

On Eschatology

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New Emphasis on Eschatology

RATZINGER BEGINS HIS *Eschatology*¹ by noting that this subject, long treated as a relatively minor feature in the theological landscape, is now regarded as lying in the very heart of theology. Why such a change in theological perspective? In significant part, he explains, this is because of the influential work of theologians like Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer, who noted that, in Jesus's preaching, the message about the imminent end of the world and the coming of the Kingdom is central (1–2).²

The particular character of this new focus on eschatology cannot

¹ Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, trans. Michael Waldstein, trans ed. Aidan Nichols, O.P. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1988) [originally *Eschatologie: Tod und ewiges Leben*, ed. Alphonse Auer and Joseph Ratzinger, *Kleine Katholische Dogmatik* 9 (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1977); includes two appendices written after the appearance of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's Letter on "Certain Questions Concerning Eschatology," May 17, 1979). This work will be cited parenthetically in the text by page number.

² I have no reason to think that Benedict XVI would want to distance himself from the views expressed in *Eschatology*, but because he wrote it well before he became pope, I shall respectfully refer to the author as Joseph Ratzinger. While the book includes an extensive treatment of purgatory, I shall not treat it in this article. Cf. Johannes Weiss, *Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1892), and Albert Schweitzer, *Die Messianitäts- und Leidengeheimnis: eine Skizze des Lebens Jesu* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1901), and *Von Reimarus zu Wrede. Eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu Forschung* (Tübingen: Mohr [P. Siebeck], 1906).

be accounted for only by the new exegetical methods employed by Scripture scholars. Rather, Ratzinger says we must notice the influence of two currents in European culture: existentialism, which interpreted Jesus's message about the end according to its own philosophical canons; and Marxism, which uprooted from its theistic context the promise of a life of future happiness and applied it to the future life of the *present* world, thus claiming to make it more real than the "pie in the sky" offered by theism in general and Christianity in particular. The effect of these cultural currents on theology is that "the classical themes of the doctrine of the last things—heaven and hell, purgatory and judgment, death and the immortality of the soul—are conspicuous by their absence." Ratzinger avers that, while the study of eschatology rightly concerns itself with the way the future is related to our present life, we cannot ignore "these omitted topics," since they "belong intrinsically to what is specific in the Christian view of the age-to-come and its presence here and now" (4).

I will not recount Ratzinger's exposition and critique of the views of the various theologians who would minimize and even deny the importance of those topics, but it is worth attending to the two sets of reflections he offers after considering their views. In the first, he insists on courage and modesty: the courage to see the latest theories in historical context and "the modesty of not claiming to have just discovered what Christianity is all about by dint of one's own ingenuity." Humility is required of one who "submits to reality." Instead of "inventing Christian truth as a newly discovered 'find,'" he says one should truly find it "in the sacramental community of the faith of all periods" (60). Here the theme that serves as the backdrop for his entire treatment of eschatology (namely, the Church as the subject and "inner living context" of doctrinal development) moves into the foreground (270). Unless we turn to what he calls "the plenary authority of the communitarian history of faith, that is, in the Church," we are bereft of the all-important subject (260). Ratzinger speaks of a "succession of phenomena (of texts)" that lack "the binding power of internalization" and leave us with "a mere succession of contradictory stages in faith and ecclesial life" (270).

He explains that, when texts are only partly reconcilable, "contemporary theology has no other option save to fall back on the most ancient of its texts," the Bible itself. Sacred Scripture is, of course, the text *par excellence*, but if we attempt to interpret it apart from the Church, understood as the authoritative subject that perdures throughout history, we are, in effect, attempting to "attach to whatever one

takes to be primitive and Jesus-like a self-illuminating philosophy one has concocted for oneself" (270). This is hardly a promising enterprise. As we shall see, our author finds it at work especially in the dispute about the immortality of the soul and resurrection, which he treats at far greater length than any other topic in his book.

Ratzinger's other set of reflections about the new emphasis on eschatology concerns the significance of the Christian transformation of Jewish assumptions about salvation history. Oscar Cullmann had pointed out that, as Ratzinger puts it, "Jewish thought knew only one decisive demarcation of time after the creation"—namely, "the moment of Parousia with which the new aeon is to begin." From the perspective of the Old Testament, that moment is "the midpoint of time" (52). This framework was radically and decisively altered by the preaching of Jesus. His appearance marks the midpoint of time, but it is not yet the Parousia and the new age. To recall Cullman's analogy, just as there is a significant interval between D-Day, the day of the decisive battle, and V-Day, when victory is celebrated, so also there is a considerable period of history between the appearance of Jesus, who definitively overcomes evil and ushers in the Kingdom, and the full appearance of that Kingdom in the cosmic transformation Jesus promised (52).³

What is the significance of this interval? As Ratzinger points out, "the problem of the expectation of an imminent end ceases, therefore, to be a pressing one," since the new perspective on history and eschatology made possible by this interval is far more important than the question of how long it will last (53). Reflecting on this new perspective, he notes that it "has the effect of radically transforming both the idea and the reality of what we call salvation." "The Jewish people," he says, "were expecting salvation in the form of a change of circumstances affecting the whole cosmos: a kind of religiously grounded *shangri-la*" along the lines described in the accounts of Jesus's temptations: "Bread from desert soil, sensational signs and wonders, assured political power over the entire world." He notes that "all political propaganda lives off such attitudes of expectation" (61). He argues, however, that the experience of unrestrained consumption reveals the yearning of the human heart for something more; namely, "emancipation so total that it is equivalent to asking that men become God" (62).

³ Cf. Oscar Cullmann, *Christus und die Zeit: Die urchristliche Zeit- und Geschichtsauffassung*, 2nd ed. (Zurich, CH: Evangelischer, 1948), 71–72.

Ratzinger does not consider that yearning to be misconceived, but he says we must avoid pursuing emancipation in the manner of Prometheus—and Adam and Eve—by attempting to take it by stealth. Such a pursuit is self-defeating, for the emancipation at stake “is not a product but a gift” that we are powerless to give to ourselves (66). He explains: “By making himself like unto God he sets himself over against truth, and so the adventure ends in that nothingness where truth is not.” In point of fact, however, “the Son’s obedience on the Cross is the place where man’s divinization is accomplished” (64). And so, he says, we receive that divinization only if our “life-style is cruciform and therefore Son-like.” Since this means that we must abandon egotism, it becomes clear that we must will salvation, not only for ourselves and those near and dear, but for everyone. Moreover, as Henri de Lubac argued at length, salvation “cannot simply be given people in some external way, as one might hand over a sum of money,” for it claims “the entire personal subject who receives it” (65).⁴

Since the emancipation at issue involves nothing less than our divinization, Ratzinger says it cannot be experienced in its fullness through a mere “modification of our earthly circumstances.” Rather, it requires “liberation from the constraints of cosmos and history alike.” He therefore insists that “the Kingdom of God, salvation in its fullness, cannot be deprived of its connection with dying” (62).

Connection between Death and Resurrection: Life in the Kingdom

Before Ratzinger explains his understanding of this connection, he considers how death is regarded in contemporary culture and offers incisive comments. He notes two seemingly contradictory aspects of

⁴ Ratzinger clearly understands divinization as a gift (66), and he apparently agrees with theologians like de Lubac regarding the desire for divinization as innate. When he says that the human heart yearns for it and that it cannot be given in an external way, he implies that we have more than just an obediential potency for it. But the question arises as to how to ground the gratuity of divinization if the desire for it is built into our nature and it is impossible in principle to find adequate happiness without it. For de Lubac’s account of the relation between human nature, the desire for supernatural fulfillment, and the gift of that fulfillment, see *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967). For a discussion of both de Lubac and his critics on this problem and a proposed solution, see Peter F. Ryan, S.J., “How Can the Beatific Vision both Fulfill Human Nature and Be Utterly Gratuitous?” *Gregorianum* 83, no. 4 (2002): 717–54.

the way society treats death. On the one hand, it hides death away. Instead of being an integral part of the life of the family, death is concealed in hospitals; the very word “death” is avoided, and euphemisms are used in its place. On the other hand, society treats death as a thrilling spectacle, as is evident, for example, in graphic television crime shows. Though these aspects are quite different, each in its own way obscures the profound metaphysical questions that death poses about its meaning and man’s destiny. “Schleiermacher,” he recalls, “once spoke of birth and death as ‘hewed out perspectives’ through which man peers into the infinite.” But Ratzinger says that, in contemporary culture, death is “deprived of its character as a place where the metaphysical breaks through” (70). Like sickness, death is treated as a mere technological problem. In a “Litany of the Unbelievers,” he wryly observes, the Christian prayer asking God to deliver us “from a death that is sudden and unprepared for” would be “just the opposite: a sudden and unprovided death grant to us, O Lord.” The assumption, he says, is that “death really ought to happen at a stroke, and leave no time for reflection or suffering” (71).

This problematic attitude toward death has been exacerbated by the push for euthanasia, which turns death into a product to be sought after. Ratzinger explains that its “purpose is to slam the door on metaphysics before it has a chance to come in,” and he adds that “the price for this ban on fear is very high. . . . The dehumanizing of death necessarily brings with it the dehumanizing of life as well. When human sickness and dying are reduced to the level of technological activity, so is man himself. Where it becomes too dangerous to accept death in a human way, being human has itself become too dangerous” (71–72). Our author goes on to observe that people move toward “a positivistic, technocratic world view,” even as they nostalgically yearn “for some unspoiled state of nature,” and “in this latter tendency, rational self-consciousness is regarded as the culprit that breached the peace of paradise, and man as the one animal that took a wrong turning” (72). In both cases, what is valued is a world without true reflection. In failing to grasp the dignity of the human person, such a view inevitably fails to appreciate the profound significance of death.

Ratzinger takes up the theme of death’s significance by first surveying the theological landscape and observing how quickly the traditional teaching on the immortality of the soul dropped out of view. Theologians like Paul Althaus and Eberhard Jüngel contributed to its virtual disappearance by decrying the influence of Greek

thought on Christianity, especially with respect to its concept of the human person and death. According to these theologians, the Greek understanding of the human person is radically idealistic and dualistic. As Ratzinger explains: “The divine flame of the spirit is imprisoned in the dungeon of the body,” and at death “the gates of that prison house are flung wide open and the soul steps forth into that freedom and immortality which are its by right” (73).⁵

Such a view is obviously antithetical to the biblical understanding that regards the human person “in his undivided wholeness and unity” (74). These authors assume, however, that the only way to preserve the biblical view is to understand death as the annihilation of the human person. This view enables them both to see death as the destroying enemy, as Scripture describes it, and to highlight the radical significance of the Resurrection.

Ratzinger argues, to the contrary, that such an understanding betrays a failure to appreciate the complexity of both Greek thought and biblical anthropology. On the one hand, in Greek thought, the afterlife is not uniformly treated as preferable to life here and now. Moreover, Plato’s concern was not to advocate a flight from this world but to support his conviction that the polis can thrive only if people grasp the significance of self-abandonment for the sake of truth. On the other hand, although Scripture does not speak explicitly about the immortality of the soul, Jesus’s promise from the Cross to the good thief that “today you will be with me in Paradise” (Luke 16:19–31), his parable about Lazarus dying and resting in “Abraham’s bosom” while the world continues (Luke 16:19–31), and the Book of Revelation’s reference to the souls of martyrs “under the altar” awaiting their full complement (Rev 6:9) clearly indicate that the Bible cannot reasonably be understood as teaching that “in between the first Easter and our own resurrection human beings . . . sink into nothingness” (246).

Ratzinger explains that the tendency to deny the immortality of the soul is already found in Luther, who at least used the biblical term “sleep” to refer to the stage between death and resurrection. But one wonders: to what does “sleep” in this context refer? It must refer either to a person’s being asleep or to a state of non-existence between death and resurrection. Ratzinger argues, however, that neither interpretation vindicates resurrection apart from the doctrine

⁵ Cf. Paul Althaus, *Die letzten Dinge: Lehrbuch der Eschatologie*, 6th ed. (Gütersloh: Kreuz, 1956), and Eberhard Jüngel, *Töd* (Stuttgart: C. Bertelsmann, 1971).

of the immortality of the soul. If “sleep” refers to a person’s being asleep, then death is not the absolute cessation of the person after all and the aspect of the person that survives death could reasonably be called the soul. If “sleep” refers to a state of non-existence, then the question arises as to how the same individual who died and no longer exists could be raised. In short, although sleep is a biblical and appropriate word to use for death, it does not bear either of the above meanings. Christians have understood it to mean conscious life before resurrection (251).

Following the lead of Protestant theologians Ernst Troeltsch and Karl Barth, Catholic theologians, before and especially after Vatican II, responded to these criticisms by developing a theory of resurrection *in* death. They noted that time and eternity are utterly incommensurable and argued that, when a person dies, he “steps out of time” and enters into “the end of the world” and, so, also “into Christ’s return and the resurrection of the dead” (251–52). By thus removing the intermediate state, these theologians obviated the need for the soul to account for the preservation of the individual’s identity. This approach also enabled Barth to find meaning in the scriptural warnings about an imminent end of the world.

Ratzinger notes the problems attendant on this approach. If the person is an absolutely unitary reality, then he ceases to exist at death. What then can it mean for him to rise at death if his body is laid in a tomb and has no connection with that alleged resurrection? If his dead body does not step out of time and into eternity, then what does? The only solution is to hold that an aspect of his personhood perdures—the aspect traditionally called the soul. Otherwise, the resurrection body that is allegedly given is not given *to* anyone and has no connection with the bodily person who previously existed. Far from overcoming dualism, this idea of what Ratzinger calls a disconnected “post-mortem second body” is profoundly dualistic (252). Moreover, this dualism apparently lasts forever, because the approach fails to account for the destiny of the cosmos and “reduces Christian hope to the level of the individual” (267). If resurrection happens even as the body lies in the grave, what becomes of those bodies and all else that comprise the only physical universe we know?

Ratzinger’s broader critique of this theory is that it ascribes to the word “resurrection” a meaning impossible for ordinary believers to grasp because it is plainly opposed to the way it has been traditionally understood. “To be sure,” he explains, “one can bring the believer to the conclusion that there is no immortality of the soul. But no

preaching idiom will ever make him understand that his dead friend is, *by that very fact*, risen from the dead.” Those who advance this theory begin by trying to rid themselves of the barnacles of tradition in order to find the true meaning of the text of Scripture, but they end by moving “beyond the Bible both in language and thought” (254). That result is to be expected when theologians follow the counter-historical impulse of the age.

Ratzinger does not content himself with simply criticizing these theories. He also provides positive arguments to support the traditional view that the soul is both immortal and the substrate for bodily resurrection. He points out that the concept of the soul in Christianity is not simply imported wholesale from philosophy. Rather, Christianity avails itself of insights from philosophy and other disciplines, reflects on them, develops them, and draws them into unity by bringing truths of revelation to bear on them. Ratzinger notes in particular St. Thomas’s development of the Aristotelian doctrine of form and matter to account for the unity between body and soul, and he considers it a profound advance in the history of thought. The soul gives life to the body, and in turn, it becomes matter-stamped. Thus, though the soul perdures after the body dies, it never loses its orientation to matter (257–58).

Ratzinger notices, however, that “the Thomistic teaching cannot preserve the self-identity of the body before and after death.” If the soul is the only form of the body, then when the body is separated from the soul, it lacks a unifying form, and the soul is not related to that body any more than to any other part of the material creation. He says, “This might seem to be an advantage in the case of the question of the resurrection,” but he notes that “it has anthropological and ontological consequences which are strange, to say the least.” For example, “if the body derives its identity in no way from matter but entirely from the soul,” then the corpse of Jesus, no longer informed by the soul, cannot be identified with the one who was crucified (180). So also the significance of parenthood is called into question if our bodies receive their identity only from the soul, which is created immediately by God and not passed on by parents. Seeing these problems, Ratzinger notes that, while the right direction is indicated by Thomas’s explanation (namely, that the soul is the form making the body properly human), still “a repristinization of a thoroughgoing Thomism is not the way we seek” (181).

Is Bodily Life in the Kingdom Imaginable?

Here I will offer some critical comments. Ratzinger rightly criticizes certain efforts to account for the self-identity of the body before and after death, but he does not consider the problem that arises when such an account is lacking—namely, that bodily resurrection becomes impossible to imagine. Indeed, far from regarding that impossibility as a problem, he treats it as a positive feature. After speaking of “the derivation of the identity of the body not from matter but from the person, the soul,” he adds: “Bodiliness is something other than a summation of corpuscles” (181). Elsewhere he says:

The Assumption [of Mary] cannot mean, of course, that some bones and corpuscles of blood are forever preserved somewhere. It means something much more important and profound. To wit: that what continues to exist is not just a part of a human being—the part which we call the soul and which is separated out from the whole—while so much else is annihilated.⁶

Those statements strike me as problematic. As Ratzinger beautifully explains, Mary’s whole person did indeed enter into heaven and whole persons will enter heaven at the resurrection of the dead on the last day. But should we say that bones and corpuscles of blood did not and will not enter? The orientation toward having a body is rightly attributed to the soul, and the body is informed by the soul, but the body itself is a material entity that has certain attributes. If we should not think of the resurrected body as composed of blood and bone, then how should we think of it?

Is it appropriate to think of it as including limbs and organs? Apparently not, because Ratzinger states quite bluntly: “The new world cannot be imagined. Nothing concrete or imaginable can be said about the relations of man to matter in the new world, or about the ‘risen body.’” He rightly insists on “the certainty that the dynamism of the cosmos leads towards a goal, a situation in which matter and spirit will belong to each other in a new and definitive fashion” (194). But is that enough? Is it really the case that not only the beatific vision but even the new earth is utterly beyond our ability to imagine?

⁶ Joseph Ratzinger, *Dogma and Preaching*, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1965) [originally *Dogma und Verkündigung* (Munich: Erich Wewel, 1973)], 116–17.

Ratzinger understands 1 Cor 15:50 as expressing that view: “I tell you this, brethren: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor the perishable the imperishable.” He writes: “Here all naturalistic or physicalistic ideas of the resurrection are set aside. At a stroke, all speculation about how the perishable might become imperishable is rendered superfluous. According to Paul, this is precisely what will *not* happen” (169). It seems to me, however, that “flesh and blood” refers to our current condition of life. The statement “flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God” is parallel to “nor the perishable the imperishable” and indicates that Paul means that mortal living human beings cannot inherit the kingdom.⁷ What is perishable cannot, *qua* perishable, inherit the imperishable.⁸ It must first be made imperishable.⁹ The further context shows this, for Paul goes on to speak of the need to “put on” imperishability and immortality (1 Cor 15:53). The idea in context is not that something of our present bodily reality is lost, but that something else is added to it. He points to a transformation by perfection or addition or fulfillment, not by subtraction of anything, including blood and bones.¹⁰

The view that it is impossible to imagine the new earth severely undermines the motivating power for action here and now of

⁷ Raymond F. Collins understands this parallelism “as a form of synonymous parallelism, a kind of rhetorical *repetitio* in semitic fashion” (*First Corinthians*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, S.J., *Sacra Pagina* 7 [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999], 579).

⁸ Gordon D. Fee states that “the perishable” in 1 Cor 15:50 refers “to that which in its present form is subject to decay, which in itself rules out its possibility for eternal longevity” (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, ed. F. F. Bruce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987], 798).

⁹ Richard Kugelman, C.P., explains 1 Cor 15:50 thus: “The corruptible body of man must be transformed in order to participate in ‘the kingdom of God,’ i.e., in the life of glory” (“The First Letter to the Corinthians,” in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, S.S., Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., and Roland E. Murphy, O. Carm. [Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968], 274).

¹⁰ Commenting on 1 Cor 15:53 (“For it is necessary for this perishable being to put on imperishability and this mortal being to put on immortality”), Collins says: “The qualities the risen body must attain are emphasized in the pair of contrasts. That the qualities of imperishability and immortality are indicated by Greek terms that begin with a privative alpha suggests that these are not qualities that belong to the perishable and mortal being. Deprived of imperishability and immortality, the risen body must receive these qualities as a gift” (*First Corinthians*, 581).

hoping for heavenly fulfillment. Here we glimpse something of the significance of eschatology for moral theology. If the imagination is deprived of an object to focus upon, the intellect cannot present the will with a concrete motive for action. This leaves the will directed toward the immediate and tangible; namely, a this-worldly fulfillment.¹¹ Consider an analogy. A man tempted to sexual infidelity will be far more likely to be deterred if he pictures the wife he loves and the hurt such a choice would cause her than if he merely reminds himself of the fact that such a choice violates the natural law. He will be far more motivated to act uprightly by a good he can imagine than by an abstract idea of good. So also, a person will be far more motivated to cooperate with Jesus's plan of salvation and store up for himself treasure in heaven if he is able to imagine what heavenly treasure is than if what he is storing up is, so far as he is concerned, simply an abstraction.

Christological Account of Heaven

To appreciate Ratzinger's account of heaven, it helps to notice that the traditional tendency to view heaven as the immediate intellectual apprehension of God's essence raises significant problems. St. Thomas Aquinas, for example, holds that we naturally desire an absolutely perfect happiness that leaves nothing to be desired (*Summa theologiae* [hereafter, ST] I-II, q. 1, a. 5) and equates heavenly fulfillment with the beatific vision, which he considers uniquely capable of satisfying all our desires (ST I-II, q. 3, a. 8). However, if some people have the beatific vision before they experience bodily resurrection and all their desires are already satisfied, one wonders what difference the body can possibly make to their heavenly happiness. Thomas tries to resolve this problem by saying that, although the body is not essential for perfect beatitude, it adds well-being to it (ST I-II, q. 4, a. 5).¹² But one is left wondering how, if the beatific vision really does fulfill us perfectly, the body could add any well-being at all to our heavenly fulfillment. Thomas also holds that the communion of friends is not essential for perfect beatitude, but adds well-being to it (ST I-II, q. 4, a. 8). Here, too, the same question arises: how can that communion in any way improve happiness that is already perfect?

¹¹ See James T. O'Connor, *Land of the Living* (New York: Catholic Book, 1992), 37.

¹² See John Morreall, "Perfect Happiness and the Resurrection of the Body," *Religious Studies* 16, no. 1 (1980): 29–35.

The problem vanishes when one no longer assumes that we naturally desire a perfect happiness that leaves nothing to be desired and when one no longer equates heaven with the beatific vision, but instead realizes that heavenly fulfillment is found in all of the various elements of the kingdom: the vision of God, to be sure, but also bodily resurrection and all that it enables us to enjoy—the communion of friends, the new heavens and the new earth, and the whole range of humanly fulfilling goods. This richer understanding of heavenly fulfillment finds support in the New Testament, which emphasizes resurrection much more than the vision of God.

Of course, Scripture does promise that vision: Jesus himself proclaims the pure of heart blessed because “they shall see God” (Matt 5:8); St. Paul says that, although we presently see only “in a mirror dimly,” we shall see “face to face” (1 Cor 13:12); and St. John affirms that those who now are children of God shall in heaven “see him as he is” (1 John 3:2). But Jesus also affirms “that the dead are raised” (Luke 7:22), teaches that fulfillment in heaven is communal by comparing it to a wedding feast (see Matt 22:2; cf. Rev 19:7,9), and proclaims the meek blessed because “they shall inherit the earth” (Matt 5:5). And St. Paul speaks at length of the resurrection of the body, explaining that, even though we do not understand how God can raise us up, we should not doubt the reality of resurrection or downplay its significance (see 1 Cor 15). Paul also has much to say about the communal character of heaven (see Eph 1:18–23, 4:1–16) and its extension to all creation (see Rom 8:19–23).

Ratzinger’s Christological understanding is more clearly grounded in Scripture and far less vulnerable to criticism than some traditional conceptions. Heaven “is not an extra-historical place,” for it “depends on the fact that Jesus Christ, as God, is man, and makes space for human existence in the existence of God himself” (234; note omitted). Statements like this highlight a truth essential for a proper understanding of heaven; namely, that it includes both divine and human fulfillment. Although Ratzinger speaks of an apparently innate desire for divinization and, at various points, seems to identify heaven with the beatific vision, his focus on union with Christ the God-man suggests a far richer conception. It does justice to the fullness of our humanity and does not conflate human and divine fulfillment. Ratzinger’s remarks on the character of heaven as Christological are wonderfully startling: “One is in heaven when, and to the degree, that one is in Christ”; Christ “is heaven, the new Jerusalem” (234); and “the redeemed are not simply adjacent to each other

in heaven. Rather, in their being together as the one Christ, they *are* heaven” (238).

As Pope Benedict XVI, Ratzinger has emphasized that, in the Eucharist, Christ makes us “one with him.”¹³ Christ draws us into unity by giving us “a real foretaste of the eschatological fulfillment for which every human being and all creation are destined (cf. Rom 8.19ff.).”¹⁴ The Eucharist guides us “towards our final goal,” which “is Christ himself,”¹⁵ and “sacramentally accomplishes the eschatological gathering of the People of God. For us, the eucharistic banquet is a real foretaste of the final banquet foretold by the prophets (cf. Is 25:6–9) and described in the New Testament as ‘the marriage-feast of the Lamb’ (Rev 19:7–9) to be celebrated in the joy of the communion of saints.”¹⁶

Pope Benedict’s appreciation of the centrality of the resurrection of the body is evident when he explains that, as viaticum, “communion in the Body and Blood of Christ appears as the seed of eternal life and the power of resurrection: “Anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day (John 6:54).”¹⁷ So also, despite his unwillingness to speak of Mary’s Assumption and our resurrection as realities that we can imagine, Benedict points out that “Mary’s Assumption body and soul into heaven is for us a sign of sure hope, for it shows us, on our pilgrimage through time, the eschatological goal of which the sacrament of the Eucharist enables us even now to have a foretaste.”¹⁸

Benedict emphasizes the social character of heaven by explaining that: “Communion draws me out of myself towards him, and thus also towards unity with all Christians. We become ‘one body,’ completely joined in a single existence. Love of God and love of neighbor are now truly united: God incarnate draws us all to himself.”¹⁹ Moreover,

¹³ Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* (2007) [*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 99 (2007): 105–80], §66, accessed April 23, 2017, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20070222_sacramentum-caritatis.html.

¹⁴ Ibid., §30.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., §31.

¹⁷ Ibid., §22.

¹⁸ Ibid., §33.

¹⁹ Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* (2005) [*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 98 (2006): 217–52], §14, accessed April 23, 2017, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est.html.

Benedict sees the Eucharist as the key that reveals the unity between God's original creation and the new heavens and the new earth:

The relationship between the Eucharist and the cosmos helps us to see the unity of God's plan and to grasp the profound relationship between creation and the "new creation" inaugurated in the resurrection of Christ, the new Adam. Even now we take part in that new creation by virtue of our Baptism (cf. Col 2:12ff.). Our Christian life, nourished by the Eucharist, gives us a glimpse of that new world—new heavens and a new earth—where the new Jerusalem comes down from heaven, from God, "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev 21:2).²⁰

This unity is able to come about because:

The substantial conversion of bread and wine into his body and blood introduces within creation the principle of a radical change, a sort of "nuclear fission," to use an image familiar to us today, which penetrates to the heart of all being, a change meant to set off a process which transforms reality, a process leading ultimately to the transfiguration of the entire world, to the point where God will be all in all (cf. 1 Cor 15:28).²¹

Ratzinger also calls attention to the uniqueness of each person's fulfillment in heaven and to the importance of living now so as to expand our capacity to receive. But this uniqueness does not suggest individualism. Rather, the purpose of the expansion is "to be able to distribute all the more to our fellows. In the communion of the body of Christ, possession can only consist in giving, the riches of self-fulfillment in the passing on of gifts" (236). He does not discuss the precise character of the gifts that the blessed in heaven will give each other, but if he did, he would surely have to identify them not as the beatific vision itself, but as *human* gifts. Such a discussion might stir the imagination and also move the heart to desire heavenly fulfillment more intensely, so that one becomes willing to sacrifice now with a view to being all one can be in the heavenly *communio*. As noted, however, Ratzinger unfortunately excludes any possibility of imagining what heavenly life and sharing will be like.

²⁰ Ibid., §92.

²¹ Ibid., §11.

Free Will, Mercy, and Hell

I now turn to Ratzinger's brief but interesting treatment of hell. The influence of Hans Urs von Balthasar is unmistakable, especially in Ratzinger's reference to "Jesus's descent into Sheol, in the night of the soul which he suffered" (217) and the challenge "to experience communion with Christ in solidarity with his descent into the Night" (217–18). Yet Ratzinger, unlike Balthasar, never tries to make the case that hell might turn out to be empty of all human beings.

Perhaps Ratzinger sees the weaknesses of some of the arguments used to defend that claim. Appeals to God's goodness and mercy fail utterly to vindicate the claim, for they prove too much if they prove anything at all. God's goodness, mercy, love, and so forth either are or are not compatible with some people's ending in hell. If those attributes are compatible with some people's ending in hell, then they cannot be used to support the claim that all human beings might well be saved. If they are not compatible with some people's ending in hell, then they prove too much; namely, that it is necessarily the case that no one ends in hell.

The same point can be made with respect to the Scripture passages cited by Balthasar that seem to point to universal salvation, for example: God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:4); God was pleased through Christ "to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven" (Col 1:20); and "I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (John 12:32).²² If those passages are compatible with some people's being lost, then they do not help to show that hell might well be empty, and if they are not compatible with some people's ending in hell, then they prove, contrary to Church teaching, that all are necessarily saved.

The question nevertheless remains how a good and merciful God can allow some people to be lost, and how Scripture passages like the ones just cited are compatible with some people's being lost. Ratzinger's reflection is enlightening on both counts. He says that we must first recognize "God's unconditional respect for the freedom of his creature," and he astutely points out that, while the good acceptance of grace is created, refusing it is something one can do on one's own (216). Ratzinger also speaks of God's mercy, but without any hint of universalism. Rather, he says that "the doctrine of everlasting

²² Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Dare We Hope "That All Men Be Saved"? With a Short Discourse on Hell*, trans. David Kipp and Lothar Krauth (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 184–86.

punishment preserves its real content” and then immediately speaks of mercy, implying that the two are compatible (218). How can they be? Ratzinger does not explain, but part of the answer is that hell does not involve a set of conditions positively created by God to make people miserable. Rather, it consists in what people have brought on themselves; namely, not being a part of the *communio* of the saved and thus suffering the consequences of that exclusion. As Pope Benedict XVI, he explains: “Jesus came to tell us that he wants us all in Paradise and that hell, about which little is said in our time, exists and is eternal for those who close their hearts to his love.”²³

Indeed, Benedict holds that there are people with no openness whatsoever to truth, love and Christ. He affirms that: “Alarming profiles of this type can be seen in certain figures of our own history. In such people, all would be beyond remedy, and the destruction of good would be irrevocable: this is what we mean by the word *Hell*.”²⁴ But while this statement strongly suggests that Benedict rejects the view that hell might turn out to be empty of all human beings, he goes on to suggest that it will be populated only by a few extremely wicked people: “For the great majority of people—we may suppose—there remains in the depths of their being an ultimate interior openness to truth, to love, to God” (*Spe Salvi*, 46). “Our defilement,” he adds, “does not stain us forever if we have at least continued to reach out [*tendimus*] towards Christ, towards truth and towards love.”²⁵

However, Christians in mortal sin can and often do remain oriented in a significant way toward Christ, truth, and love, because they can and often do still have true, though not living, faith.²⁶ As a theological virtue, that faith, although practically inactive, is still an orientation (but not a salvific one) towards divinely revealed truth.

²³ Benedict XVI, Homily on the Occasion of Visit to the Roman Parish of St. Felicity and her Children, Martyrs, Sunday, March 25, 2007, accessed April 23, 2017, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/homilies/2007/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20070325_visita-parrocchia_en.html.

²⁴ Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Spe Salvi* (2007) [*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* (2007): 985–1027], §45, accessed April 23, 2017, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20071130_spe-salvi.html.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, §47.

²⁶ *Enchiridion Symbolorum: Definitionum et Declarationum de Rebus Fidei et Morum*, ed. Heinrich Denzinger and Adolf Schönmetzger (Freiburg: Herder, 1973), nos. 1578, 838.

Central to it is Christ's offering an everlasting communion in love to fallen human beings. As Pope Benedict XII said in his authoritative definition: "The souls of those who die in actual mortal sin go down into hell immediately after death and there suffer the pain of hell."²⁷ Obviously, Benedict XVI did not intend to diverge from the definition of Benedict XII.²⁸ And the formulation "we may suppose" suggests that Benedict XVI intended his affirmation not as a binding teaching, but as a professorial hypothesis. Still, it is not immediately evident how the statements of the two Benedicts can be harmonized.

The Damned and God's Mercy

Ratzinger's brilliant treatment of eschatology has a great deal to recommend it. While acknowledging the significance of the future life of our present world, he criticizes the modern tendency to emphasize intra-mundane eschatology at the expense of the traditional topics of eschatology that bear on the future beyond this world. He also very ably takes up those topics. As I have pointed out, his claim that bodily resurrection is impossible to imagine undermines its realism, even as it empowers hope for resurrection. Nevertheless, his description of heaven as a Christocentric communion in which, "as the one Christ, [the redeemed] *are* heaven," is powerful indeed. Ratzinger's descriptions of Jesus as "the One who came to transform our night by his suffering" and of hell as self-imposed exclusion from the *communio* of the saved appropriately emphasizes God's mercy without suggesting that hell might be empty. As noted, however, the apparent assumption that hell will be populated only by a few extremely wicked people raises questions. I will conclude by discussing the problems with such an assumption and by proposing the theological hypothesis that God's mercy, together with the data of revelation, can be vindicated by the idea of a populated hell from which all intelligible evil has been eliminated.

One can certainly sympathize with the impulse to insist, as Balthasar does, that hell might turn out to be empty of all human beings. God, after all, is love. He created human beings to become members of his family and, united with Christ, to enjoy rich human

²⁷ Benedict XII, Constitution *Benedictus Deus: On the Beatific Vision of God*, January 29, 1336, in Denzinger and Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, nos. 1000–02.

²⁸ *Spe Salvi*, §37, cites *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [hereafter, CCC], §§1033–37. CCC §1035 quotes that definition, referring to Denzinger and Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, nos. 76, 409, 411, 801, 858, 1002, 1351, 1575.

fulfillment and Trinitarian intimacy. Hell is the antithesis of that plan. Nevertheless, Ratzinger rightly resists that quasi-universalistic impulse, for the scriptural evidence for a populated hell excludes Balthasar's position. That evidence, however, also excludes the view that only a few extremely wicked people will be lost. It is not possible to consider the evidence in depth here, but the following is worth noting:

Jesus teaches that many who acted in his name will be shocked to find themselves condemned by their failure to have done the Father's will (see Matt 7:21–23). Jesus teaches that some who think they have fulfilled their responsibilities to him will be surprised to find themselves condemned for having failed to meet his pressing needs in the least of his brothers and sisters (see Matt 25:41–46). When asked whether those saved will be few, Jesus responds: "Strive to enter by the narrow door," and goes on at once to provide motivation: "for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able" (Luke 13:24). Without saying whether those saved will be few, Jesus thus makes it clear that more than a few will be lost.²⁹

I do not propose those passages as proof texts but as representing New Testament teaching as a whole. That teaching lines up perfectly with practices of the Church, dating back to New Testament times, that plainly presuppose that mortal sin is common—practices such as evangelization that calls people to repentance, exhortations to confess and do penance, and warnings about the need for a clear conscience to receive the Eucharist. While one ought not judge any particular

²⁹ Germain Grisez and Peter F. Ryan, S.J., "Hell and Hope for Salvation," *New Blackfriars* 95 (September 2014): 606–15, at 612, accessed April 23, 2017, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/nbfr.12050/abstract>). According to Balthasar, "in the New Testament, two series of statements run along side by side in such a way that a synthesis of both is neither permissible nor achievable: the first series speaks of being lost for all eternity; the second, of God's will, and ability, to save all men" (*Dare We Hope*, 29). It is clearly not impermissible or contradictory, however, to hold both that the all-powerful God wills every human being without exception to be saved and that some, nevertheless, miss out on salvation due to culpable lack of faith or failure to live the faith. Moreover, a reconciliation of different kinds of statements is impossible only if they contradict each other. In denying that the two series of statements can be reconciled, Balthasar unfortunately implies, no doubt unwittingly, that Scripture contradicts itself and thus that some of its assertions are not true.

individual guilty of mortal sin, many wrongdoers at some moments in their lives realize the gravity of what they are about to do or have done but freely choose either to do it or not to repent and desist from doing it.

Moreover, many people die suddenly. The events of September 11, 2001, and the tsunami tragedy of a few years later are but dramatic reminders of the reality of sudden death, which happens every day, sometimes when people are engaged in gravely wrong activities. Jesus therefore mercifully urges us to watch, “for you know neither the day nor the hour” (Matt 25:13). Because it is unreasonable to suppose that almost all mortal sins are repented, we must conclude that more than a few human beings die in mortal sin and go to hell.

To avoid that conclusion, some theologians have proposed the theory of the so-called final option.³⁰ They claim that before death one is not equipped to determine one’s whole self for or against God, so God gives everyone an option at the moment of death. These theologians deny that this final option is one choice among others. They treat it as coming from the depths of one’s being. It is said to be like the option the angels are thought to have had—an option for or against God in which the implications of their choices could be clearly seen.

Critics have pointed out, however, that rejecting God and going to hell would hold no appeal and, thus, would not be a true option. People commit mortal sins now not because they want to reject God and go to hell but because they want whatever benefit the sinful choice offers or seems to offer. But because the final option is supposed to be unclouded by considerations of such benefits or apparent benefits, it seems to be no option at all. Moreover, its alleged significance would seem to render otiose the choices we make here and now. Finally, there is no scriptural evidence that we have a final option, and Jesus’s urgent warnings that we be prepared for death argue against it.³¹

³⁰ See, for example, Ladislaus Boros, S.J., *The Mystery of Death* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965), 86–99. For a critique of Boros, see Matthew J. O’Connell, S.J., “The Mystery of Death: A Recent Contribution,” *Theological Studies* 27 (1966): 434–42.

³¹ For a brief exposition and critique of this theory with references to works in which it is proposed, see Germain Grisez, *Christian Moral Principles*, vol. 1 of *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, 3 vols. (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983–1997), 445–46, accessed April 23, 2017, <http://www.twotlj.org/G-1-18-F.html>.

Instead of holding that hell might be empty or that only a few very wicked people will end there, I propose that we follow Julian of Norwich in affirming both sides of the paradox she articulates and then consider how both can be true. She famously says that the Lord revealed to her that “all manner of things shall be well,” and then she adds that: “Many,” including those “that dieth out of the Faith of Holy Church: that is to say, they that be heathen men; and also man that hath received christendom and liveth unchristian life and so dieth out of charity: all these shall be condemned to hell without end, as Holy Church teacheth me to believe.”³² Julian wonders how all things can be well if many are lost: “And all this [so] standing, me thought it was impossible that all manner of things should be well, as our Lord shewed in the same time.”³³ But she received the strength “to keep me in the Faith in every point, and in all as I had before understood,” and she was convinced that this included holding that many will be lost.³⁴

The only way that all can ultimately be well, despite the fact that many will end in hell, is if Jesus overcomes hell’s evil such that no permanent residue remains.³⁵ Is such a position tenable? We must see if it is compatible with what faith requires us to hold: that those who die in mortal sin remain impenitent, that they lose intimate friendship with God (*poena damni*) and suffer (*poena sensus*) and that their loss and suffering last forever.

If human beings had a natural desire for the beatific vision, as Ratzinger apparently holds, then its loss would be a privation. But, while God created us with a view to offering us divine intimacy, such intimacy is a gift over and above the gift of being created in the

³² Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Grace Warrack (1901) (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2002), ch. 32 (Revelation no. 13); for a description of Julian’s work, see <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/julian/revelations.html>, accessed April 23, 2017.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., ch. 33 (Revelation no. 13).

³⁵ Some of the ideas in this section appeared in Germain Grisez and Peter Ryan, S.J., “Sketch of a Projected Book about the Kingdom of God,” in *Moral Good, the Beatific Vision, and God’s Kingdom*, ed. Peter J. Weigel (New York: Peter Lang, 2015), 149–65. What follows in this article is also only a sketch of a hypothesis whose defense would require a much fuller treatment. I welcome criticism and, as always, submit my views to the ultimate judgment of the magisterium. For an analysis of a similar proposal, see Joshua R. Brotherton, “Presuppositions of Balthasar’s Universalist Hope and Maritain’s Alternative Eschatological Proposal,” *Theological Studies* 76 (2015): 718–41.

first place, which it could not be if it were an intrinsic requirement of human fulfillment.³⁶ So, while the damned will miss out on that greatest of gifts, their not having it will not be an evil.

Because the damned do not love others as themselves, they definitively exclude themselves from communion, not only with God but also with the blessed.³⁷ Harmony with others is a fundamental good, and it is realized most richly in intimate relationships, of which the damned have made themselves incapable. Although this incapacity is tragic, given what they could have enjoyed had they chosen well in this life, it is not a privation. Harmony with others can be realized to some degree even by those who, like the damned, are motivated only by self-interest.

What about the suffering of the damned? St. John Paul II explains that, whereas the vocabulary of the Old Testament “did not have a specific word to indicate ‘suffering,’” and therefore “defined as ‘evil’ everything that was suffering, . . . the Greek language, and together with it the New Testament,” has a verb (*paschó*) to express “‘I am affected by. . . . I experience a feeling, I suffer’; and thanks to this verb, suffering is no longer directly identifiable with (objective) evil, but expresses a situation in which man experiences evil and, in doing so, becomes the subject of suffering.”³⁸

Unlike intelligible evil, suffering is not a privation, but a positive reality. Although suffering is by definition unpleasant and sometimes even excruciating, it is the appropriate sensory response to evil. Still, if suffering is the experience of evil, and if the damned suffer, the presence of evil in hell seems inevitable.

The evil that one experiences when one suffers, however, is not necessarily a present evil. One also may suffer because one anticipates a future evil or, as I propose in the case of the damned, because one recalls a past evil. It may be that the damned suffer anguish forever in hell because they are continually aware of the intense joy of the just and realize that, but for their own mortally sinful choices, which

³⁶ See note 4 above.

³⁷ “To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God’s merciful love means remaining separated from him forever by our own free choice. This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called ‘hell’” (CCC, §1033 [Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994]).

³⁸ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Doloris* (1984)[*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 76 (1984): 201–50], §7, accessed April 23, 2017, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1984/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_11021984_salvifici-doloris.html.

they do not truly repent but do regret, they would be able to share in that joy.³⁹

Although the regret of the damned arises only because they are unhappy about their self-limitation, that regret is entirely in accord with what God wills, for it is contrary to the will to sin. Indeed, God can make it impossible for the damned to do any evil by motivating them to refrain by their self-love, which in itself is good. He can make it be the case, and enable the damned to see, that even evil wishes are never in their self-interest. He can bring it about that, out of self-interest, they will all, and only, the good they can will. Although this will be far less than the good they would be willing if they were able to share in communion with God and the blessed, it will not include any evil.

People with modern sensibilities find it extremely difficult to accept the Church's teaching on hell. Part of that problem can be addressed by pointing out, as John Paul II did, that hell "is not a punishment imposed externally by God but a development of premises already set by people in this life." He also explains that "Sacred Scripture uses a symbolical language" that is not intended to give a realistic description of hell but to "show the complete frustration and emptiness of life without God." But, to deal effectively with the modern tendency to discount the teaching on hell, it seems necessary to explain how God—whom John Paul II calls at the beginning of his talk "the infinitely good and merciful Father"—may extend his mercy even to the damned.⁴⁰ If God can eliminate intelligible evil from hell, it is surely reasonable to think that his mercy would move him to do so.

Moreover, because God loves the damned, he no doubt wants them to be as fulfilled as they can be. Scripture tells us that the damned as well as the blessed will be raised from the dead, so we

³⁹ Wis 5:1–13 considers the conversation of the wicked who, unlike the just man they persecuted in this life, are not numbered among the sons of God: "They will speak to one another in repentance, and in anguish of spirit they will groan" (5:3). *Summa theologiae* III, q. 86, a. 1, corp., says: "the sins of the damned and of devils . . . cannot displease them as it is a fault, but only as it means punishment which they suffer. For this reason they have a kind of penance, but it is unfruitful" (trans. T. C. O'Brien, in *Summa theologiae*, vol. 60 [London: Blackfriars, 1966]).

⁴⁰ John Paul II, General Audience, July 28, 1999, §§2–3, accessed April 23, 2014, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/audiences/1999/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_28071999.html.

already know that they participate in the good of bodily life. God can also enable them to exercise their natural capacities to realize other human goods. Although that fulfillment will inevitably be meager, to say the least, compared to what the blessed will enjoy, there is no reason to assume that it will be entirely lacking.

It might be objected that a view of hell in which God vanquishes its evil and even arranges for the damned to experience some human fulfillment will be less effective than the traditional one in motivating people to avoid hell. It can be said in response that the many people in contemporary societies who have rejected the traditional understanding as implausible and contrary to God's love are hardly being motivated by it, and if the perspective proposed here strikes people as compatible with God's goodness, they will find it harder to dismiss. Moreover, the prospect of missing out on intimacy in the kingdom and living forever with emotional anguish remains awful on this view, so it remains possible both to fear hell and to hope for heaven. It therefore remains urgent to follow Jesus, be prepared for his coming, and strive to promote others' salvation. Finally, even if this understanding of hell does lessen its motivating force, a corresponding view of life in the kingdom as including both the beatific vision, which we cannot imagine, and happiness that I argue we can imagine—the rich, unimpeded fulfillment as bodily persons in the human goods of which the damned have only a very impoverished experience—would greatly increase the kingdom's motivating force. Accordingly, the overall motivation would be very great and more positive.

The view of hell that I have proposed emphasizes God's mercy without suggesting that all might be saved or that only a few extremely wicked people will be lost. This view also enables us to understand in a more robust sense St. Paul's teaching that God will be "all in all" (I Cor 15:28) than does one in which evil remains forever.⁴¹ Finally, this approach makes it possible to answer the question of how the blessed can be happy despite the suffering of loved ones. The blessed will realize that the suffering of the damned is not an evil but an appropriate reaction to their situation, that intelligible evil has been overcome even in hell, and that God loves the damned and gives them all the good of which they are now capable. So, with

⁴¹ "The ultimate purpose of creation is that God 'who is the creator of all things may at last become "all in all," thus simultaneously assuring his own glory and our beatitude'" (CCC, §294, referring to *Ad Gentes Divinitus*, Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church, §2).

their feelings perfectly aligned with their understanding, the blessed will be able to rejoice that God has fulfilled his promise to Julian of Norwich to make all manner of things well. NEV