political institutions that he supports.⁴

I am grateful to the editors of the English edition of *Nova et Vetera* for allowing me to respond to these articles. I feel a certain responsibility to do so. On the one hand, I selected Strand’s first paper as part of the *Festschrift*

¹ Vincent L. Strand, S.J., “On Method, Nature, and Grace in *Caritas in Veritate*,” in “Symposium in Honor of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI’s 90th Birthday,” ed. Stephen M. Fields, S.J, special issue, *Nova et Vetera* (English) 15, no. 3 (2017): 835–52, at 848.

² Kevin M. Doak, “Globalism in Natural Law Theory: Pope Benedict XVI and Paul Francis Kōtarō Tanaka,” *Nova et Vetera* (English) 18, no. 2 (2020): 653–68.

³ Vincent L. Strand, S.J., and Sam Zeno Conedera, S.J., “Ratzinger’s Republic: Pope Benedict XVI on Natural Law and Church and State,” *Nova et Vetera* (English) 18, no. 2 (2020): 669–94.

⁴ Strand and Conedera, “Ratzinger’s Republic,” 670.

that I guest-edited, which was presented to Benedict on his ninetieth birthday. On the other hand, I asked the editors if they might publish Doak's paper. I had requested it for a conference held at Georgetown University in September of 2018 as a follow-up to the *Festschrift*.⁵ Because Doak took explicit issue with Strand's first article, the editors invited Strand and Conedera to reply.

My response seeks to bridge divergences between Doak, on one side, and Strand and Conedera, on the other. It will be developed in three stages. First, it will review the three articles, focusing on key claims made about the natural law, human reason, and their place in the debate concerning the relation between nature and grace. Second, it will explain how Benedict develops the Council of Trent to conceive nature as theologically analogous. It will show that this concept can integrate claims made about him by both Doak and Strand and Conedera, even as it can resolve the dilemma that the last two find in him. Finally, it will offer its own interpretation of Benedict's understanding of the natural law's place in the theology of nature and grace.

Strand, 2017

Strand grounds his claim about Benedict's thin account of nature in *CV*'s emphasis on the logic of gift. Gift includes, but is not limited to, generosity, friendship, solidarity, and the redistribution of goods. These devolve not from the natural law as such, but from Christian revelation. Nonetheless, argues Strand, *CV* does not set these over against contractual obligations, which devolve from the natural law's notion of justice. The encyclical does, however, advocate that gift should be ingredient in economic liberalism, working in tandem with natural justice.⁶ Still, stresses Strand, *CV* does not account for the socio-economic dimension of human rationality principally "through an inductive observation of the person and his operations," as would the natural law, "but through a deductive consideration of the Trinitarian God." It follows, therefore, that *CV*'s anthropology is erected primarily on grace, "because no other ontological foundation remains."⁷

CV's thin account of nature, Strand contends, is consistent with Benedict's 2004 dialogue with Jürgen Habermas. Here Benedict asserts that the natural law, as grounded in reason, "has become blunt" when used

⁵ The conference was funded by the Thomistic Institute headquartered at the Dominican House of Studies, Washington, DC.

⁶ Strand, "Method, Nature, and Grace in *Caritas in Veritate*," 844; quoting *CV*, §§36–37.

⁷ Strand, "Method, Nature, and Grace in *Caritas in Veritate*," 848.

as a tool for dialogue with secular culture. The victory of scientific evolution suggests that “nature as such is not rational, even if there is rational behavior in nature.”⁸ Moreover, Benedict, when commenting in 1968 on the Second Vatican Council’s Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, claims that “every human reason is conditioned by a historical standpoint so that reason pure and simple does not exist.”⁹ Strand interprets the meaning of these claims of Benedict through the lens of Alasdair MacIntyre, David Schindler, and Tracey Rowland.

MacIntyre, for instance, while not denying “the existence of universal, transcultural truth,” proposes nonetheless that “philosophical principles are conceived [as varying] according to the tradition in which we find ourselves.” As a result, it is not easy to transpose truths from one tradition to another.¹⁰ Similarly, Schindler argues that economics advances claims “about God, humanity and culture [which] can conflict with the logic of the Gospel,” at least implicitly.¹¹ Likewise, Rowland “understands the culture of modernity to be incompatible with Catholicism.”¹² Consistent with these thinkers, Benedict posits that “human reason” must obtain “*in* [the tradition and culture of] faith.”¹³ In support of this claim, Benedict frankly admits that the Christian effort to establish “with pure rational certainty” the evidences for faith (*preambula fidei*) in the natural order “has failed.”¹⁴

⁸ Strand, “Method, Nature, and Grace in *Caritas in Veritate*,” 849; quoting Joseph Ratzinger and Jürgen Habermas, *The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*, ed. Florian Schuller, trans. Brian McNeil (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), 69–70.

⁹ Strand, “Method, Nature, and Grace in *Caritas in Veritate*,” 850; quoting Joseph Ratzinger, “The Dignity of the Human Person,” in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler, trans. Lalit Adolphus et al., 5 vols. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967–69), 5:115–63, at 120.

¹⁰ See Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 326–48 (cited in Strand, “Method, Nature, and Grace in *Caritas in Veritate*,” 840).

¹¹ See David L. Schindler, *Heart of the World, Center of the Church: Communio Ecclesiology, Liberalism, and Liberation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmanns, 1996), 119 (cited in Strand, “Method, Nature, and Grace in *Caritas in Veritate*,” 840).

¹² Tracey Rowland, *Culture and the Thomist Tradition: After Vatican II*, Radical Orthodoxy (London: Routledge, 2005), 83 (cited in Strand, “Method, Nature, and Grace in *Caritas in Veritate*,” 840).

¹³ Strand, “Method, Nature, and Grace in *Caritas in Veritate*,” 850; quoting Ratzinger, “Dignity,” 120.

¹⁴ Strand, “Method, Nature, and Grace in *Caritas in Veritate*,” 849; quoting Joseph Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance: Christian Belief and World Religions*, trans. Henry

These quotations of Benedict, together with Strand's aligning them with MacIntyre, Schindler, and Rowland, raise the crucial question underlying the exchange among Doak, and Strand and Conedera. Are nature and grace equivocal, such that nature is so nakedly thin that its ability to make claims about the true and the good is enfeebled unless grace explicitly animates them? In other words, how robust is nature to supply an independent or quasi-independent substratum for grace to do its work? We might wonder whether our four thinkers are approaching the Reformed position put forth in recent times by Karl Barth that grace, as the "wholly other," breaks in upon nature as a tangent, "perpendicularly from above."¹⁵ His view posits nature as so corrupted by the Fall that it retains little, if any, integrity for grace to support and perfect.¹⁶ By contrast, we should recall Trent's "Decree on Justification" (1545–1547). It teaches that, however much grace is the guarantor of freedom, still nature is vital enough freely to "reject" grace as freely to assent to and cooperate with it.¹⁷ The Council thus weds nature and grace into a dynamic, albeit a paradoxical, synergy. Where between these two poles, we are led to ask, is Benedict to be located?

For his part, Strand sees Benedict following the "single-end" theory of the human person brought to the fore by Henri de Lubac's seminal *Surnaturel*.¹⁸ It argues that humanity cannot possess two ends, a theory that, according to de Lubac, originated in Cajetan's sixteenth-century misreading of Aquinas. The two-ends theory posits that a natural end is altered into a supernatural end when the infusion of sanctifying grace effects justification. Justification in turn makes the beatific vision existentially possible. But according to the French Jesuit, because a final end, goal, and purpose necessarily structures every aspect of a substance as a unity of form and matter, a substance's end cannot be altered without altering its entire species.

The two-ends theory has recently been defended by Steven Long, who agrees with de Lubac that the end of a substance determines its species.¹⁹

Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 136.

¹⁵ Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God*, trans. John Newton Thomas et al. (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1960), 41.

¹⁶ Barth, *The Humanity of God*, 44.

¹⁷ Council of Trent, *Decree on Justification*, ch. 5, in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. Norman P. Tanner, 2 vols. (London: Sheed and Ward, 1990), 2:671–81, at 672.

¹⁸ Strand, "Method, Nature, and Grace in *Caritas in Veritate*," 848; citing Henri de Lubac, *Surnaturel: études historiques* (Paris: Aubier, 1946).

¹⁹ Strand, "Method, Nature, and Grace in *Caritas in Veritate*," 847.

In disagreeing, however, Long argues that, if a substance does not possess its proportionately natural end, the substance cannot be determined and would lack any basis for its unity. If, therefore, humanity's end is graced and not natural, nature becomes merely an empty vessel to be filled with grace.²⁰ Nature would thus lack immanent integrity and so, one might argue, devolve all too easily into the Reformed position. Is Benedict subject to Long's probing critique? Doak's argument leads us strongly to think not.

Doak, 2020

Referring to the work of Manfred Spieker and Martin Rhonheimer, Doak emphasizes that Benedict orders his use of the natural law to right reason, which necessarily embraces a social dimension. This ordering means that the *oughts* of the natural law devolve from their entailment within the end, goal, and purpose of the human person, which *is* reason's own immanent ordering to the true and the good. As so grounded, the natural law is immune to Hume's naturalistic fallacy, which claims that an ought cannot be evinced from an *is*.²¹ This ordering also means that, when the person establishes justice within himself through the virtuous guidance of right reason, justice also results in society.²² Doak thus emphasizes that, for Benedict, the origins of law reside squarely within society, not within the state, which is itself derived from society.²³ As evidence for this claim, Doak cites Benedict's reference in *CV* §6 to the classic maxim *ubi societas, ibi ius*.

Doak criticizes the erroneous English rendering of this maxim as "every society draws up its own system of justice" (see the translation of *CV* on Vatican website). It connotes a relativism inimical to the mind of Benedict, who has warned the world of its dictatorship. The correct translation is

²⁰ Strand, "Method, Nature, and Grace in *Caritas in Veritate*," 847–48; citing Steven A. Long, *Natura Pura: On the Recovery of Nature in the Doctrine of Grace* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 48–49. Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God According to St. Thomas and His Interpreters*, 2nd ed. (Naples, FL: Sapientia Press, 2010), also supports the two ends theory.

²¹ Doak, "Globalism," 661.

²² Doak, "Globalism," 654, 657–58; citing Manfred Spieker, "The Quiet Prophet: Benedict XVI and Catholic Social Teaching," trans. David Lutz, *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* (2018): 64–82, and Martin Rhonheimer, "The Secular State, Democracy, and the Natural Law: Benedict XVI's Address to the Bundestag from the Perspective of Legal Ethics and Democracy Theory," in *Pope Benedict XVI's Legal Thought: A Dialogue on the Foundation of Law*, ed. Marta Cartabia and Andrea Simoncini (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 79–92, at 88.

²³ Doak, "Globalism," 666.

“where society exists, there law exists.” For Doak, this meaning holds the key to Benedict’s understanding of the natural law. It is fitting that every society should have its own legal system, precisely because distinctive societies are the historical embodiment of humanity’s rational nature. Law therefore finds its warrant in the universal sense of justice that is part and parcel of rationality’s ordering to the true and the good.²⁴ For this reason, Benedict avers in *Truth and Tolerance* that, whereas the basis of law is society, the basis of society is “the whole of mankind,” both today’s and tomorrow’s.²⁵ Doak addresses Benedict’s criticisms of the natural law. Benedict’s 1964 remark in “The Natural Law, Gospel and Ideology in Catholic Social Teaching” is directed not at a proper understanding of the natural law, but at its “pseudonym.”²⁶ By this term, Doak sees Benedict meaning the tradition of Grotius and the Enlightenment that, unlike the tradition of Aristotle and Aquinas, is “non-responsive to social particularity and historical change.”²⁷ The pseudonym posits a deductive system leading to a form of rationalist positivism, which easily devolves into the relativism that Benedict deplors.²⁸ Consequently, Benedict rightly joins other natural jurists, like the Japanese Kōtarō Tanaka and the Georgetown University scholar Heinrich Rommen, in censuring them as “authoritarian, hyper-theorized, individualistic.”²⁹

In noting the reasons for Benedict’s opposition to the pseudonym, Doak may be suggesting an interpretation of what Benedict means when he says that “every human reason is conditioned by a historical standpoint.”³⁰ If this quotation is read in light of Benedict’s robust model of reason, so ordered to the true and the good that a universal sense of justice can ground every society’s distinctive legal system, then it means that no bar exists, *prima facie*, to reason’s integrating into that universality the historical contingencies of evolving human beings and societies. Although perfect justice is unattainable short of the eschaton, still, insofar as reason necessarily aims at it, reason, in coping with the history in which it is

²⁴ Doak, “Globalism,” 658–59.

²⁵ Doak, “Globalism,” 664; quoting Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 249–50.

²⁶ Doak, “Globalism,” 662; quoting Joseph Ratzinger, “Naturrecht, Evangelium und Ideologie in der katholischen Soziallehre: katholische Erwägungen zum Thema,” in *Christlicher Glaube und Ideologie*, ed. Klaus von Bismark and Walter Dirks (Stuttgart: Kreuz-Verlag, 1964), 29.

²⁷ Doak, “Globalism,” 661.

²⁸ Doak, “Globalism,” 662.

²⁹ Doak, “Globalism,” 663.

³⁰ See Strand, “Method, Nature, and Grace in *Caritas in Veritate*,” 849, quoting Ratzinger and Habermas, *Dialectics of Secularization*, 69–70.

immersed, can mediate justice to history. Reason's power to effect this mediation is what I believe Doak means when he affirms that Benedict's model of the natural law is founded on "the analogical autonomy of reason."³¹ In other words, history and universality, for Doak's Benedict, are not equivocal, but constitute a unity-in-difference guaranteed by the human person's immanent end. Doak's Benedict thus inclines toward Long's position, which requires a vitally stout (as opposed to a nakedly thin) concept of nature when positing its relation to grace.

Moreover, Doak presents further citations indicating that Benedict not only understands natural reason as analogous in itself, but also in its relation to grace. This second analogy suggests an interpretation of what Benedict could mean when claiming that "human reason" must obtain "*in* [the culture and tradition of] faith."³² On the one hand, like Strand, Doak looks at Benedict's dialogue with Habermas. Here Doak finds Benedict retrieving the contributions of Ulpian and Gratian for a proper notion of natural law. In so doing, Benedict avers that, although "the natural law is broader than the revealed truths of the Catholic Church, [it] is also inherent in Church doctrine."³³ On the other hand, eyeing Benedict's 2010 Westminster Hall speech, Doak cites scholars who underscore the boldness of Benedict's argument that the contribution of the Church to public debates does not rely, first and foremost, on the divine authority of its magisterium, "but on the authority of reason."³⁴ Accordingly, the true, the good, and the just of natural reason, derived from reason's end, stand equally valid outside of, and within, the order of grace. For its part, the content of faith given by grace seems, for Doak's Benedict, to embrace the content of natural reason, supplementing it, even while respecting and absorbing it.

Strand and Conedera, 2020

These authors, when considering reason's historical conditioning, qualify Strand's 2017 position. For their Benedict, although "metaphysical and moral reason comes into action" only in history, this does not mean

³¹ Doak, "Globalism," 668.

³² See Strand, "Method, Nature, and Grace in *Caritas in Veritate*," 840, quoting Rowland, *Culture and the Thomist Tradition*, 83.

³³ Doak, "Globalism," 665; quoting Joseph Ratzinger, "Reason and Faith for a Common Ethics: A Dialogue with Jürgen Habermas (January 19, 2004)," in *Faith and Politics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2018), 182–95, at 190, 191n3.

³⁴ Doak, "Globalism," 667; quoting Marta Cartabia and Andrea Simoncini, "A Journey with Benedict XVI through the Spirit of Constitutionalism," in Cartabia and Simoncini, *Benedict XVI's Legal Thought*, 1–30, at 4.

that reason is reducible to history.³⁵ The authors note that, for Benedict, the “natural law finds its ultimate metaphysical grounding in God, and, correlatively, the existence of natural law points back to its author.” Because Benedict locates “love at the heart of morality,” this metaphysical pointing back creates an opening in natural reason for faith in Christ.³⁶ Strand-Conedera thus conclude that “the realms of revelation and reason penetrate one another very closely.”³⁷ The point is that natural reason does indeed possess some independent integrity, both as metaphysics aiming at God and as the substratum that, without direct reference to grace, can be opened to faith. In short, even though operating “*in* [the historical context of] faith,” reason *qua* reason does seem to possess trans-historical significance to know the true, the good, and the just.

We are thus led to ask whether the Benedict of Strand and Conedera and Doak’s Benedict are in fact closer than they might initially appear. Indeed, Strand and Conedera frankly acknowledge that Benedict does accord nature “a certain autonomy” apart from grace, although they note his caution that too much autonomy could disadvantageously render grace “superfluous.”³⁸ At this point, we might be inclined to interpret the Benedict of Strand and Conedera as accepting de Lubac’s single-end theory of nature and grace’s relation, even while respecting Long’s caveat that nature must constitute more than a mere vessel to be filled with grace. And, as we recall, Long’s caveat implicitly undergirds Doak’s argument.

But the matter does indeed become further complicated when Strand and Conedera probe more deeply into their reading of Benedict’s suspicions about the natural law. Crucially, Benedict reminds us that this “law obtains not in a hypothetical order where human nature is untouched by sin and grace, but rather in the real order in which both are active.”³⁹ Any account of natural reason’s innate power to affirm universal judgments of the true, the good, and the just must include the recalcitrance of fallen nature that, as John Henry Cardinal Newman opines, “pursues its own

³⁵ Strand and Conedera, “Ratzinger’s Republic,” 675; quoting Joseph Ratzinger, “Truth, Values, Power: Touchstones of a Pluralist Society,” in *Faith and Politics*, 95–150, at 146.

³⁶ Strand and Conedera, “Ratzinger’s Republic,” 677; citing Joseph Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe? The Church in the Modern World: Assessment and Forecast*, trans. Brian McNeil (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), 43–44.

³⁷ Strand and Conedera, “Ratzinger’s Republic,” 677; quoting Ratzinger, *Turning Point for Europe*, 43.

³⁸ Strand and Conedera, “Ratzinger’s Republic,” 678; quoting Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, *Faith and Politics*, 17–18 (preface).

³⁹ Strand and Conedera, “Ratzinger’s Republic,” 677.

course, . . . now across [grace], now divergent, now counter, in proportion to its own imperfection.”⁴⁰ Nature, as independent of grace, can ignore and deliberately corrode the true, the good, and the just. The “aboriginal calamity” of original sin and its perduring consequences can lead reason, as Newman also avers, into “suicidal excesses” of its own making.⁴¹

When accounting for this persistent corrosion in nature, Benedict’s dialectic between reason and faith manifests tension, Strand and Conedera indicate, even apparent contradiction. Conditioned by sin and its effects, how trustworthy is metaphysics *qua* metaphysics to guarantee access to the true, the good, and the just? “Nature,” avers the Strand-Conedera Benedict, “will function ‘naturally’ in the postlapsarian condition only when assisted by grace.”⁴² Accordingly, they see Benedict claiming in his doctoral thesis that “supernatural revelation is now morally necessary even for the mere grounding of” the natural law.⁴³ If this is the case, then how can the natural law possibly provide “the state with non-confessional moral resources that” the state cannot provide by its own legal positivism?⁴⁴ If the secular state cannot have direct recourse to grace, then is Benedict not really proposing a Christian morality under the veneer of universal values putatively accessible to natural reason alone?⁴⁵ Benedict himself says, for instance, that “the Church community is required in the historical condition for the activity of reason.”⁴⁶ He advises the state to “recognize that a fundamental system of values based on Christianity is the precondition for its existence.”⁴⁷ This advice corresponds with his claim that the natural

⁴⁰ John Henry Cardinal Newman, *The Idea of a University*, discourse 8, no. 2 (San Francisco: Rinehart Press, 1960), 18.

⁴¹ John Henry Cardinal Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 320–21, 323.

⁴² Strand and Conedera, “Ratzinger’s Republic,” 679.

⁴³ Strand and Conedera, “Ratzinger’s Republic,” 678; citing Joseph Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus Gottes in Augustins Lehre von der Kirche*, in Ratzinger, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1 (Freiburg-im-Breisgau: Herder, 2011), 400–401.

⁴⁴ Strand and Conedera, “Ratzinger’s Republic,” 679.

⁴⁵ On this question, Strand and Conedera, “Ratzinger’s Republic,” 686–89, cite Paolo Flores d’Arcais in his 2000 debate with Ratzinger. See also Gerald McKenny, “Moral Disagreements and the Limits of Reason: Reflections on MacIntyre and Ratzinger,” in *Intractable Disputes About the Natural Law: Alasdair MacIntyre and Critics*, ed. Lawrence S. Cunningham (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 195–226.

⁴⁶ Strand and Conedera, “Ratzinger’s Republic,” 679; quoting Joseph Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics: New Essays in Ecclesiology* (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 155.

⁴⁷ Strand and Conedera, “Ratzinger’s Republic,” 683; quoting Ratzinger, *Church*,

law is broader than the revealed truths of the Catholic Church, even as it inheres in the Church's doctrine.⁴⁸

Findings

Having completed our review of Strand's 2017 article, Doak's 2020 criticism, and Strand's 2020 response with Conedera, let us take stock of our findings. Both camps have Benedict according nature at least "a certain autonomy" apart from grace. Both admit a role for metaphysics, but they diverge on its potency in the historical order of humanity conditioned by sin. For his part, Doak's Benedict sees humanity's immanent ordering to the true, the good, and the just as robustly authoritative, and he underscores the ability of reason to mediate this authority to the particularity of history. He would surely not deny the bias of sin and the perfection of nature's integrity in grace. By contrast, the Benedict of Strand's solo article and later response with Conedera posits a notably more curtailed potency for nature *qua* nature. In light of sin's corrosion, what authority remains to reason without grace, if any, is not further specified, but Strand and Conedera do claim that these days "both the faithful and civil" leaders reject the natural law as "accessible to reason alone."⁴⁹ The "certain" independence that their Benedict ascribes to nature seems close to the "nakedly thin account" in Strand's original 2017 piece with which we introduced our review. In other words, their Benedict seems finally to incline toward nature's indeterminacy that Long avers follows from the single-end theory.

By now, we may be eager to exclaim with Bud Collyer, host of the famous television show *To Tell the Truth*: "Will the real Benedict XVI please stand up!" I will argue that, although tension exists in Benedict's thought on the natural law, reason, and the relation between nature and grace, this tension is not equivocal or contradictory. It finds a coherent ground in a view of nature as "analogously autonomous." This term came to our attention in Doak, who credits my work.⁵⁰ I will suggest that the

Ecumenism and Politics, 207.

⁴⁸ See Doak, "Globalism," 665; quoting Ratzinger, "Reason and Faith for a Common Ethics," 190, 191n3.

⁴⁹ Strand and Conedera, "Ratzinger's Republic," 693–94.

⁵⁰ Doak, "Globalism," 668n44. See Stephen M. Fields, *Analogies of Transcendence: An Essay on Nature, Grace and Modernity* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2016), 11–13, 127–34. The argument that follows is adapted from this source. A version also appeared in my "On Nature and Grace in *Deus Caritas Est*," in "Symposium in Honor of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI's 90th Birthday," ed. Stephen M. Fields, S.J., special issue, *Nova et Vetera* (English) 15, no.

term finds a basis in Trent and that Benedict develops an expanded version of it by locating nature within the eschatology of John's Gospel. In short, the three articles highlight diverse aspects of Benedict's thought that can be brought into concord. As Samuel Johnson observes: "He who differs from us, does not always contradict us."⁵¹

Trent on Nature and Grace

We stated earlier that Trent weds nature and grace into a dynamic, albeit paradoxical, synthesis. It teaches that, in justification, God's freedom, as expressed in the merits of Christ's saving deeds, is the efficient cause. But justification obtains only through baptism, or the desire for it, which is justification's instrumental cause. Human beings are "awakened and assisted" by prevenient grace freely to assent to this grace and cooperate with it. They are "not inactive," therefore, since they can "reject" grace, or voluntarily receive it. Nonetheless, without grace, they cannot of their "own free will" turn toward righteousness.⁵²

Trent's assertion that baptism is justification's instrumental cause allows the Council to marry nature and grace into integrally free centers of action. According to Aquinas, an instrumental cause exercises two powers. On the one hand, the "power of the instrument" designates the innate activity that the cause effects in virtue of its defining form. On the other hand, the "instrumental power" designates the activity that the power of the instrument receives from a principal agent. The power of the instrument assumes instrumental power when the principal agent transfers to it a form that this agent possesses. When this transfer obtains, the instrumental power is incorporated into the finality of the activity intended by the agent.⁵³ Trent thus affirms that justification obtains by God, through Christ, as instrumentally mediated by the person's baptism.

We might offer the following interpretation of the Council's teaching. In baptism, the freedom of the human person constitutes the power of the instrument, because only through it can baptism's final cause be realized. Human freedom becomes an instrumental power when grace is joined to the person's voluntary acceptance of the justification effected by the

3 (2017): 817–33, at 826–31.

⁵¹ James Boswell, *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, ed. G. B. Hill, rev. L. F. Powell, 6 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1942/1951), 4:381n1 (cited in Walter Jackson Bate, *Samuel Johnson* [New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975], 532).

⁵² Council of Trent, *Decree on Justification*, chs. 4–6 (Tanner, *Decrees*, 2:672).

⁵³ James S. Albertson, "Instrumental Causality in St. Thomas," *New Scholasticism* 28 (1954): 409–35, at 412, 419, 424.

sacrament. As justification's principal agent, God confers on the person sanctifying grace, God's own life, which only he can give. Prior to the reception of the sacrament, prevenient grace and human cooperation meet in an unspecified union that preserves free will.

Initiating a person's life of grace, this sacramental scenario respects human and divine freedom even as it binds their synergy. As the power of the instrument, human freedom is not compromised when it becomes an instrumental power. Nor is the freedom of God, justification's principal agent, compromised when it effects the instrumental power. The reciprocity between human and divine freedom obtains by their common contribution to a single final cause, justification. Especially significant is Trent's incorporation of prevenient grace into the union of freedom effected by this final cause. Prevenient grace participates, however remotely, in baptism's sanctifying grace, precisely because it is oriented toward justification. As Trent says, a desire for baptism can sufficiently effect the sacrament. It is possible, then, without the water of baptism, for prevenient grace to become sanctifying grace; they can meet in the hidden continuum of human and divine freedom.

Thus, Trent's teaching on justification refuses to affirm a theory of a pure nature totally independent of grace. Whereas justification requires the cooperation of human nature, this is always grounded in grace, both prevenient and sanctifying. Nonetheless, Trent does not posit an indeterminate nature, but a nature that belongs to human persons innately endowed with their "own" freedom to cooperate with, assent to, and reject grace. Because the innate determinacy of free will, precisely as a power of the instrument, retains integrity when grace renders it an instrumental power, Trent posits nature as analogously autonomous. Nature subsists, in other words, as a unity-in-difference with grace. It abides substantially as itself, with its own determinate power to act for a good that is congenial with the good given by grace. Hence, nature exercises an autonomy. But this autonomy obtains as grace subsumes it into its own higher end. This higher end even empowers the autonomous assent. Hence, because nature's autonomy is enveloped in grace, it and grace are analogous.

Furthermore, Trent posits nature as autonomously analogous in another sense. Nature in itself—*qua* nature—subsists as a unity-in-difference. As we have seen, the selfsame nature can both assent to and cooperate with grace and reject it. Nature is able to expand into transcendence or stubbornly indulge its own suicidal excesses. The Council thus accords nature an integral plasticity constituted by two oppositely tending moments.

For his part, Doak implicitly suggests that Benedict's view is consistent

with Trent's. As we saw, for Doak's Benedict, the content of faith, given by grace, seems to embrace the content of natural reason, supplementing it, even while respecting and absorbing it. But Strand and Conedera also implicitly suggest that Benedict's view is consistent. As we saw, for their Benedict, sin riddles historically conditioned humanity, and so vitiates its ability to know and do the good. All three see Benedict as consistent with Trent, and in this the outline of an analogously autonomous view of nature in Benedict thus begins to emerge. Let us now explore how Benedict develops the Council in light of the eschatology of John's Gospel.

Benedict's Analogy of Nature

Benedict envisages *Deus Caritas Est* [DCE] as an extended reflection on its "starting point," the pierced side of Christ, the living font of wounded love (DCE, §12). It should not surprise us, then, that the eschatology grounded in this starting point should provide the document's implicit framework. The blood and water flowing from the crucified Jesus consummates "the hour [that] now is," which has been "coming" (John 4:23/5:25). This hour manifests the divine glory of the Christ, which has been foreshadowed in the miracles of the preceding Book of Signs. Moreover, the consummation of the hour underscores the nuanced tension between "realized" and "future" eschatology, which John articulates more clearly than any other New Testament writer. For the Master's disciples living in the post-resurrection Church, true worship is given to God in Jesus, because the hour of the Spirit's indwelling has been realized. Nonetheless, Jesus's messiahship is not yet perfected. Our worship in and of him, although authentic, still but anticipates our future worship in heaven, whose earthly sacrament our historical worship nonetheless is.⁵⁴

Accordingly, every Christian must own a dual vocation: to live for Christ *in* this age and *for* the age to come. A disciple cannot feed on the flesh of the Son of Man and become in anyway an autonomous prisoner of history.⁵⁵ To be sure, the mandate of Holy Thursday must be obeyed: feet must be washed here and now. But for John, the grafting of the disciples onto Christ as the living vine gives them a share in the Redeemer's ascent through an obedient death to the glory of the Father.⁵⁶ Both given and pledged, this glory inspires Christians dwelling in history "to make the world more human . . . by freely giving something to others" in love amidst

⁵⁴ C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 68.

⁵⁵ Barrett, *Gospel According to St. John*, 69–70.

⁵⁶ Barrett, *Gospel According to St. John*, 84.

perduring injustice (*DCE*, §§28, 31).

The Christian's dual eschatological vocation presupposes a nature both charged with grace and recalcitrant to it. Although nature realizes grace and, dilating in it, can anticipate its future perfection, still nature's finitude, contingency, and propensity for evil impose limits on grace's activity. The German theologian Karl Rahner observes, for instance, that even when grace seems to shine through nature, it seems unable "to achieve anything final in the world but seems subject to the world's stronger law."⁵⁷ Likewise, Benedict reminds us that nature's limits can be sensed most forcibly in its struggle with its innate imperfectability. This struggle lodges in the heart of every Christian's life of grace, as Benedict reminds us in *Spe Salvi* when quoting Theodor Adorno: progress means moving "from the sling to the atomic bomb" (§22).

Thus, we see that Benedict, by situating nature within the Johannine tension between realized and future eschatology, constructs an analogy that, like Trent's, accounts for nature's dynamic plasticity. We can discern three moments in this analogy; the first two are identical with the Council's, whereas the third is an elaboration of Trent's second moment. First, even in this world of realized eschatology, nature freely asserts its recalcitrant enmity to grace. Capable of spurning the divine gift outright, nature means that "the world [will] hate you [even as] it has hated me" (John 15:18). Second, nature can freely cooperate with grace to bring about a metanoia that purifies us of sin. Benedict stresses that, until the full fruition of the eschaton, history, both individual and corporate, will ever demand conversion. It is "the path that draws [humanity] together [into communion]."⁵⁸

Third, building on conversion, grace further purifies the practice of natural virtue. Even when acting in accord with ends deemed good by natural reason, the theological virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit must subsume those rational habits so ably defined, for instance, by Aristotle. Accordingly, Benedict avers that the justice grounding the social order must spring from love and lead to love (*DCE*, §§34, 36, 37). Corroborating Benedict, Aquinas notes that prudence, the natural regulator of the moral life, requires purifying by counsel. This gift of the Spirit inspires in us an intuitive sense of the good that transcends prudence's skilled

⁵⁷ Karl Rahner, *The Christian Commitment: Essays in Pastoral Theology*, trans. Cecily Hardings (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963), 60.

⁵⁸ Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*, trans. Sister Mary Frances McCarthy, S.N.D. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 51–52.

ability to assess options for action.⁵⁹ In short, Benedict shows us the error in Rahner's claim that nature is merely "guilt-laden, . . . closed, to its own undoing, against grace."⁶⁰ On the contrary, nature evinces an integral dynamism. While yearning in history for its future transcendence, it grows expansively, through the analogous moments that constitute it, even as, because of sin, it can always retreat solipsistically, through these same moments, into willful closure.

The important point is that all three analogous moments presuppose nature's innate power to act for a determined good that it knows. Nature could neither reject grace, nor accept and cooperate with it in the first and second moments, unless it knows grace as a good to which it inclines. Similarly, in the third moment, grace could not lead justice into love, or prudence into counsel, unless nature knows justice and prudence as goods to which it moves to acquire. When acquired outside of justification, of course, natural virtues are not meritorious of salvation. Nonetheless, because reason deems them valuable, Aquinas classifies them as "works leading to a good which is connatural" to fallen nature (*Summa theologiae* [ST] I-II, q. 109, aa. 2, 5).

It is precisely here, in this crucial presupposition of both Trent's and Benedict's analogy of nature, that the natural law finds its properly *theological* ground (as opposed to its philosophical ground, treated in the next section). If Benedict emphasizes the natural law as the foundation of the political order, it is not because he inconsistently underplays the bias of sin and the need for grace. It is because, consistent with nature's analogy, he staunchly asserts and defends the natural capacity of human reason and volition *as the very basis of grace* leading to salvation. Without humanity's natural ability to know the true, the good, and the just, and to act upon them, the Catholic doctrine of grace collapses into the Reformed position. Accordingly, metaphysics can ground a universal justice knowable without direct advertence to grace. Equally, metaphysics needs grace's purification. Nature's innate power to know and freely act, its innate power to undermine what it can know and do, and its innate power to be purified coexist. That they do coexist entails no equivocation, because, as analogous moments, they coexist as the unity-in-difference which defines "nature" as a theological concept.

Doak's Benedict and the Benedict of Strand and Conedera, then, are

⁵⁹ Anselm Stolz, *The Doctrine of Spiritual Perfection*, trans. Aidan Williams (New York: Crossroad, 2001), 187, expounding Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* [ST] I-II, q. 52, a. 2, and q. 68, a. 2.

⁶⁰ Rahner, *Christian Commitment*, 51.

not, at root, contradictory, although they do differ about whether nature's independence from grace is thin or robust. Nonetheless, that nature's independence, however thinly defined, must include its innately determined power, albeit limited, to know and to do the true, the good, and the just finds solid ground in Trent and Benedict. This being said, we still need to face the problem raised by Strand and Conedera that "something has gone badly amiss."⁶¹ Is the rejection by the faithful and civic leaders of what should be apparent to reason without grace due to sin? If so, then is grace indeed necessary for reason to see the validity of the natural law and so desire to fulfill it? And if grace is necessary, then how can the fundamental presupposition of Trent and Benedict's position be defended?

Nature, Grace, and the Natural Law

The inability of the natural law to command universal assent to its numerous claims is, in the first instance, not a matter of sin, but rooted in the very "nature" of reason as it emerges as good from its Creator. According to Aquinas, the precepts of the natural law stand to practical reason as first principles stand to speculative reason. The most important of these latter principles is non-contradiction, because it is "being" that first falls under reason's apprehension. It therefore follows that the same entity, precisely as it exists, cannot simultaneously be affirmed and denied. By contrast, the essential precept of practical reason is the good as directed to the ends of actions. Accordingly, just as non-contradiction grounds speculative intelligence, so the imperative "that good should be done and evil avoided" grounds practical intelligence. Thomas affirms that both the first principle and the imperative precept are self-evident. Non-contradiction is entailed in being, whereas doing good and avoiding evil is entailed in the ends of action (*ST* I-II, q. 94, a. 2).

Furthermore, Thomas affirms that all other precepts of the natural law follow from practical reason's first precept. Accordingly, the next level of inference from the first precept encompasses those inclinations of human nature that tend toward ends. These—good simply because they are so entailed—include self-preservation, procreation, educating offspring, knowing truth and God, and the prospering of social cooperation (*ST* I-II, q. 94, a. 2).

Crucially, the Angelic Doctor next considers the third level of inference. Whereas the natural law is the same in all because it embraces those things known by reason, nonetheless reason evinces what is proper or particular from what is common or general. Accordingly, practical

⁶¹ Strand and Conedera, "Ratzinger's Republic," 694.

intelligence must apply the precepts of the first two levels to the manifold contingencies that constitute human affairs. As a result, “the more we descend towards the particular, the more frequently we encounter defects.” Hence, “practical reason is not [necessarily] the same for all as to what is particular,” and where it might or should be, it is not self-evident to all (*ST* I-II, q. 94, a. 4). That practical reason is not self-evident to all does not necessarily mean that some of its claims are not goods that should be done by all. A claim may properly be inferred from the first two levels of precepts but not be self-evident “in relation to us.” As Thomas says, citing Boethius: “Some propositions are self-evident only to the wise” (*ST* I-II, q. 94, a. 2). By “wise,” Aquinas means those having prudence, the practical wisdom or *phronesis*, which, as we noted, serves, for him and Aristotle, as the regulating virtue of natural ethics.

In light of these considerations, it is evident that, because even the correct system of natural law (as opposed to the pseudonym) asserts numerous claims about complex contingencies in sexual, medical, and business ethics, and in social policies on economics, defense, war, and jurisprudence, the moral judgments of reasonably prudent persons will differ, not only about the nature of the rule to apply, but also about how to apply it to specific cases. That such differences do, and should, exist is part and parcel of the natural law; they are entailed in the nature of practical intelligence. Accordingly, when some faithful and civic leaders reject the natural law as unapparent to reason, it is unlikely that they are rejecting *tout court* the first two levels of precepts (that the good should be done consistent with the inclinations). It is more likely that they are submitting to reasonable scrutiny the third level of prudential inference. That they are is not necessarily a matter of sin, nor a sign that something has gone badly amiss; it may well be an exercise of virtue.

Still, a problem is raised when the Church, using its magisterium, makes a moral claim based on the natural law. In cases like abortion, artificial contraception, and sterilization, which are declared intrinsically evil, an eclipse seems to fall on the natural prudence of some, or even many, at the third level of inference. Even in such cases, however, we cannot conclude that the graced exercise of the ecclesial teaching office is inconsistent with natural reason. As Thomas says, some claims of the natural law are evident only to the wise. In other words, without direct advertence to grace, natural reason can perceive the goodness of controversially received teachings, but it should not surprise us, given the contingent reasoning required to assert them, that many persons, though not generally lacking in reasonableness, will not have the wisdom (skilled prudence) to see it.

As Newman reminds us, skilled wisdom confers on the mind *certitude*,

not *certainty*. Whereas certainty is a function of propositions reached by formal reasoning or syllogisms, certitude is a habit of mind, which proceeds according to a living discernment assessing concrete situations.⁶² This discernment enables a person to pass from conditional inference to unconditional assent on the basis of *implicit* proof. Such proof enables a wise person, by apt insight that often “cannot express itself in words, [to take] in the necessary conditions for an assent” in the midst of opposing arguments.⁶³ Even after the assent is made, *difficulties* may remain, says Newman, but these do not constitute a *doubt*. Difficulty and doubt, he avers, are incommensurate.⁶⁴

Newman’s elaboration of Aquinas’s use of “wise,” then, confirms Benedict’s claim that, although the natural law is broader than the revealed truth of the Church, it is also inherent in it. Prudential reason operates in both nature and grace. But in keeping with our analysis of nature in both Trent and Benedict, it should not surprise us that it operates analogously. The theological and philosophical grounds of the natural law overlap in Trent’s defense of nature’s power to act for a determined good that it knows. From the perspective of grace, *in* which, as Benedict says, “human reason” obtains, sin can always vitiate this power, requiring it to be purified so that its natural object can be focused. Nature can either cooperate with this purifying or reject it. Moreover, grace, subsuming natural prudence, can endow reason with the gift of counsel. It can give or strengthen the certitude of the truth, goodness, and justice of magisterial claims that, based on the natural law, seem less than persuasive to natural reason. Grace’s endowment, however, does not deny that a person of skilled prudence could nonetheless be persuaded, on their own merits, of the claims’ truth, goodness, and justice.

Modeling Nature and Grace

The evidence presented thus far, especially in the three previous sections, inclines us, on balance, to read Benedict’s position on nature and grace as mediating between de Lubac and Long. While subscribing to the single-end theory, in other words, it heeds the caveat that nature must be represented more robustly than as an undetermined receptacle for grace to fill. In light of it, we need now to interpret Benedict’s claim that, after the Fall,

⁶² John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, ed. Ian T. Ker (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 288 (this source will be cited according to the standard edition, whose pages are given in the margins of the Clarendon edition).

⁶³ Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 300–301.

⁶⁴ Newman, *Apologia*, 317.

grace is needed as the ground of the natural law.⁶⁵ If nature is capable of perceiving the natural law's claims, then in what sense does it require grace, not only for its purification and growth, but also for its foundation? To answer this question, I will now propose a model of nature and grace that develops Benedict's mediating position in more detail. It does not appeal to Benedict for direct authority, because the Pontiff only adumbrates his position. Nonetheless, my model does purport to resolve this searching question that he poses to us.

First, the Church has long held that grace animates nature from within and represents no external alien imposition. This claim is a corollary of the fundamental teaching of Chalcedon that the divine nature subsumes the human nature within one divine person, even as each nature retains its integrity. Hence, as the communication of idioms allows, it is true, however paradoxically, that "God dies." Even before Chalcedon, the second century Justin Martyr articulates the doctrine of the *logos spermatikos*: wherever reason is found in the created order, there Christ is perforce found, because Christ is divine reason incarnate (Logos).⁶⁶ Similarly, Irenaeus propounds the "recapitulation," according to which the Logos in Christ "sum[s] up in Himself all things" in heaven and earth, thereby reforming the essence of what he initially fashions as agent of creation (see John 1:3).⁶⁷ More recently, *Gaudium et Spes* stresses that grace renovates the symbols of human culture "from the inside" (§58).⁶⁸ Divine revelation takes "the spiritual endowments and talents of every person and age," and with its own abundance "strengthens, completes and restores [them] in Christ" (§5; citing Eph 1:10). Echoing Justin, it further adds that, wherever these symbols lead humanity more deeply into truth and goodness, reason is enlightened by "the wonderful wisdom which was with God at the beginning" (§57; citing Prov 8:30–31). We can conclude, therefore, that, when nature is infused by grace, its redemption will obtain analogously.

Second, let us return to Trent's doctrine of redemption. As we have

⁶⁵ See Strand and Conedera, "Ratzinger's Republic," 678; citing Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus Gottes*, 400–401.

⁶⁶ Justin, *Apology* 1, ed. and trans. Edward Rochie Hardy, in *Early Christian Fathers*, ed. Cyril C. Richardson et al. (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 225–89, at 233.

⁶⁷ Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies* 21.1, in vol. 1 of *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, trans. and ed. Alexander Roberts and W. H. Rimbaud (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 315–567, at 548.

⁶⁸ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, in Tanner, *Decrees*, 2:1069–1135, at 1109. The English in the following quotations of the pastoral constitution will be from Tanner.

seen, baptism effects justification by embracing the human person's free will into a theandric synthesis that respects its natural endowment. Sanctifying grace and nature are thus analogously joined into a unity-in-diversity. Furthermore, prevenient grace rouses and helps natural free will to make its assent to justification. Although prevenient grace does not justify, its purpose is directly oriented to justification, and indeed, even without the water of baptism, it can lead to baptism of desire.⁶⁹ We can conclude, therefore, that prevenient and sanctifying grace both obtain more as formal causality (from within) and less as efficient causality (from outside). We can also conclude that these two graces, although differing as divine activity acting in nature and divine life redeeming nature, are nonetheless analogous, given their common purpose. Aquinas himself avers, for instance, that "one and the same grace both calls [nature to faith] and justifies [nature in faith]" (*ST* I-II, q. 113, a. 8).

Third, let us more precisely define nature from the perspective of de Lubac's single-end theory. Challenging the premise that the supernatural order is evinced from the natural, the French Jesuit claims that "it is not . . . nature which requires grace; it is rather grace which . . . calls into being spiritual creatures to receive it."⁷⁰ This means, for him, and for Benedict if, as Strand and Conedera claim, the Pontiff follows him, that it is not possible to envisage "a concrete nature in existence prior to or without its supernatural finalization."⁷¹ If so, then nature's fundamental difference from grace rests in its radical otherness to God: in its finitude, contingency, dependence on time and space, and sinfulness. Yet this radical otherness is of course not so other that it cannot affirm the analogy of being and the natural law and cooperate with or reject grace (see Rom 1:18–19). In affirming these powers, Trent does not canonize a theory of pure nature, and so, in agreement with it and de Lubac, Benedict's German contemporaries Rahner and Hans Urs von Balthasar both affirm that "no slice of pure of 'pure nature' exists in this world."⁷²

⁶⁹ Trent, *Decree on Justification*, chs. 4 and 6 (Tanner, *Decrees*, 2:672).

⁷⁰ See Anton C. Pegis, "Nature and Spirit: Some Reflections on the Problem of the End of Man," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 23 (1949): 62–79, at 79 (cited in Stephen J. Duffy, *The Graced Horizon: Nature and Grace in Modern Catholic Thought* [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1992], 70n9, as summarizing de Lubac).

⁷¹ Pegis, "Nature and Spirit," 79 (cited in Duffy, *Horizons*, 70n9).

⁷² Karl Rahner, "Nature and Grace," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 4, *More Recent Writings* (Baltimore, MD: Helicon, 1966), 165–88, at 183; Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation*, trans. Edward T. Oakes (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 288.

Fourth, if no such slice historically exists, then we need to inquire into the dynamics of grace's engagement with nature. It is clear that sanctifying grace obtains only with the sacrament of baptism, either by water or desire. In the case of adults, baptism requires the cooperation of the individual's free will. Sanctifying grace, therefore, is given in the order of history in appropriate interaction with discrete instances of human freedom. We might therefore argue that it is not sanctifying grace but prevenient grace that is given *tout court* with nature at creation. If so, we could claim that nature and prevenient grace subsist as an analogous unity-in-difference.

This analogy means, on the one hand, that nature provides the substratum for prevenient grace, even as prevenient grace subsumes nature into an implicitly Christian vocation, which is explicitly consummated by baptism. Although nature and prevenient grace emerge at creation as a unity, they differ as to their essence. Nature is radically other than grace and entitled, of itself, to no Christian vocation. The analogy means, on the other hand, that grace is the gift of God alone, who endows what is radically other than he with such an implicit vocation. The coexistence of prevenient grace with nature does not prejudice nature's freedom by vitiating its ability either to reject or cooperate with grace, either prevenient or sanctifying, to which prevenient grace is oriented. When nature cooperates with prevenient grace and assents to baptism, not only is prevenient grace perfected, but nature, which is joined to prevenient grace, now possesses the life of God that makes the beatific vision, its only final end, existentially possible. In short, as to their causality, we might posit that nature and prevenient grace are materially the same, but formally different, even as they share a common end, goal, and purpose.

In conclusion, Benedict's claim that grace is the foundation of the natural law can be interpreted as follows. Whereas this law coexists with prevenient grace, even as the law retains its patency to reason, the law nonetheless finds in sanctifying grace the purifying that brings its object into clear focus and that gives it the fullness of certitude of its truth, goodness, and justice. Prevenient grace, an endowment given to nature at creation, thus animates nature from within to move it to assent to sanctifying grace, which also elevates the person from within. Neither grace supplants nature's post-lapsarian potency, as we have defined it, to know the true and do the good. But acting analogously together, these graces lead nature, through its own analogous moments discussed earlier, into a divine synthesis that, healing and expanding nature, allows the natural law to be perceived in its full propriety as the law of *nature* that indeed it is. In sum, the single-end theory is not only compatible with but also

strengthened by a determined nature that accords with Trent, Scripture, the patristic tradition, the Common Doctor, and Vatican II.⁷³ 

⁷³ For a more detailed treatment of the model outlined here, see Fields, *Analogies of Transcendence*, ch. 4.