

Seek First the Kingdom: A Reply to Germain Grisez's Account of Man's Ultimate End

EZRA SULLIVAN, O.P.
Dominican House of Studies
Washington, DC

NOT EVEN FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD can utterly fulfill man, either in this life or in the next: so argued Germain Grisez in the 2001 *American Journal of Jurisprudence*.¹ This was in contrast, he said, to the position of St. Thomas Aquinas, whose “opinions” about man’s ultimate end have been “regarded as tantamount to the truths of faith.”² Responding to Grisez in the same issue of the journal, Fulvio Di Blasi contended that Grisez’s “general theses” are not only “daring,” they are “self-contradictory, and indeed dangerous from the point of view of faith.”³ More recently, in 2008, Grisez has returned to the topic. His position is more definitive and emphatic—and therefore more potentially dangerous to Catholic faith—

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¹ Germain Grisez, “Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment,” *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 46 (2001): 3–36 at 28. The context of Grisez’s claim is his disagreement with St. Thomas Aquinas about whether man’s *beatitudo* consists in “God’s goodness alone.” Grisez states: “As I explained in Part I, above, their capacities [i.e., that of human persons] are naturally inclined toward the basic human goods—friendship with God, knowledge of truth and aesthetic experience, and so on. But *no single instantiation of any of those goods—not even friendship with God—can utterly fulfill anyone.*” Emphasis added.

² Grisez, “Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment,” 36.

³ Fulvio Di Blasi, “Ultimate End, Human Freedom, and Beatitude: A Critique of Germain Grisez,” *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 46 (2001): 113–35 at 113.

than it was before. At the end of his article, Grisez again pits his understanding of faith against that of St. Thomas Aquinas: "Thomas maintains that it is *contrary to the faith* to hold that human beings' ultimate end is to be found in something other than God. . . . But I hold it to be *a truth of faith* that human beings' true ultimate end is the kingdom of God, not God alone."⁴ Grisez's emphatic assertion, his faith-claim, cannot be dismissed as mere rhetorical hyperbole, coming as it does from so eminent a theologian who has such a wide knowledge of the faith. While not questioning Grisez's adherence to the Church's Magisterial teaching, I agree with Di Blasi that there could have been "greater clarity and detachment in Grisez's use of Scripture and Tradition."⁵ The purpose of this article is to evaluate Grisez's daring faith-claim by focusing on the Catholic Tradition he calls his own.⁶

⁴ Germain Grisez, "The True Ultimate End of Human Beings: the Kingdom, Not God Alone" *Theological Studies* 69 (2008): 38–61 at 61 n. 69. Emphasis added. All in-text citations refer to pages in this article, hereafter "The Kingdom, Not God Alone."

⁵ Di Blasi, "Ultimate End, Human Freedom, and Beatitude," 114 n. 5.

⁶ Through its emphasis on arguments from authority, this present article distinguishes itself from critiques of Grisez published in *The American Journal of Jurisprudence* 46 (2001). Authors of those critiques were interested in showing *why* one conception of man's ultimate end was better than another, but without taking account of reasons suggested by the Magisterium; our interest here is primarily about *what* the Church teaches about man's ultimate end. For example, Di Blasi, cited above, answers Grisez by utilizing a Thomistic conception of "ultimate ends" and the nature of the beatific vision. He mentions tradition without discussing it. Scott MacDonald responds to Grisez and tries to show that rational reflection reveals the coherency and persuasiveness of Thomas's view and the inadequacy of Grisez's. MacDonald notes, "Grisez's first argument—about the New Testament's view of ultimate human fulfillment—raises deep and important hermeneutical and theological issues that deserve probing," but he does not discuss the Scriptural issue and he makes no mention of Magisterial teaching on man's end. See Scott MacDonald, "Aquinas' Ultimate Ends: A Reply to Grisez," 37–49 at 37. Others, such as Peter Simpson in "Grisez on Aristotle and Human Goods," 75–89, mention neither Scripture nor Tradition, since those sources were outside the scope of their inquiry. The most attention that Tradition receives comes from a supporter who assumes that because Grisez "repeatedly and with delight quotes *Gaudium et Spes* . . . Grisez's answer to secularism is the same as Vatican II's." But the author does not analyze Vatican II's view of ultimate ends in the texts cited or in light of Tradition—see Patrick Lee, "Germain Grisez's Christian Humanism," 137–51 at 142. In sum, this present article may help to clarify many of the issues involved in discussions surrounding a properly Catholic understanding of man's ultimate end—not least because it asks the question "What does the Church teach about man's ultimate end and the kingdom of God?"

The authorities to which Grisez appeals in the course of his 2008 article are Sacred Scripture, Benedict XII, Vatican II's *Gaudium et Spes*, and the current *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. One notes that Grisez does not directly invoke any Magisterial authority between 1336 and 1965. Therefore, in addition to the authorities cited by Grisez, we will examine the First Vatican Council and Roman pontiffs from Leo XIII to Benedict XVI. This will give us a broad perspective of more than a century's worth of Magisterial teaching on man's ultimate end. We will see that there are many elements of Catholic tradition in Grisez's position, but these elements do not constitute full continuity with the faith as formally expressed. The authorities unmentioned by Grisez, including Vatican I, make it abundantly evident that the Church has clearly and consistently taught that God alone, in Himself, apart from creatures, is man's ultimate end.⁷

After our extensive look at the Magisterial position on "God alone," we will discuss a crucial distinction between man's supreme ultimate end and his secondary ultimate end. The distinction rests on the difference between the object of man's end (God in Himself) and the subject's attainment of the end (primarily in the beatific vision). We will see that this crucial distinction is maintained, not only by a number of pre-Vatican II popes, but also by the current *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Despite the witness of many authoritative sources, Grisez misunderstands the objective and subjective aspects of human finality. This leads him to misinterpret a key passage in *Gaudium et Spes*, which speaks about the kingdom of God and man's ultimate end. In contrast, our reading of *Gaudium et Spes* reveals that the passage Grisez quotes is in continuity with previous Magisterial teaching; at the same time, its use of the Biblical term "the kingdom of God" must be harmonized with the various ways of speaking about man's ultimate end.

In order to understand how God's kingdom relates to man's objective and subjective ultimate ends, in the final section of the article we consider

⁷ Although Grisez quotes Sacred Scripture as if it agrees perspicaciously and undeniably with his position, it is not at all certain that it does. For example, one may note the following references (all biblical quotations are from the NAB): Ps 16:2, 5, and 11, "I say to the LORD, You are my Lord, you are my only good. . . . Lord, my allotted portion and my cup, you have made my destiny secure. . . . You will show me the path to life, abounding joy in your presence." Ps 145:16, "You open wide your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing." Jn 17:3, "Now this is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ." Rom 11:36, "For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be glory forever." Col 1:16b, "All things were created through him and for him." At the very least, these passages show that Scriptural authority does not necessarily support Grisez's case.

four different interpretations of the kingdom of God: as (1) heaven, (2) the Church, (3) the union of the soul with God, and (4) Jesus Christ himself. Although Scripture and Tradition support each interpretation, the first two are not complete pictures of the kingdom; the most complete understanding of the kingdom is in interpretations (3) and (4). The kingdom as union of the soul with God corresponds with man's secondary, ultimate end (the beatific vision). The kingdom as Jesus Christ, God Incarnate, corresponds with man's supreme ultimate end (God in Himself). Hence, one can agree that the kingdom of God is man's ultimate end—provided that the kingdom is equated with man's primary or secondary ultimate ends: God considered in Himself, or the beatific vision in which man attains God. This leads us to conclude that Grisez's faith-claim is untenable as it stands, while a position more closely allied with Magisterial sources and the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas provides a more complete and convincing account of human finality and the kingdom of God.

Benedict XII and Complete Fulfillment

Our extended look at the Church's teaching begins with Benedict XII's constitution *Benedictus Deus*, promulgated in 1336.⁸ The fullest version of the relevant section reads:

They [separated souls who die in Christ] see the divine essence with an intuitive vision and even face to face, without having any mediating creature as an object of vision, yet the divine essence reveals itself to them simply, openly, and clearly; thus seeing, each has the full enjoyment of the same divine essence, and indeed, by reason of such a vision and enjoyment of their souls, those who are now departed, are truly beatified and have eternal life and rest.⁹

Notice that, while *Benedictus Deus* does not state that men could be fulfilled in some way by creatures, neither does it exclude the possibility that beatitude consists in man's fulfillment by creatures along with God. The document is silent about the role of creatures with respect to human beatitude. Instead, it focuses on teaching that true beatitude and eternal rest are results of union with God in the beatific vision. Grisez correctly notes that the document "leaves it open" for one to agree with his posi-

⁸ Grisez cites the decree four times in "The Kingdom, Not God Alone," on pp. 51, 52, 52 n. 47, and 60, respectively.

⁹ For an excellent summary of the historical context and theological issues at stake in this document, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), esp. 283–91.

tion that the separated soul, though experiencing the beatific vision, has further desires (52, n. 47).

Grisez, for his part, agrees with the teaching that "the beatific vision will fulfill human persons" (59). But Grisez does not mean that man's fulfillment is solely a result of the beatific vision, or that beatitude is unchangeable. Rather, he suggests that beatitude is "not static" but "an ongoing process, in which fulfillment will increase" as more persons enter heaven and after the general Resurrection (52).

On this point, Benedict XII's formulation in *Benedictus Deus* allows for one to agree with Grisez. This is because, as Simon Tugwell shows, the pope privately held a similar view regarding beatitude.¹⁰ Before he was Benedict XII, Cardinal Fournier argued that beatitude is "the condition which is complete with its collection of all goods," so that where some goods were lacking, beatitude is somehow incomplete.¹¹ This led Fournier to conclude that, before the last judgment, "neither men nor angels will be fully blessed. Though they see the essence of God and are blessed . . . because they already have the thing that is most important in beatitude, all the same, they do not have all that they legitimately want or could legitimately want."¹²

Fournier's view of beatitude is remarkably similar to Grisez's position that "our ultimate end should include all the benefits that can be realized by protecting and promoting all the fundamental goods of persons" (56). Since fulfillment involves a number of goods, it logically follows that "each of the fundamental human goods is only one element of human well-being and flourishing, and each realization of any of those elements . . . is only one part of an individual's or community's overall fulfillment" (56). Therefore, Grisez reasons, the beatific vision is only a part of "integral communal fulfillment." By "integral communal fulfillment" Grisez means "divine good together with the well-being and flourishing of created persons in respect to all of their fundamental goods" (57). Two small steps lead to Grisez's faith-claim that we are examining. To begin with, if it is necessary that things other than (but not apart from) God fulfill man,

¹⁰ See Simon Tugwell, *Human Immortality and the Redemption of Death* (Springfield, IL: Templegate, 1990), 145–49. Bynum agrees with this view: "Benedict did not settle the issue . . . of whether there is increase in the intensity of the beatific vision after the Last Judgment, although his personal opinion was that there was." *The Resurrection of the Body*, 285.

¹¹ Quoted in Tugwell, *Human Immortality*, 147.

¹² Ibid. For a detailed discussion of arguments from the East and West regarding the nature of the beatific vision, see H.-F. Dondaine, "L'objet et le 'medium' de la vision béatifique chez les théologiens du XIII^e siècle," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 19 (1952): 60–130.

then God alone (apart from those things) does not fulfill man. In addition, integral communal fulfillment may be equated with the kingdom of God. This leads to Grisez's major conclusion: "God alone is not the ultimate end toward which we direct our lives. That end is integral communal fulfillment in God's kingdom" (58).

If Benedict XII's thought were the sole source of Magisterial teaching on man's ultimate end, there would be plenty of room to agree with Grisez. But Catholic eschatology has developed since 1336. As Tugwell notes, Benedict XII's formal definition was restricted to "the essential minimum that needed official clarification."¹³ It left unresolved a number of questions about beatitude, including what essentially constitutes man's ultimate end. We will see that, in the course of time, especially in the past one hundred and fifty years, the Church has further elaborated on man's ultimate end and developed doctrines which Grisez's theory overlooks.

Vatican I: God Alone is Man's Ultimate End

Any authoritative claim about Catholic teaching on man's ultimate end must take the First Vatican Council (Vatican I) into account. In the course of their deliberations, the fathers of the Council responded to a theological error that threatened to undermine the Catholic understanding of God's nature and a fundamental principle of morality. In doing so, they formulated a definitive teaching about man's ultimate end, one that many of the popes in the last century have affirmed and developed.

A theological and historical explanation of Vatican I's teaching on man's ultimate end was advanced by Philip J. Donnelly in an article published in 1933 in *Theological Studies*.¹⁴ He carefully treated the context of the original discussion, outlining the views to which the Council was responding and quoting at length the *Schema Prosynodale*, official annotations, and the *Relatio* in which the Council fathers discussed the formulations included in the final documents. From these sources, we can see that, in developing a position about man's ultimate end, they were responding to the teaching of Georg Hermes, a priest who taught theology from 1807 until his death in 1831. As influenced by Kant, Hermes developed a system in which a fundamental principle of morality is "the duty of loving and esteeming the dignity of man for its own sake."¹⁵ Hermes' thought on man's ultimate end

¹³ Tugwell, *Human Immortality*, 146.

¹⁴ See Philip J. Donnelly, "The Doctrine of the Vatican Council on the End of Creation," *Theological Studies* 4 (1943): 3–33.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 11. For a thorough discussion of Kant's understanding of man as a willing sovereign in a kingdom of ends, see Patrick Riley, "Kant on Persons as 'Ends in Themselves,'" *The Modern Schoolman* 57 (1979): 45–56.

is summed up in his statement "Since I am a being of reason and, as such, constitute *an end unto myself*, therefore I must be the end of God's will."¹⁶

Hermes and Grisez agree on a crucial argument: both think that, if some created good is an end unto itself, then God alone and in Himself, apart from creatures, cannot be the ultimate end for man.¹⁷ In addition, each firmly holds that at least one created good is an end in its own right. For Hermes, the end is the human person; for Grisez it is "integral communal fulfillment in God's kingdom" (59). From these principles, they conclude that God alone is not man's ultimate end.

There are a number of problems with the thinking of Hermes and Grisez on this point; authorities in Hermes' day recognized one that centered around the nature of a final cause. The problem, formally expressed, is this: An end is a final cause. Whatever is an end moves something as the final cause of the thing. If God's ultimate end in creating were something created (that is, some good in addition to Himself), then God was moved by some thing or things lesser than Himself. But whatever moves is greater than that which is moved. Therefore God (as moved) is less than man's good (which moved Him). In sum, Hermes' theory detracts from divine impassibility and perfection. To correct such errors, the Council of Cologne condemned the Kantian-based system in 1862. This local council taught, in opposition to Hermes: "If the *finis operantis*, or that which impelled God to create, be sought, it should be stated that nothing which is distinct from God could have impelled Him, since, being self-sufficient, He could intend nothing *for Himself*," that is, God cannot intend something distinct from Himself as an ultimate end because He cannot augment His own substantial perfection.¹⁸

The fathers of Vatican I developed the doctrine taught by the Council of Cologne. In the course of their conciliar discussions, the bishops came

¹⁶ Georg Hermes, *Einleitung in die christkatholische Theologie* (Münster, 1831), 479. Quoted in Donnelly, "Vatican Council," 15. Italics added.

¹⁷ There are, of course, many differences between the doctrine and system of George Hermes and that of Germain Grisez. Here we simply focus on a point of intersection between the two thinkers and highlight the fact that part of Grisez's thought on that point had been anticipated by Hermes. As will be seen below, the Church strongly critiqued Hermes on the very point in which he agrees with Grisez. For a fuller exposition of Hermes' overall theology, which was condemned as "semi-rationalism," see Alan Vincelette, *Recent Catholic Philosophy: The Nineteenth Century* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2009), 50–55, 61–67.

¹⁸ Provincial Council of Cologne (1862), quoted in Philip Donnelly, "Saint Thomas and the Ultimate Purpose of Creation," *Theological Studies* 2 (1941): 53–83 at 58. Italics in the original. One notes that, though it was regional, the Council of Cologne received the official *recognitio* of the Holy See.

to recognize that one denigrates God's intrinsic perfection if one holds that creation has an ultimate end other than God's own Goodness. The *Schema* for the third session of Vatican I states that the Council fathers intended to condemn the "damnable heresy" that the world was not created for the sake of God in Himself. The *Annotationes* show that their teaching was meant to "exclude false doctrines about the end of creation," including the idea that "the end in creating was only the happiness and good of the creature."¹⁹ Therefore, on April 24, 1870, the assembled bishops definitely declared that the end of all creation, human and otherwise, was not ultimately human good. Rather, God created all things "in order to manifest His perfection through goods which He communicates to creatures."²⁰ Put negatively, the doctrine runs, "If anyone . . . denies that the world was made for the glory of God: anathema sit."²¹

So far the teaching of Vatican I contradicts the notion that man's ultimate end consists in "integral communal fulfillment."²² The Council teaches that man's ultimate end is God's glory, for that is the ultimate end of all creation. Nevertheless, one could raise an objection. Perhaps the language leaves room for the idea that God's glory is the end of all things along with or in addition to some created good/s, and thus it leaves room for Grisez's position. In other words, one might claim, "I hold that man's ultimate end is God's glory, but I also hold that God's glory includes created goods." Donnelly demonstrates that this position is problematic and unsustainable.²³

The theological background of Vatican I's *Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith* shows that the ecumenical council taught that God *alone* is man's ultimate end. The key teaching in this regard is the statement that we can know by "the natural light of human reason" that "God is the source and end of all things."²⁴ By saying that God, without any qualification, is man's end, the Council means that God in Himself, as perfect,

¹⁹ The Latin original is quoted in Donnelly, "Vatican Council," 21. My translation.

²⁰ Concilium Vaticanum, sessio III, Constitutio *Dei Filius*, caput I, "*De Deo rerum omnium creatore*."

²¹ *Dei Filius*, can. I.5.

²² As has been mentioned, Grisez defines "integral communal fulfillment" as "divine good together with the well-being and flourishing of created persons in respect to all of their fundamental goods" (57). See also his statement, "Integral communal fulfillment—the ultimate end for all created persons—will therefore be realized in the kingdom as a whole" (59).

²³ Donnelly wrote two articles, cited in notes 14 and 18 above, to explain the Catholic position on man's ultimate end and to correct some manualist theologians of his day. Led by Leonard Lessius, many manualists held that the ultimate end of all creation was a created good: the created communication of God's goodness, His extrinsic glory. See Donnelly, "Vatican Council," 3–4, 31–33.

²⁴ *Dei Filius*, caput II, "*De revelatione*."

infinite, and substantial Being, is man's ultimate end.²⁵ In other words, "God Himself, intrinsically and objectively, not merely by extrinsic denomination and metaphorically, is the *finis simpliciter ultimus* of all finite beings."²⁶ Since God in Himself is man's supreme ultimate end, nothing else can be so in the same respect, for God is radically and unalterably distinct from creation.²⁷ It would be pantheistic to claim that man's ultimate end is God's intrinsic being *which includes* something created.²⁸ When the Council taught that God's glory is man's ultimate end, it was speaking of God's *intrinsic* glory, which is not distinct from His being. Therefore, Vatican I taught that man's supreme ultimate end is God in Himself, apart from all creatures—and that is equivalent to saying, "God alone is man's ultimate end."

Leo XIII to Benedict XVI: God Alone Is Man's Ultimate End

Donnelly has shown that Vatican I *verifiably* but only *implicitly* taught that God alone is man's ultimate end; we will now see that, following Vatican I, the Church has *frequently* and *explicitly* taught that God in Himself is the ultimate end of all. In order to show how consistently the Ordinary Magisterium has taught about man's ultimate end, we will take into account some important contributions of Leo XIII, Pius X, Pius XI, Pius XII, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI. Here we will focus on three kinds

²⁵ Here the fathers of Vatican I employed a Scholastic understanding of God: because God is Being itself and the source of all being, He must simultaneously be the highest good and the ultimate end of all things. Jan Aertsen shows that, in St. Thomas's mind, "The perfect is the ultimate. . . . Insofar as something is in act, it is good. There is an identity of 'perfect' with 'end'—'good'—'act'." He references St. Thomas's statement in his *Summa theologiae* (ST) I, q. 5, a. 1, which shows the convertibility of the terms. Jan Aertsen, *Nature and Creature: Thomas Aquinas's Way of Thought* (New York: Brill, 1988), 376, 376 n.166. See also ST I, q. 5, a. 4 and *In II Metaphysicorum*, lectio 4, 317.

²⁶ Donnelly, "Vatican Council," 29–30.

²⁷ *Dei Filius*, cap. I, taught that God is radically other than His creation: "Since He is one, singular, completely simple, and unchangeable spiritual substance, He must be declared to be in reality and in essence, distinct from the world, supremely happy in Himself and from Himself, and inexpressibly loftier than anything besides Himself which either exists or can be imagined." For a discussion of the theoretical foundations and implications of this insight, see Robert Sokolowski's discussion of the "Christian distinction" in his work *The God of Faith and Reason: Foundations of Christian Theology* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), esp. chap. 4, "The Metaphysics of Christian Belief."

²⁸ Donnelly notes, "Whoever would place the supreme end of creation in something outside of God, if he possesses any correct notions of final causality, must logically either place the *summum bonum* [solely] in something created or adhere to some form of pantheism." Donnelly, "Ultimate Purpose of Creation," 72.

of arguments employed by the pontiffs: those which start from God's nature as the perfect, substantial Good; those which start from man's nature as a rational, moral being; and arguments from authority.

From the basis of God's perfect nature, Pope St. Pius X taught, "No matter what the Christian does, even in the realm of temporal goods, he cannot ignore the supernatural good. Rather, according to the dictates of Christian philosophy, he must order all things to the ultimate end, namely, the Highest Good."²⁹ This doctrine, according to Pius X, constitutes one of the "fundamental principles" of faith "that all Catholics have a sacred and inviolable duty, both in private and public life, to obey and firmly adhere to and fearlessly profess."³⁰ Because God's nature never can change, nor will it, Pius XII emphasized that man's ultimate end is morally always the same: "The ordination and direction of man to his ultimate end—which is God—by absolute and necessary law based on the nature and the infinite perfection of God Himself is so solid that not even God could exempt anyone from it."³¹ More recently, Benedict XVI has taught the same truth in the context of speaking about man's hopes. While not denying that created goods are "hopes"—or "ends," since an object of hope is an end to be obtained—the pontiff points out that there is a hierarchy of hopes: "Let us say once again: we need the greater and lesser hopes that keep us going day by day. But these are not enough without the great hope, *which must surpass everything else*. This great hope can only be God, who encompasses the whole of reality and who can bestow upon us what we, by ourselves, cannot attain."³²

Implicit in the papal statements we have just seen is the following kind of reasoning: something is an end insofar as it is good; the ultimate end must be the ultimate good. But the ultimate good can be nothing other than God. Therefore God in Himself must be the ultimate end. Combining the argument based on God's nature with that based on human nature, John Paul II taught in *Veritatis Splendor* that man's true good consists ultimately in God's intrinsic Goodness: "Acting is morally good when the choices of freedom are *in conformity with man's true good* and thus express the voluntary ordering of the person towards his ultimate end: God himself, the supreme good in whom man finds his full and perfect happiness."³³ With respect to the argument based on human nature, John Paul II was following his predecessors, including Pius XI. The lesser-

²⁹ Pius X, *Singulari Quadam*, §3.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, §2.

³¹ Pius XII, *Musicae Sacrae*, §24.

³² Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*, §31.

³³ John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, §72. Italics in the original.

known pope Pius of the twentieth century wrote that he wanted to affirm a "fundamental doctrine" for Catholics, one that "may be gathered from reason and Faith." The argument from faith, or authority, is based on a careful reading of Vatican I and Pius XI's predecessors, including Leo XIII, who wrote in his great social encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*: "All men are children of the same common Father, who is God . . . all have alike the same last end, which is God Himself, who alone can make either men or angels absolutely and perfectly happy."³⁴ Pius XI based an argument from reason on the dignity and nature of man's "spiritual and immortal soul," united naturally to a body. Because of his nature, Pius XI wrote, man has "a value far surpassing that of the vast inanimate cosmos. *God alone is his last end, in this life and the next.*"³⁵ One would be hard-pressed to find a more explicit rejection of Grisez's thesis than this.

In light of our study thus far, we can come to a few conclusions about man's ultimate end. First, we have found that Grisez's assertion, "Strictly speaking, God alone is not the ultimate end toward which we should direct our lives" is opposed to various doctrines that the Magisterium has incontrovertibly taught. More than this, we have come to a positive truth: the Church explicitly and consistently teaches that God in Himself and apart from creatures (that is, God alone) is man's ultimate end. Donnelly formulated the Catholic position well when he said, "The end ultimately intended by God and the supreme *finis operis* are identical, namely, the

³⁴ Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, §25. Leo XIII taught many times in different contexts that God in Himself is man's ultimate end. We find another example in his encyclical on human freedom, *Libertas Praestantissimum*, §20, where he wrote, "We are ever in the power of God, are ever guided by His will and providence, and, having come forth from Him, must return to Him. . . . Moral virtue is concerned with those things which lead to God as man's supreme and ultimate good."

³⁵ Pius XI, *Divini Redemptoris*, §27. Emphasis added. The last sentence of the English translation follows closely the official French and Spanish (respectively): "En cette vie et dans l'autre, l'homme n'a qu'un Dieu pour fin dernière"; "Dios es el último fin exclusivo del hombre en la vida presente y en la vida eternal." The original Latin contains the same teaching, albeit with more nuance: "Ita reapse « microcosmos » ex veterum scriptorum sententia ea de causa vocari potest, quod inanimarum immensitatem rerum longissime evincit ac superat. Non modo in hac mortali vita, sed in perpetuo etiam mansura supremus ei finis est unice Deus; et cum per sanctitatis effectricem gratiam ad fili Dei dignitatem evectus sit, in mystico Iesu Christi corpore cum divino Regno coniungitur." A literal translation of this reads: "He [man] is truly a 'microcosm,' as he was able to be called accurately in the writings of the ancients, so that he subdues and surpasses the very great immensity of inanimate things. Not only in this life, but also destined to remain as such forever, God alone is his [man's] supreme final end; and through the efficacious grace of sanctity he is raised to the dignity of a son of God, conjoined with the kingdom of God in the mystical body of Christ."

Divine intrinsic goodness.”³⁶ In other words, the objective end of the work of creation and God’s own primary intention are the same: God in Himself. Only the Supreme Good can constitute the *finis simpliciter ultimus* of all creation, including man.³⁷ Divine simplicity and perfection necessitate a strict dichotomy of being: the Creator on one side, all created goods on the other.³⁸ Consequently, if man’s ultimate end were to include created goods, it could not be in a way that contradicts God’s primacy as the absolute end.

Created Goods and Ultimate Ends

It is as yet unclear, given the Magisterial teaching discussed above, precisely what role created goods have with respect to human finality. We have seen that they cannot be man’s supreme ultimate end. Nevertheless, we should not despise created goods just because they are not the pinnacle of man’s destiny. Grisez recognizes that Creator and creation must always remain distinct, and his theory holds that both are man’s end in some way (see 61). It is possible that a created good is man’s ultimate end in some kind of secondary way. To better understand the Church’s position, and to grasp a key distinction between primary and secondary aspects of man’s ultimate end, we will turn to the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas. His insights will be crucial for evaluating Grisez’s claims about what is essential to man’s ultimate end.

Grisez notes Thomas’s position that, because of a difference between an *object* which is obtained and the *attainment* of that object, there must be a primary aspect of man’s ultimate end (God Himself) as well as a secondary aspect (see 39 and 43). Considering the object first, Thomas reasoned, “If, therefore, we speak of man’s last end as of the thing which is the end, thus all other things concur in man’s last end, since God is the last end of man and of all other things.” We have seen that Vatican I and subsequent Roman pontiffs have confirmed Thomas’s teaching as a part of Catholic faith. Considering the attainment of the object, Thomas continues, “If, however, we speak of man’s last end, as of the acquisition [or attainment] of the end, then irrational creatures do not concur with man in this end. For man and other rational creatures attain to their last end by knowing and loving God: this is not possible to other creatures.”³⁹

³⁶ Donnelly, “Ultimate Purpose of Creation,” 83.

³⁷ One could also say that “God’s glory” is man’s supreme ultimate end, for His *intrinsic* glory is not something other than His very being.

³⁸ See note 27 above.

³⁹ ST I–II, q. 1, a. 8, c. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. by Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger, 1947). All quotations of the

In a later article, Thomas explains that the attainment is distinct from the object and is ordered to it: "For, since the end, as stated above [i.e., our previous citation], signifies sometimes the thing itself, and sometimes the attainment or possession of that thing (thus the miser's end is either money or the possession of it); it is evident that, simply speaking, the last end is the thing itself."⁴⁰ Given that the attainment of God is distinct from God Himself, it follows that the attainment is the human person's participation in God.⁴¹ In consequence, man has a primary, objective end (God in Himself), and a secondary, subjective end (human attainment of God). We have already discussed the Church's doctrine that God is man's supreme ultimate objective end. Our task, then, is to determine the character of man's secondary, subjective end.⁴²

We saw above that Grisez holds man's ultimate end to be "integral communal fulfillment in God's kingdom," that is, obtaining "divine good together with the well-being and flourishing of created persons in respect to all of their fundamental goods" (59, 57). It is unclear whether, in saying that "divine good" is part of human fulfillment, Grisez means divine good in itself—that is, God's very being—or whether he is referring to something else. On the one hand, it could seem that Grisez is referring to God's very being when he says that "God alone" is not man's ultimate end. As we have seen, the words have traditionally been interpreted as indicating God insofar as He is distinct from creation, that is, God's intrinsic being. But if Grisez meant this, there would be manifest tensions with Catholic Tradition. This leads us to consider the alternative. Perhaps Grisez is *not* speaking about God's very being. In his list of six points essential to Thomas's "treatise on beatitude," Grisez is silent about Thomas's understanding that God in Himself is the only supreme and substantial Good because of His intrinsic being.⁴³ Grisez considers

Summa theologiae (ST) are from this translation unless otherwise noted. Grisez references the same passage on p. 39, n. 4 in "The Kingdom, Not God Alone."

⁴⁰ ST I-II, q. 16, a. 3, c.

⁴¹ See Thomas's statement "Each good thing that is not its [own] goodness is called good by participation. . . . We must, therefore, reach some first good, that is not by participation good through an order toward some other good, but is good through its own essence. This is God." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles, Book One: God*, trans. Anton C. Pegis (New York: Image, 1955), chap. 38, p. 153.

⁴² By speaking of man's "subjective" end, I do not mean that his end is something derived from feelings, ideals, or desires. Rather, I mean man's end insofar as he is an acting subject, a rational person with an end specific to his nature.

⁴³ See Grisez's discussion of the six points on pp. 38–40 in "The Kingdom, Not God Alone." In points (4) and (5), Grisez quotes St. Thomas's position that the "divine goodness" is man's ultimate end and that only the universal good can satisfy man's desires (referencing ST I-II, q. 2, a. 8, cc.). Surprisingly, Grisez does

“divine goodness” only insofar as it is the source of good things for us; he therefore focuses on trying to demonstrate that beatitude is not as fulfilling as Thomas argues it is.⁴⁴ But Grisez does not discuss *why* Thomas thinks beatitude is fulfilling, namely, because it focuses on God, the supremely Good object.⁴⁵ Grisez’s silence inclines one to conclude that he does not mean to discuss God in Himself.

So is Grisez speaking about God in Himself or not? It is unclear. Grisez’s understanding of the term “divine good” is ambiguous; he could mean (a) God as the supremely good object who beatifies man, or (b) man’s beatific attainment of God. Evidence suggests that Grisez conflates these two ends of man. In the body of the article, Grisez claims that “harmony with God” is not the sole object of human hope or fulfillment (59–60). But he concludes his article by declaring that “God alone” is not the sole object of human hope. He is arguing that, since harmony with God is not the sole object of human hope, man’s primary ultimate end is therefore not God in Himself.⁴⁶ This confuses the *attainment* of fulfillment with the *object* of fulfillment. Grisez, then, is making a category mistake.

not connect this position to St. Thomas’s understanding that God in Himself is the universal and ultimate Good.

⁴⁴ Grisez describes two ways in which we can “intend divine goodness” without revelation: insofar as God gives us good things, and insofar we can cooperate with God’s plan for ourselves and the common good. He does not mention intending God in Himself because He is the substantial Good. See “The Kingdom, Not God Alone,” 55.

⁴⁵ The Scholastic use of the word “object” here and throughout this article is not meant to depersonalize God but to indicate that which actuates the potential within a subject. For example, a visible object, when seen, actuates an animal’s power of sight. St. Robert Bellarmine makes useful remarks regarding God as the object of man’s desire: “Delight which comes from knowledge requires three things—power, a sensible object suitable to that power, and an union of the object with this power. . . . In proportion as the power is capable of knowledge, and the object more noble, and the union more intimate, so much the greater pleasure is derived. But no one can doubt but that the mind is much more pure and noble, and more capable of knowledge than the exterior senses. Now, all must admit that God is the highest and most noble object, placed not only above all objects of sense, but also above those of the mind, being infinite Goodness itself. But it is also equally certain, that a union of the mind with God by a clear vision is so intimate that the essence of God will penetrate the soul herself will be transformed into God as if she were plunged into a great sea. Who, therefore, can imagine the greatness of this joy? The sweetness of this embrace from an infinite Good, from a Spouse of infinite beauty?” Robert Bellarmine, *The Kingdom of God, or, the Eternal Happiness of the Saints*, trans. John Dalton (London: Thomas Richardson and Son, 1847), 157–58.

⁴⁶ We will see below that at least once Grisez equates “harmony with God” and the beatific vision.

We can more easily see that Grisez has confused the secondary, subjective end for the supreme ultimate objective end, by analyzing a key statement of his. "Perfect life with the Holy Trinity," Grisez asserts, "essentially includes communion of life and love not only with the Trinity, but with Mary, the angels, and all the blessed" (52, emphasis added).⁴⁷ By saying "essentially," Grisez is denying that man's ultimate end is God's perfect Being. Without an essence, a thing as such does not really exist, though parts which could compose it may exist separately. If we have only frosting, eggs, and flour, we do not yet have a complete cake. Similarly, according to Grisez, if we have only the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we do not have complete human fulfillment, for God's essence—inseparable from the Persons—is not the sum of man's end. For Grisez, Mary and other saints are essential to human beings' perfect life with the Holy Trinity. It follows that God in Himself is only an ingredient, a *sine qua non*, of man's fulfillment. The Holy Trinity, as only one part among others, cannot constitute the whole of man's fulfillment. Grisez admits that "a whole is greater than its parts" (56). Therefore, the whole of man's fulfillment must be greater than the Holy Trinity. Now when one thing is greater than another, it means that the first thing has what the second lacks. Since the Holy Trinity does not constitute man's complete fulfillment, it must be lacking in some perfection. To put the argument another way, Grisez's assertion means that if Mary and other saints are not present in heaven, then part of the essence of human fulfillment with the Holy Trinity will not be experienced. The Holy Trinity alone cannot constitute essential human fulfillment. This implies that these created goods have some perfection that God lacks; in this line of thinking, God is imperfect.⁴⁸

Some might object that Grisez does not mean to say that God is imperfect. Granted that he does not intend to do this, we must still pay attention

⁴⁷ Grisez here is interpreting the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) §1024 as if it teaches that Mary, etc., are "essential" to heaven—a word that is not in the original text. A more complete discussion of CCC §1024 and the position of the *Catechism* is given below.

⁴⁸ St. John of the Cross radically opposes this way of thinking; he says with respect to man's ultimate desires, "Those who love something together with God undoubtedly make little of God," for God is infinitely and substantially Good while created things are only finitely good by participation. He goes on to say, "It is well known from experience that when the will is attached to an object [as an ultimate end], it esteems that object higher than any other, even though another, not as pleasing, may deserve higher admiration. . . . Since nothing equals God, those who love and are attached to something along with God [in the same respect] offend him exceedingly." John of the Cross, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, I, 5.4–5 in *The Collected Works of John of the Cross*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1991), 128–29.

to the direct implications of his language. If Grisez's affirmations about created goods mean that human fulfillment consists essentially in God *along with* created goods that are *equally* essential, then we are revisited with the problem that God in Himself is somehow insufficient to be the final purpose of human existence. If the affirmations mean that man's ultimate end consists *primarily* in God alone but *consequently* in created goods subordinated to God as secondary ends, then Grisez's formulation that "God alone" is not man's ultimate end undermines his intention.

In addition to misconstruing how God alone is man's supreme ultimate end, Grisez's language also misinterprets man's secondary ends. To grasp how this is the case, we can first notice that Grisez equates the beatific vision with "harmony with God." In discussing the beatific vision, Grisez states that it is "entirely a gift of the Father, Son, and Spirit—a sharing, somehow, in their own joy. Nevertheless," he continues, "the beatific vision will fulfill human persons. Integral communal fulfillment includes human persons' harmony with God, a fundamental good of human persons that can be realized less and more" (59–60). The smooth transition from one concept to another indicates that Grisez equates the two.

Grisez's claim that the beatific vision (or harmony with God) is a fulfilling fundamental good sounds innocuous enough. But it must be read in light of his earlier statement, "the fundamental goods of human beings [include]: life, including health and bodily integrity; skillful work and play; knowledge and esthetic experience; harmony with God; harmony among human beings . . . and marriage, including parenthood" (54).⁴⁹ Surprisingly, Grisez does not say that harmony with God is a higher basic good than others. As he wrote in an earlier article, "they are incommensurable: no basic good considered precisely as such can be meaningfully said to be better than another"; for him this means there is no hierarchy among the basic human goods in themselves. He explains further on that, though there is a moral order "involving the basic human goods, nevertheless, [there] is not a hierarchy among them. . . . The principle of this order is a

⁴⁹ To defend his claim that marriage is found in heaven, Grisez points his readers to his work *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol. 2, *Living a Christian Life* (Quincy, IL: Franciscan, 1993), 607–9. In contrast to Grisez's view of marriage in heaven, Bernard Lonergan argues that marriage is immediately directed to procreation and the upbuilding of a family but ultimately has a "dispositive upward tendency" which subordinates it to the beatific vision as its end. This obviates the role of marriage once heaven is reached. Bernard Lonergan, "Finality, Love, Marriage" in *The Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan vol. 4, Collection*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 17–52 at 29.

moral truth—the integral directiveness of practical knowledge—not the primacy of any one of the basic goods. Thus, none of these is so absolutely prior that it prevails in every morally good choice.”⁵⁰ Man's fulfillment must therefore be an undifferentiated combination of Creator and creature. Thus, harmony with God is not more ultimate as an end: it is one good that fulfills man along with other goods, such as play and marriage. Such a view takes insufficient account of Pius XII's teaching that the beatific vision is the full flowering of the indwelling of the Holy Trinity in the righteous soul. Pius XII explains that God dwells in the souls of the just “in a way that lies beyond human comprehension, and in a unique and very intimate manner which transcends all created nature.”⁵¹

⁵⁰ Germain Grisez et al., “Practical Principles, Moral Truth, and Ultimate Ends,” *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 32 (1987): 99–151 at 110 and 139. Grisez implicitly endorses this view in his 2008 article, 54 n. 52. My reading of Grisez is borne out by other scholars who have treated similar questions. James Hanink discusses “Grisez's claim that the basic goods are incommensurable. To claim that they are such,” says Hanink, “is to claim that there is no scale of value common to them by which they can be ranked in a hierarchy of worth.” Recognizing serious problems in a moral system that does not rank goods, Hanink asserts that “Grisez would surely agree” that there must be a hierarchy among the basic goods. To support his assertion, Hanink cites the *Summa theologiae* I–II, q. 94, a. 2, showing that it is reasonable to hold that a hierarchy of basic goods exists. But this overlooks Hanink's own reading of Grisez and begs the question: does Grisez really agree with Aquinas on this point? See James Hanink, “A Theory of Basic Goods: Structure and Hierarchy,” *The Thomist* 52 (1988): 221–45 at 233 and 236. Jean Porter's read, by contrast with Hanink's, is less irenic. She summarizes Grisez's position on basic human goods, stating that he holds that, since they are incommensurable, there can be no hierarchy among the basic goods. Further, she notes that this is a “serious difficulty” for Grisez's theory. See Jean Porter, “Basic Goods and the Human Good in Recent Catholic Moral Theology,” *The Thomist* 57 (1993): 27–49 at 31–32 and 46. Finally, Peter Simpson exposed the root issues at stake in Grisez's systematic rejection of a hierarchy among basic goods. He ably demonstrates the deficiencies and incoherencies in Grisez's arguments. See Peter Simpson, “Grisez on Aristotle and Human Goods,” *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 46 (2001): 75–89.

⁵¹ After saying this, the pope approvingly quotes Leo XIII's explanation of the beatific vision (see n. 63 below) and continues, “In that celestial vision it will be granted to the eyes of the human mind strengthened by the light of glory, to contemplate the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in an utterly ineffable manner, to assist throughout eternity at the processions of the Divine Persons, and to rejoice with a happiness like to that with which the holy and undivided Trinity is happy.” Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, §§79, 80. Additionally, see the *Roman Catechism*, also known as the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*: “Solid happiness, which we may designate by the common appellation, *essential*, consists in the vision of God, and the enjoyment of His beauty who is the source and principle of all goodness of perfection. . . . For the blessed always see God present and by this greatest and most exalted of gifts, being made *partakers of the divine nature*, they enjoy true and solid happiness. . . . Supreme

Grisez's position on ends is greatly influenced by his aversion to hierarchies of goods, an aversion foreign to Magisterial teaching and classic theology. Grisez reasonably wants to give created goods their rightful place in human life, but he does so by rejecting a traditional way of approaching such goods. For example, Pius XI explained that God in Himself is man's ultimate end, for the righteous, "in ascending through them [i.e., created goods], as it were by steps, shall attain the final end of all things, that is God—to Himself and to us, the supreme and inexhaustible Good."⁵² In saying that man ascends to God step-wise through created goods, the pope recalls a venerable tradition that recognizes created goods as ends ordered to one another and ultimately ordered to God.⁵³ Grisez argues that man has other ends or desires in addition to the beatific vision (see 46–47), but he does not consider that lower ends may be subordinated to and find their fulfillment in the highest end. According to the traditional view, just as each rung on a ladder is either higher or lower than another, depending on its distance from the summit, so created goods/ends are greater or lesser with respect to their distance from the ultimate end, their goal—God the perfect Good.⁵⁴ This does not necessitate that we equate created goods other than the beatific vision with mere means, to be surpassed and forgotten. Rather,

and absolute happiness, which we call essential, consists in the possession of God, for what can he lack to consummate his happiness who possesses the God of all goodness and perfection?" *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, trans. Charles J. Callan and John A. McHugh (Rockford, IL: TAN, 1982, repr. 1923 ed.) part I, art. XII, pp. 136, 137, 138.

⁵² Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, §43.

⁵³ The idea that a hierarchy of goods leads to God has been held by diverse thinkers. Plato's *Symposium*, 209e–212c is a *locus classicus*. Perhaps the best-known Christian treatise on the subject is St. Bonaventure's *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*. St. Robert Bellarmine treated similar insights in his work *The Mind's Ascent to God by the Ladder of Created Things*. More recently, Pope Benedict XVI noted this theme in the thought of St. John Chrysostom. See Benedict XVI, *Church Fathers: From Clement of Rome to Augustine* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 104–5.

⁵⁴ In Thomas's theology, the natural inequality of things undergirds the hierarchy of ends: see *ST* I, q. 47, a. 2, c. Thomas attributes the inequality to God's wisdom, for a variety and hierarchy of goods displays God's goodness in manifold ways. The natural hierarchy of goods corresponds to an order in the supernatural virtue of charity (see *ST* II–II, q. 26, a. 1, ad 2). In considering charity, Thomas lists objects that one loves in charity; the order is founded on one's relation to them (from highest to lowest): the Holy Trinity, one's soul, the soul of one's neighbor, one's body. Though Thomas's questions on the order of charity do not address every "basic human good," Thomas would insist that each good has a place within the ordered universe. The order of charity, which places God as the ultimate end who is loved above all things, begins on earth, encompasses all, and persists in heaven (see *ST* II–II, q. 26, a. 13).

we value those created goods as *secondary* ends: though they are not ultimate ends, they have intrinsic value and finality while also leading to a good greater than themselves.⁵⁵

As a summary of how created goods relate to man's ultimate end, Donnelly's formulation is quite apt: "The created communication of Divine goodness is indeed the ultimate end of all creatures in the finite order (*finis-quo*); but it is not the absolutely last end (*finis-qui*)."⁵⁶ That is, the beatific vision, the formal subjective aspect of the end, the "created participation of the Divine goodness," is man's secondary, ultimate end.⁵⁷ Each term in the previous sentence is meaningful. Man's *finis-quo* is "formal" because, in the Thomistic view, one thing participates in another thing by means of a form. For example, a person participates in the love of two of his friends for each other when he grasps the form, or the meaning, of their love and espouses it with his own love. Analogously, man will participate in God's inner life by a formal aspect suited to human nature—God will be united with man's intellect through the *lumen gloriae* which will bear fruit in charity.⁵⁸ Man's *finis-quo* is "subjective" because it is man's end from the point of view of the intellective and volitional human subject who acts to reach his goal. It is a "secondary" end because it is subordinated to God in Himself, but it is "ultimate" because there is nothing in the created order above it. In sum, while the supreme ultimate objective end of all things is God alone, the secondary ultimate subjective end of man is the attainment of God in the beatific vision.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Bernard Lonergan explained well the difference between mere means and secondary ends—*ea quae ad finem sunt*—saying: "Means are willed, not at all for their own sake, but only for the sake of the end. On the other hand, what is loved in love's self-expression is loved in itself though as a secondary object and from a superabundance of love towards the primary object which is imitated or reproduced." God wills the created order out a superabundance of His love; similarly, Christian charity, which is primarily directed to God, has a number of secondary objects. "Hence," Lonergan concludes, "it is gravely mistaken to term means and instrument whatever is not the primary end." Lonergan, "Finality, Love, Marriage," at 34–35 n. 60.

⁵⁶ Donnelly, "Ultimate Purpose of Creation," 83.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁵⁸ See *ST I*, q. 12, aa. 5–6.

⁵⁹ Alice von Hildebrand helpfully addresses the relation between man's primary and secondary ends, saying, "According to the Church's doctrine, the glorification of God is man's primary end; beatitude is our secondary end, and *secondary not only in order of time, but also in the order of importance*." She elaborates: "God should be loved for His own sake because 'He alone is Holy, He alone is the Lord, He alone is the most High,' but the sublimity of this very love brings in its train what we call 'beatitude.'" Alice von Hildebrand, "Aristotle the Philosopher," *Logos* 8:3 (2005): 112–22 at 120–21 and 122. Emphasis in the original.

Our consideration of the beatific vision raises the question about what role the body plays in man's beatitude. This question is of great importance to Grisez and demands its own study; by briefly addressing it, we may better see the connection between the primary and secondary ends of man. Grisez is correct that man hopes for the resurrection of the body, a created good, an end that is a part of man's ultimate end.⁶⁰ But, as we have seen, it would be incorrect to claim that the resurrection of the body is the *primary* aspect of man's supreme ultimate end; it would also be incorrect to say that it is the most important *secondary* aspect of man's ultimate end. Having a body in the resurrection cannot be the highest secondary end of man, for knowing and loving God is intrinsically greater than having a body.⁶¹ In this vein, Leo XIII taught, "To contemplate God, and to tend to Him, is the supreme law of the life of man." This is because our specific nature as a rational and volitional creature necessitates that only by knowledge and love of God can we reach him as persons: "For, indeed, God is the first and supreme truth, and the mind alone feeds on truth," and similarly, "God is perfect holiness and the sovereign good, to which only the will can desire and attain."⁶² Because the intellect and the will, the only human faculties capable of directly attaining God, are spiritual, they can be perfected without the body in heaven. Thus, the saints, without bodies, already know and love God and thus are fulfilling the "supreme law of the life of man"—living in divine beatitude.⁶³ One could

⁶⁰ See Grisez's discussion on pp. 49–53 in "The Kingdom, Not God Alone."

⁶¹ Pius XII, *Miranda Prosus*, §22: "Since God is the Supreme Good, He continually bestows His gifts upon men. . . . Some of these gifts look to the spirit; others to the conduct of earthly life. These latter gifts are clearly subject to the former, in much the same way that the body should be subject to the soul with which, before He communicates Himself by the beatific vision, God is joined by that faith and love." The pope here agrees with St. Thomas's position that the goods of the body are ordained to the goods of the soul. See *ST* I–II, q. 2, a. 5; *ST* II–II, q. 25, a. 5, ad 2; and *ST* II–II, q. 18, a. 2, ad 4: "Since hope is a theological virtue having God for its object, its principal object is the glory of the soul, which consists in the enjoyment of God, and not the glory of the body. Moreover . . . the glory of the body is a very small thing as compared with the glory of the soul . . . one who has the glory of the soul has already the sufficient cause of the glory of the body."

⁶² Leo XIII, *Sapientiae Christiani*, §1.

⁶³ Leo XIII's profound understanding of the beatific vision is revealed in his statement "God by grace resides in the just soul as in a temple, in a most intimate and peculiar manner. From this proceeds that union of affection by which the soul adheres most closely to God, more so than the friend is united to his most loving and beloved friend, and enjoys God in all fullness and sweetness. Now this wonderful union, which is properly called 'indwelling,' differing only in degree or state from that with which God beatifies the saints in heaven . . . is most certainly produced by the presence of the whole Blessed Trinity." Leo XIII, *Divinum Illud Munus*, §9.

object that if the soul is perfectly happy, then the resurrection is superfluous, which is contrary to faith. In reply, we can say that the resurrection is not superfluous; it is a gratuitous restoration of nature.

The *Catechism* on Man's Ultimate End

In addition to the witness of Leo XIII and Pius XII, we find the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaching that man's highest secondary, subjective end is the beatific vision—which is a higher good than other created goods. In §1045, the *Catechism* states, “The beatific vision, in which God opens himself in an inexhaustible way to the elect, will be the ever-flowing well-spring of happiness, peace, and mutual communion.”⁶⁴ Like a mountain spring that begins from on high and waters the plains below it, the beatific vision constitutes the “ever-flowing well-spring” of happiness; it resides at the summit of secondary ends and it pours out its fullness onto the other goods that man enjoys in heaven, such as the body. Although entering into the glory of Christ through the beatific vision is distinct from other goods that we will also receive in heaven, those goods are somehow contained within and subordinated to it.⁶⁵

Despite the clarity of the *Catechism's* teaching here, Grisez reads the document as if it supports his position. Without taking account of CCC §1045, Grisez claims that the *Catechism* supports his view that “perfect life with the Holy Trinity essentially includes communion of life and love not only with the Trinity but with Mary, the angels, and all the blessed” (52). His proof-text is CCC §1024: “This perfect life with the Most Holy Trinity—this communion of life and love with the Trinity, with the Virgin Mary, the angels and all the blessed—is called ‘heaven.’”⁶⁶

A more careful reading of the *Catechism* demonstrates that Grisez's claim could be more nuanced. First, the language of §1024 reveals his claim to be a non sequitur: the *Catechism* here is silent about what *essentially* constitutes life with the Blessed Trinity. In addition, Grisez's interpretation of §1024 is nowhere affirmed in the *Catechism*. Rather, the *Catechism* clearly teaches that the entire providential order of creation, including man, aims at God as its ultimate end. For example, the *Catechism*

⁶⁴ CCC, §1045.

⁶⁵ St. Thomas said, “the soul desires to enjoy God in such a way that the enjoyment also may overflow into the body, as far as possible” *ST* I-II, q. 4, a. 5., ad 4. For a thorough discussion, see Montague Brown, “Aquinas on the Resurrection of the Body,” *The Thomist* 56 (1992): 165–207. Also helpful is Carlo Leget, *Living with God: Thomas Aquinas on the Relation Between Life on Earth and ‘Life’ after Death* (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), esp. 217–29.

⁶⁶ CCC, §1024.

states that “the ultimate end of the whole divine economy is the entry of God’s creatures into the perfect unity of the Blessed Trinity”; here we should understand that the object of beatitude is the Blessed Trinity in itself, while *entry* into the Blessed Trinity—participation in God’s life—is the way the object is attained by humans.⁶⁷ This truth is echoed in another passage: “God created the world for the sake of communion with his divine life.”⁶⁸ Being created for communion with divine life means being made to participate in the life of God Himself with no mediating creature, as Benedict XII taught. This should dispel any doubt about the *quid sit* of man’s ultimate end, for God’s beatitude in itself cannot essentially involve any creatures: “The Beatitudes reveal the goal of human existence, the ultimate end of human acts: God calls us to his own beatitude.”⁶⁹ The beatitude of God is nothing less than the uncreated *perichoresis*, the mutual indwelling, of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—a beatitude that existed before all creation. Hence, the object of man’s end cannot essentially involve any created good as such.

“Beatitude,” the *Catechism* teaches, “makes us ‘partakers of the divine nature’ and of eternal life. With beatitude, man enters into the glory of Christ and into the joy of the Trinitarian life.”⁷⁰ The *Catechism* can hardly be clearer that God alone is man’s ultimate end when it continues, “The beatitude we are promised . . . invites us to purify our hearts of bad instincts and to seek the love of God above all else. It teaches us that true happiness is not found in riches or well-being . . . or indeed in any creature, but *in God alone*, the source of every good and of all love.”⁷¹ Recognizing that God in Himself and apart from creatures is his ultimate end, man gains a new perspective on created goods, a perspective emphasized by St. John of the Cross and ascetic saints through the ages: “Desire for true happiness frees man from his immoderate attachment to the goods of this world so that he can find his fulfillment in the vision and beatitude of God.” Quoting St. Gregory of Nyssa, the *Catechism* concludes, “Whoever sees God has obtained all the goods of which he can conceive.”⁷²

***Gaudium et Spes* on Man’s Ultimate End**

At this point the reader may have noticed a glaring omission in our argument from Magisterial authority: we have not mentioned the Second

⁶⁷ CCC, §260.

⁶⁸ CCC, §760.

⁶⁹ CCC, §1719.

⁷⁰ CCC, §1721.

⁷¹ CCC, §1723. Emphasis added.

⁷² CCC, §2548.

Vatican Council. The teachings of Vatican II, especially those found in *Gaudium et Spes* (GS), are important not only in themselves but also because Grisez believes that they support his position. Our purpose then, is to respond to Grisez's claim by carefully reading the text he cites; this will provide an introduction to understanding the Church's teaching on the kingdom of God.⁷³

Grisez claims that *Gaudium et Spes* supports his position that human beings' true ultimate end consists, not in "God alone," but in "integral communal fulfillment in God's kingdom" (58–59). To support his position, Grisez references GS §39. In order to give full weight to his argument from authority, we will reproduce what he quoted, including the reference to the document's footnote 23:

Hence, while earthly progress must be carefully distinguished from the growth of Christ's kingdom, to the extent that the former can contribute to the better ordering of human society, it is of vital concern to the Kingdom of God.[23]

For after we have obeyed the Lord, and in His Spirit nurtured on earth the values of human dignity, brotherhood and freedom, and indeed all the good fruits of our nature and enterprise, we will find them again, but freed of stain, burnished and transfigured, when Christ hands over to the Father: "a kingdom eternal and universal, a kingdom of truth and life, of holiness and grace, of justice, love and peace." On this earth the kingdom is present in mystery even now; with the Lord's coming, however, it will be consummated.

Let us consider three arguments which militate against Grisez's interpretation of GS §39. These arguments can be seen as concentric circles, which go from more general truths to those that more specifically address Grisez's argument.

The first argument rests upon a basic understanding of Catholic tradition. A hermeneutic of continuity proposes that Vatican II was not denying or contradicting earlier definitive teachings, as Grisez's interpretation

⁷³ Other scholars hold that the kingdom of God is central to man's ultimate end. Without citing Grisez, Peter F. Ryan comes to a remarkably similar conclusion regarding man's ultimate end, arguing that St. Thomas Aquinas was mistaken in saying that "the restless heart seeks a perfect fulfillment that can be found *exclusively* in God." Ryan argues that, instead of focusing on God alone, Christians "must be taught and encouraged to hope for fulfillment in God's kingdom," and suggests that this "calls for a rich concept of the heavenly kingdom." Peter F. Ryan, "Must the Acting Person Have a Single End?" *Gregorianum* 82, 2 (2001): 325–56 at 356. Insofar as the following discussion proposes an account of the kingdom of God, it can be seen as one attempt to answer Ryan's call.

implies it does. Benedict XVI's reading of *Populorum Progressio* can be applied to our understanding of *Gaudium et Spes*: "The correct viewpoint, then, is that of the *Tradition of the apostolic faith*, a patrimony both ancient and new, outside of which [the text at hand] would be a document without roots."⁷⁴ Hence, the contents of *Gaudium et Spes* can be adequately interpreted only in light of the teachings of ecumenical councils and popes who have discussed this issue. As we have seen, Vatican I, Leo XII, Pius XI, and their successors unequivocally teach that God in Himself, alone and apart from creatures, is man's ultimate end. At the same time, one can point out that Vatican II called attention to those aspects of man's ultimate end which previously had been understated. Whereas earlier modern popes were wary of the dangers of emphasizing created goods as ends, Vatican II, especially *Gaudium et Spes*, was optimistic about the advantages of such an emphasis. These distinct approaches make, not a contradiction, but a difference in emphasis.⁷⁵

The next argument is based upon the hermeneutical principle that a statement must be interpreted in its proper context. According to its context within the document as a whole, GS §39 should be seen in light of GS §24, which teaches (in obvious continuity with earlier tradition), "All, in fact, are destined to the very same end, namely God himself, since they have been created in the likeness of God." In addition, we should not overlook the fact that footnote 23 of GS §39 refers to Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno*, which distinguishes between earthly and heavenly progress. As quoted above, the pope writes elsewhere in the encyclical, "We, in ascending through them [i.e., created goods], as it were by steps, shall attain the final end of all things, that is God, to Himself and to us, the supreme and inexhaustible Good."⁷⁶ This shows that one cannot accurately understand GS §39 to teach that God in Himself is not man's ultimate end.

The final argument proceeds from a close examination of the text itself. Even granted that, in the words of Grisez, GS §39 implies that created goods will "contribute to the fulfillment of those who find them there again," the document is simply stating that the blessed will find

⁷⁴ Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, §10. Emphasis in the original.

⁷⁵ Benedict XVI insisted, "It is not a case of two typologies of . . . doctrine, one pre-conciliar and one post-conciliar, differing from one another: on the contrary, there is a *single teaching, consistent and at the same time ever new*. It is one thing to draw attention to the particular characteristics of one Encyclical or another, of the teaching of one Pope or another, but quite another to lose sight of the coherence of the overall doctrinal *corpus*." Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, §12. Emphases in the original.

⁷⁶ Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, §43.

created goods in heaven (58). The document here is silent about precisely what role created goods have in man's essential fulfillment. It is also silent here about whether or not God *alone* is man's ultimate end; it did not mean to address the issue directly. In sum, Grisez's interpretation of *Gaudium et Spes*, §39 is more eisegesis than exegesis.

It is notable that Grisez did not cite a passage in *Gaudium et Spes* which, at first glance, bolsters his claim. The passage, §45, says: "The Church has a single intention: that God's kingdom may come, and that the salvation of the whole human race may come to pass." Although this passage seems to support strongly the position that the kingdom of God is man's ultimate end, it must be read in its wider context. The document explains that the Church works for the coming kingdom because she has the dual role of "simultaneously manifesting and exercising the mystery of God's love for man." Further, Jesus Christ best manifests God's loving concern for the world: "For God's Word, by whom all things were made, was Himself made flesh so that as perfect man He might save all men and *sum up all things in Himself*. The Lord is the *goal* of human history, the *focal point* of the desires of history and civilization, the *center* of mankind, the joy of all hearts, and the *fulfillment* of all aspirations."⁷⁷ Thus, *Gaudium et Spes* teaches that the kingdom is the "single intention" of the Church, but in a way that is compatible with the notion that Jesus Christ, God Himself incarnate, is the also the end of all things. In order to grasp fully the implications of this teaching, we must explore the various meanings of "the kingdom."

The Kingdom of God as Man's Ultimate End

So far we have seen that God in Himself, apart from creatures, is the ultimate objective end of man, while the beatific vision is the secondary, subjective end of man. There seems to be no room for the kingdom to be man's ultimate objective or subjective end. Yet *Gaudium et Spes* speaks of the kingdom of God as the "single intention" of the Church, which implies that the kingdom is somehow an ultimate end of man as well. In light of the Church's tradition and the various distinctions among ends made by St. Thomas Aquinas, how are we to understand the kingdom as an end?

To answer this question, we first turn to the declaration *Dominus Iesus*, whose fifth section is devoted to the kingdom of God. It usefully notes that there are different ways to understand the term: "The meaning of the expressions *kingdom of heaven*, *kingdom of God*, and *kingdom of Christ* in

⁷⁷ *Gaudium et Spes*, §45. Emphasis added.

Sacred Scripture and the Fathers of the Church, as well as in the documents of the Magisterium, is not always exactly the same. . . . Therefore," the document states, "there can be various theological explanations of these terms."⁷⁸ Below we will discuss four different meanings associated with the kingdom of God: (1) the general state of heaven; (2) the Church as the communion of saints in the body of Christ; (3) the union of the soul with God; (4) Jesus Christ, the Son of God incarnate.⁷⁹ Because the kingdom of God is so vast a subject, our discussion will be focused on showing how our understanding of the kingdom of God as man's ultimate end can be in conformity with the Catholic doctrines discussed above—that God in Himself constitutes man's primary ultimate end and that the beatific vision constitutes man's principal attainment of God.

We begin by observing that we can interpret the kingdom of God as a state in which the human person will, in the future, somehow experience a conglomeration of all goods. As we have seen, Grisez holds a version of this view. He says that in the kingdom of God, human persons can find an eschatological "integral communal fulfillment," a fulfillment will be continually increasing (cf. 61). The broad outline of this understanding of the kingdom is not unique to Grisez. St. Thomas recognized that when Boethius considered "happiness in general," he equated it with "a state made perfect by the aggregate of all good things."⁸⁰ Aquinas himself affirms, "The kingdom of heaven is called the glory of paradise. . . . Therefore, when we petition, 'thy kingdom come,' we pray that we may be participants in the kingdom of heaven and the glory of paradise." And we look for the future paradise "on account of its wondrous abundance" of all good things.⁸¹ Christians agree that such a state can be obtained only in heaven. Jesus himself spoke about the kingdom in future terms, preaching parables about a marriage banquet, the wheat and tares separated at harvest

⁷⁸ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), *Dominus Iesus: On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church*, §18.

⁷⁹ A number of theologians have enumerated various meanings of the kingdom of God. While our list does not correspond precisely to that of any other, it has been influenced by Thomas Aquinas's brief list in his *Super Evangelium S. Matthaei lectura*, on ch. 3 v. 2, no. 250. I also rely greatly on the insights of Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) in the chapter "The Gospel of the Kingdom of God" in his *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, trans. Adrian J. Walker (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 46–63. My argument does not assume that this book, though theologically important, has Magisterial authority.

⁸⁰ ST I-II, q. 3, a. 2, obj. 2 and ad 2.

⁸¹ Thomas Aquinas, *In Oratorem Dominicam Expositio in Opuscula Theologica vol. II*, ed. Spiazzi (Turin: Marietti, 1954), nos. 1054, 1057, p. 226. My translation.

time, and a king who calls his servants to reckoning.⁸² Following this tradition, which stresses the future sense of the kingdom, the *Catechism* teaches, "At the end of time, the Kingdom of God will come in its fullness. Then the just will reign with Christ for ever, glorified in body and soul, and the material universe itself will be transformed. God will then be 'all in all' (1 Cor 15:28), in eternal life."⁸³

While there is much to be said for a substantive and eschatological understanding of the kingdom, it is not sufficient by itself. We saw above that Catholic tradition affirms that the essence of finality for the human subject is the beatific vision, while the object of beatitude is God in Himself.⁸⁴ So if man's subjective ultimate end is the beatific vision, then the kingdom-as-eschatological-conglomeration-of-goods cannot epitomize man's ultimate end. This deductive conclusion, based on the Church's teaching on man's ultimate end, is upheld by an exegetical understanding of the kingdom.

Research shows that a solely eschatological view of the kingdom disregards important aspects of Scripture and Catholic Tradition. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger insisted, "The exponents of the apocalyptic interpretation of Jesus' kingdom . . . are simply forced, on the basis of their hypothesis, to ignore a large number of Jesus' sayings on this matter, and to bend others violently in order to make them fit."⁸⁵ Although some passages of the New Testament present a future understanding of the kingdom, others have different emphases. For example, Jesus repeatedly preached that the kingdom of God was "at hand," using parables such as the leaven in the dough and sprouting seeds to describe what has been called "realized eschatology."⁸⁶ Not only is the kingdom to come at the end of time as a future state, it is something present, it "has come upon

⁸² See Mt 22:2–14, 13:24–30, 18:23–35.

⁸³ CCC, §1060.

⁸⁴ Thomas recognizes this in the same passage in which he says that Paradise contains the wondrous abundance of good things. After the portion quoted above (see note 81), he says, "Note that, whatever man searches for in the world," that is, among created things, "he will find all more perfectly and excellently in God alone. If you search for delights, you find the heights of them in God; if riches, there you will find all sufficiency, for all riches are from Him; and thus of other goods." Aquinas, *In Orationem Dominicam Expositio*, no. 1057.

⁸⁵ Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 58. See also his analysis of Albert Schweitzer's eschatological view of the kingdom on pp. 52–53.

⁸⁶ Mt 3:2, Mk 1:15. For the parables, see Mt 13: 33, Mk 4:26–29. C. H. Dodd's arguments about Jesus' preaching a "realized eschatology" became a source of much discussion among Scriptural scholars. See his work *Parables of the Kingdom* (New York: Scribner, 1961), 21–59 at 35.

you.”⁸⁷ This leads us to a key hermeneutical principle: though it may be a worthwhile exercise to focus on certain Scriptural passages to the exclusion of others, one should not confuse the part for the whole. Rather, “The reality that Jesus names the ‘Kingdom of God, lordship of God’ is extremely complex, and only by accepting it in its entirety can we gain access to, and let ourselves be guided by, his message.”⁸⁸

It seems that Grisez does not fully acknowledge the complexity of the Biblical concept of the kingdom of God. Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium do not support his position as much as his advertence to them suggests they do. The same is true regarding the authority of Scriptural exegetes. While he cites Raymond Brown’s “reified and localized” understanding of the kingdom, he avoids mentioning Brown’s observation—on the same page—that by the time of the later New Testament, “the kingdom and the Church have begun to be partially identified.”⁸⁹ Grisez, by exclusively emphasizing the kingdom as a reified conglomeration of goods reached in the eschaton, overlooks the ancient Christian understanding that the kingdom somehow corresponds to the Church in this present world. Brown’s insight shows that Grisez’s understanding of the kingdom is incomplete, and we can see the same by recalling our earlier arguments. A more comprehensive view of the kingdom, which takes account of Scripture, Tradition, and authorities cited in their proper context, would benefit Grisez’s position.

This leads us to the second connotation of “the kingdom”: as the Church. Parables congruous with this interpretation include that of the mustard seed, which grows into a tree housing birds of all feathers, and a net that gathers all kinds of fish.⁹⁰ The tree and the net are images of a universal Church in which all peoples and nations find a home. St. Augustine closely associated the Church in the present time with the kingdom of God, for “the saints of Christ are reigning with Him even now.”⁹¹ Without accepting a complete identification between the ecclesiological and kingdom realities, *Lumen Gentium* still recognized their

⁸⁷ Mt 12:28. See also Lk 10:8–9, “Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you; heal the sick in it and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’”

⁸⁸ Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 59.

⁸⁹ Raymond E. Brown, *The Churches the Apostles Left Behind* (New York: Paulist, 1984), 51. On p. 58 n. 59 of his 2008 article, Grisez emphasizes the reified, localized view, saying, “The *basileia* Jesus proclaimed is not only God’s reign but his kingdom.” He then references Brown’s book without quoting it.

⁹⁰ See Mt 13:31–32, 47–50.

⁹¹ Augustine, *The City of God Against The Pagans*, ed. and trans. R. W. Dyson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), bk. 20, chap. 9, p. 987.

intimate union. It taught that the Church “is, on earth, the seed and the beginning of that kingdom” of Christ and God.⁹² With a similar understanding, Paul VI’s *motu proprio Solemni hac liturgia*, better known as the *Credo of the People of God*, said the kingdom of God “had its beginnings here on earth in the Church of Christ.” Paul VI later explained, “the Church is . . . establishing herself in the midst of the world as the sign and instrument of this kingdom which is and which is to come.”⁹³

John Paul II helped to explain the inseparable connection between the kingdom of God and the Church when he observed, “The Kingdom’s nature . . . is one of communion among all human beings—with one another and with God.”⁹⁴ The communion of persons, the pope said, is founded on “the love which the Father has for the world.”⁹⁵ When human persons follow the commandment of love, they are truly members of the Body of Christ, who loved us and died for us, and are thereby in communion with each other.⁹⁶ Thus united to their head and king, members of the Church are also members of the kingdom. This is why the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith stated, “Charity is the law of the kingdom of God and our charity on earth will be the measure of our sharing in God’s glory in heaven.”⁹⁷

When we identify charity as the “law of the kingdom,” we come to appreciate the *Catechism*’s teaching that “The Church is the goal of all things.”⁹⁸ As an unparalleled locus of the Holy Spirit’s action in the world, manifested in Pentecost, the Church is intimately associated with man’s destiny of unification with God through the communion of divine love. “God created the world for the sake of communion with his divine life,” the *Catechism* explains, “a communion brought about by the ‘convocation’ of men in Christ, and this ‘convocation’ is the Church.”⁹⁹ The Church does not have some end disconnected with Christ and his kingdom, but rather finds her deepest meaning and purpose in them, through the communion of charity. At the same time, we must recognize that, as John Paul II said, “it is true that the Church is not an end unto herself.”

⁹² *Lumen Gentium*, §5.

⁹³ Paul VI, *Solemni hac liturgia*, §27; and *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, §59.

⁹⁴ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, §15.1.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ See Leo XIII’s observation: “Yea, truly, charity is the bond of perfection, for it binds intimately to God those whom it has embraced and with loving tenderness, causes them to draw their life from God, to act with God, to refer all to God.” *Sapientiae Christiani*, §40.

⁹⁷ CDF, *Letter on Certain Questions Concerning Eschatology*, §7.

⁹⁸ CCC, §760.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

In the most proper sense of the terms, the Church is “distinct from Christ and the Kingdom, [yet] the Church is indissolubly united to both.”¹⁰⁰ Accordingly, the Church is not the supreme objective end of man, since she is distinct from God in Himself. Neither is the Church the supreme subjective end of man, since the Church does not consist in the act of the beatific vision that breathes forth in divine love. Nevertheless, the Church’s finality resides in her unification with God through her members’ beatific vision in the communion of charity.

In grasping the connection between the kingdom of God and a knowing charity, we approach man’s end considered insofar as man is a responsible, acting subject. This is man’s ultimate subjective end: in its most general terms, a personal relationship between God and the just. “The ‘Kingdom of God,’” Ratzinger noted, “is not to be found on any map. It is not a kingdom after the fashion of worldly kingdoms; it is located in man’s inner being. It grows and radiates outward from that inner space.”¹⁰¹ A foundational source for this interpretation is Jesus’ statement, “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.”¹⁰² Another Scriptural key is St. Paul’s assertion “For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17). With these and like sources in mind, Christian theologians have developed an understanding of the kingdom as the union of the soul with God. Origen, perhaps, may be credited with inaugurating the interpretation that “sees man’s interiority as the essential location of the Kingdom of God,” but we should not overlook Albert the Great’s extraordinary contribution.¹⁰³ In his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, while discussing the petitions in the *Pater Noster*, Albert writes:

But accepting these things in our spirits, the divine processions then create the domain of the kingdom within us, exalting and enriching and strengthening us: and those processions are the rays of His grace,

¹⁰⁰ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, §18.3.

¹⁰¹ Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 50.

¹⁰² Luke 17:20–21 (Authorized Version). Most contemporary translations read otherwise: “The kingdom of God is in the midst of you” (RSV); “The kingdom of God is among you” (NAB). But the Authorized Version’s “within” is a perfectly acceptable translation of the Greek ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ἐντὸς ἑμῶν ἐστίν, as well as the Vulgate’s “*regnum Dei intra vos est*.”

¹⁰³ Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 49. I am indebted to Benedict Viviano’s analysis of Albert the Great’s insight. See Benedict T. Viviano, *The Kingdom of God in History* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988), 66–76.

which elevate our heart above all that would slavishly oppress it: so that now we should not consider it fitting to care for such things, but be raised above such in power and, overcoming them, to be filled overflowing with beautiful and good things.¹⁰⁴

This significant statement first anticipates Magisterial teachings about the kingdom; then it gives a precise description of the soul's union with God. Regarding the first point, Albert says that the indwelling of the Holy Trinity in the soul of the just creates "the domain of the kingdom within us." The Magisterium has at various times confirmed that the kingdom may be understood as the union of the soul with God. Building on the fact that man can participate in the life of God, Pius XI explained that "the Kingdom of Christ" can refer to the relationship between God and man such that "Jesus Christ reigns over the minds of individuals by His teachings, in their hearts by His love, in each one's life by the living according to His law and the imitating of His example."¹⁰⁵ Similarly, the *Catechism* teaches: "With beatitude, man enters into the glory of Christ and into the joy of the Trinitarian life."¹⁰⁶

Regarding the second point, Albert's metaphysical description of the indwelling helps us understand the kingdom as man's union with God in beatific vision. Albert states that man's union with God is a spiritual union, for God is by nature immaterial, a union in which man enjoys God as He is, with no mediating creature, a union whose effect is to fill the soul "overflowingly" with supernatural goods. In continuity with the tradition, Albert attests that man's union with God is first and foremost a union in intellect and will, and this happens especially in the beatific vision.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Albertus Magnus, *Ennarationes in Evangelium Matthaei*, in *Opera Omnia* vol. 20, ed. Borgnet (Paris: Vivés, 1893), comment on 6:10, p. 269. Further on, Albert says, "God the Father strengthens His kingdom in us, such that He gives a participation in His kingship through grace, by which He exalts us and makes us like His Son the King, who sits at His right hand" (270). My translation.

¹⁰⁵ Pius XI, *Ubi Arcano Dei Consilio*, §48. We might also note Paul VI's teaching, "This kingdom and this salvation, which are the key words of Jesus Christ's evangelization, are available to every human being as grace and mercy." Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, §10. In a similar vein, John Paul II stated in *Veritatis Splendor*, §12.2, "This same reality of the Kingdom is referred to in the expression 'eternal life', which is a participation in the very life of God. It is attained in its perfection only after death, but in faith it is even now a light of truth, a source of meaning for life, an inchoate share in the full following of Christ."

¹⁰⁶ CCC, §1721.

¹⁰⁷ The popes cited above said that the kingdom of God is in man through knowledge and charity while on earth; the kingdom understood in this sense is more fully present in heaven, where man's knowledge and charity are completely

We can summarize this third way of understanding the kingdom of God in the following manner: when the kingdom connotes the union of the soul with God, and the soul is most united with God in the beatific vision (which is a knowing that breathes forth love), the kingdom can be understood as the beatific vision.¹⁰⁸ As we have seen, the beatific vision is man's secondary, subjective end, above all other created ends. Insofar as the kingdom is identified with the beatific vision, the kingdom is the highest of all finite ends, that is, ends considered insofar as they are goods of the soul.¹⁰⁹ Thus understood, "the kingdom" indicates that man's participation in and attainment of the Most Holy Trinity, the object of his beatitude, is man's secondary, ultimate end. With this interpretation in mind, we can heartily accept the claim that the kingdom of God is man's ultimate end.

As lofty as this interpretation of the kingdom is, we can ascend even higher. While not repudiating this point of view, Ratzinger notes that "it is not sufficient, even from a linguistic point of view," for there is an even greater mystery here.¹¹⁰

We now come to the final interpretation of the kingdom: as identical with Jesus Christ, the Son of God Himself. This interpretation may seem surprising and perhaps even unsupported by Scripture. Where, after all, does Jesus equate Himself with the kingdom? A superficial reading of the Gospels could suggest that Jesus does not make this equation, but more careful exegesis belies this result. According to Ratzinger, "the term

perfected. For Thomistic treatments of the divine indwelling, see Gilles Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Francesca Aran Murphy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 372–94. See also Bernard Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), Question 32 and Assertion 18, pp. 501–23.

¹⁰⁸ Such an understanding is implied in CCC §1720: "The New Testament uses several expressions to characterize the beatitude to which God calls man: the coming of the Kingdom of God; the vision of God: 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.'" Also, a straightforward interpretation of CCC §1726 would be that the kingdom of God and the beatific vision are somehow equivalent: "The Beatitudes teach us the final end to which God calls us: the Kingdom, the vision of God, participation in the divine nature, eternal life, filiation, rest in God."

¹⁰⁹ See *ST* I-II, q. 2, a. 7, ad 3: "Happiness itself, since it is a perfection of the soul, is an inherent good of the soul; but that which constitutes happiness, viz., which makes man happy, is something outside his soul." Here the good of the soul is the attainment of the object; this is equivalent to man's secondary, ultimate end: the beatific vision. That which makes man happy is the object outside of his soul, namely, God Himself.

¹¹⁰ Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 60.

'Kingdom of God' is itself a veiled Christology." Only gradually did Jesus reveal that he manifests, embodies, and realizes the kingdom, for he wanted to lead men slowly "to realize the overwhelming fact that in him God himself is present among them, that he is God's presence."¹¹¹ Such a pedagogical aim fits with Jesus' way of hiding the inner meaning of his parables from the crowds. Along with many of the Church Fathers, St. Robert Bellarmine penetrated the depths of the kingdom parables and saw that they ultimately refer to Jesus. If the kingdom is like a treasure in a field, Bellarmine says, "This 'treasure' is the Divinity itself, which is hidden in the field of the humanity of Christ," for, he explained, "the divinity is the truest treasure of all good."¹¹² When the kingdom is compared to a precious pearl, Bellarmine argues, "the heavenly beatitude, or Christ himself, is named a 'pearl'."¹¹³ If the kingdom of heaven is seen as a payment given to laborers who are hired at different times of the day, Bellarmine replies, "Behold, then, how precious this 'penny' [payment] is, which is called by our Lord Himself a kingdom! Nor without reason is it called so, since *it represents Christ no less than the treasure or pearl does*."¹¹⁴ One could read many, perhaps all, of the parables in this way.

"God's plan for the fullness of time is to unite all things in Christ," Grisez wrote (61); our interpretation of the kingdom parables and our understanding of man's ultimate end wholly agree with his Christological focus. Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, the focus and center of all things, including the kingdom of God (see Rev 22:13). Recall *Gaudium et Spes*, §45, which teaches that the Word of God became incarnate "so that as perfect man He might save all men and *sum up all things in Himself*"; this recalls St. Paul's teaching that "all things hold together" in Christ, for Christ is "preeminent" in all things (Col 1:17, 18). The document elaborates, "The Lord is the *goal* of human history, the *focal point* of the desires of history and civilization, the *center* of mankind, the joy of all hearts, and the *fulfillment* of all aspirations." Even apart from the parables, we can note a telling equation between Jesus and the kingdom in the Synoptic Gospels.¹¹⁵ Hence we

¹¹¹ Ibid., 49.

¹¹² Robert Bellarmine, *The Kingdom of God*, 195. See Mt 13:44.

¹¹³ Bellarmine, *The Kingdom of God*, 200. See Mt 13:45–46.

¹¹⁴ Bellarmine, *The Kingdom of God*, 207. Emphasis added. Ratzinger explicitly makes the same connection: *Jesus of Nazareth*, 61. See Mt 20:1–16. Additionally, Bellarmine treats of the kingdom as a marriage banquet, talents, prize, and crown—all with a Christocentric interpretation.

¹¹⁵ Consider, for example, the following verses (emphases are added): "Jesus said, 'Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers . . . *for my sake and for the gospel*'" (Mk 10:29), with "And he said to them, 'Truly, I say to you, there is no man who has left house or wife or brothers . . . for the sake of *the*

read in *Lumen Gentium* §5: “Above all . . . the Kingdom is made manifest in the very person of Christ, Son of God and Son of Man.” Christ manifests and realizes the kingdom, for, because his human soul is ineffably filled with the Holy Trinity, he is the unsurpassable exemplar of one who has the kingdom of God within. Even more, because Christ’s soul is hypostatically united with the Person of the Son of God, he is “the kingdom.” John Paul II summarized this insight, saying, “The kingdom of God is not a concept, a doctrine, or a program subject to free interpretation, but it is before all else a *person* with the face and name of Jesus of Nazareth, the image of the invisible God.”¹¹⁶ Additionally, he continued, interpretations of the kingdom can become so anthropocentric that they end up denying the faith: “If the kingdom is separated from Jesus, it is no longer the kingdom of God which he revealed. The result is a distortion of the meaning of the kingdom, which runs the risk of being transformed into a purely human or ideological goal.” Even worse, such an earthly view of the kingdom, being focused on earthly goods, can become “a distortion of the identity of Christ, who no longer appears as the Lord to whom everything must one day be subjected (cf. 1 Cor 15:27).”¹¹⁷

In our analysis of Magisterial texts, we found that God in Himself is man’s ultimate objective end. Provided that the kingdom of God is identified with Jesus Christ, God Himself in the flesh, then the kingdom can rightly be called man’s supreme ultimate objective end. To put it differently, one may agree with Grisez that man’s true ultimate end is the kingdom—so long as the kingdom is identified with Jesus Christ.

We have seen, in light of Scripture and Tradition, that the kingdom of God may be understood as a general aggregation of all goods, the

kingdom of God” (Lk 18:29). Or again, compare “And the crowds that went before him and that followed him shouted, ‘Hosanna to the *Son of David*! *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord*! Hosanna in the highest!’” (Mt 21:9) with “*Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that is coming*! Hosanna in the highest!” (Mk 11:10) and “saying, ‘*Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord*! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!’” (Lk 19:38). These examples are from Adrio König, *The Eclipse of Christ in Eschatology: Toward a Christ-Centered Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 108.

¹¹⁶ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, §18.2. Ratzinger uses remarkably similar language: “Jesus himself is the Kingdom; the Kingdom is not a thing, it is not a geographical dominion like worldly kingdoms. It is a person; it is he.” *Jesus of Nazareth*, 49.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. See also CCC §2816, quoting St. Cyprian: “It may even be . . . that the Kingdom of God means Christ himself, whom we daily desire to come, and whose coming we wish to be manifested quickly to us. For as he is our resurrection, since in him we rise, so he can also be understood as the Kingdom of God, for in him we shall reign.”

Church, the union of the soul with God, and as the Person of Jesus Christ. The most explanatory interpretation of the kingdom is the last. Jesus Christ sums up in himself the other meanings of the kingdom: after his Ascension, he resides physically in heaven and he remains personally the center of heaven; the Church is the body of which Christ is the Head; the union of a Christian soul with God results from the hypostatic union of Jesus' soul with the divinity; as the Son, Jesus is the actualization of the kingship of God, which will be fully manifested at the end of time but is already present in his glorified humanity.¹¹⁸ In this light, the biblical scholar Adrio König comes to this definitive conclusion: "We must affirm with Origen that Jesus is the *autobasileia*, the kingdom-as-person," and along with this we must maintain, "Jesus is the *eschatos*. The goal lies in him and is therefore attained in every phase of his history."¹¹⁹ Summarily: the kingdom of God and man's ultimate end find their complete meaning and fulfillment in Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God. "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" means: seek first your true ultimate end; seek first the Highest Good; seek first Jesus Christ—"and all these things will be added unto you" (Mt 6:33).

Conclusion

In 2008, Germain Grisez wrote, "I hold it to be a truth of faith that human beings' true ultimate end is the kingdom of God, not God alone" (61, n. 69). In contrast to previous discussions of Grisez's thought, this article has examined Grisez's faith-claim primarily in light of the faith as taught by the Catholic Magisterium.¹²⁰ We have seen that, though Grisez's citations of Magisterial authority seem to verify his faith-claim, Catholic Tradition as a whole teaches otherwise. Vatican I, Leo XIII, Pius X, Pius XI, Pius XII, Vatican II, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI, when read within their proper context, clearly affirm that God in Himself, apart

¹¹⁸ Bl. John Henry Newman notes that the hypostatic union, by which Jesus lived the divine life even while on earth, is the foundation of saying that Jesus is the center of the kingdom of God. He puts these words into the mouth of Christ: "It is mysterious how regenerate man should be a citizen of a heavenly kingdom, but I Myself, who speak, am at this moment in Heaven too, even in this My human nature." Newman goes on to say, "Such is the Kingdom of God; Christ the centre of it, His glory the light of it, the Just made perfect His companions, and the Apostles His witnesses to their brethren." Sermon 18, "The Gift of the Spirit," in John Henry Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. 3 (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1907), 265, 266.

¹¹⁹ König, *The Eclipse of Christ*, 108, 110.

¹²⁰ I summarize previous scholars' discussions of Grisez's thought in notes 6 and 50 above.

from all creatures, is man's supreme ultimate end. Magisterial sources, understood in light of the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas, also teach that man's secondary end, his attainment of God as a human subject, is the beatific vision, which occurs without the body and other created goods.

In addition to providing a critique of Grisez's understanding of man's ultimate end, this article has proposed a positive understanding of human finality. Our analysis of the various meanings of "the kingdom of God" has discovered that the term can stand for a general state of heaven, the Church, the union of the soul with God, and Jesus Christ himself. Each interpretation allows us to admit that the kingdom is man's end, but only with respect to the last two may we assert that the kingdom is man's *ultimate* end. The union of the soul with God corresponds ultimately to the beatific vision, man's secondary final end, while Jesus Christ, particularly in his divinity, is man's supreme ultimate end. Grisez's position does little justice to the Tradition to which he adheres, but even more, it does little justice to the truth that Tradition teaches—namely, that in Jesus Christ, "the different, seemingly contradictory aspects," not just of the kingdom, but of life itself, "can be joined together."¹²¹ "For in him," St. Paul declares, "all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile all things unto himself" (Col 1:19–20). Jesus, in sum, is the capstone of all creation; all things were made through him and for him; he holds all things together in himself. In the words of Adrio König, "If Christ is the goal [*telos*] of creation, only in him can things exist harmoniously and only through him can they be reconciled. . . . Only through him are they restored to a correct relationship with God and each other."¹²² If the truest purpose of human life is God Himself, revealed in Jesus Christ as the kingdom of the Father, Catholics can say, "God alone is man's true ultimate end" and "the kingdom is man's end"; we can even say "the kingdom alone is man's end," but we cannot say, "God alone is not man's ultimate end."

¹²¹ Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 61. Acknowledging this truth, John Paul II said: "In the last analysis—and each of us knows this by experience—man either seeks himself, his own affirmation, personal utility, as the ultimate purpose of his existence, or he turns to God, the supreme Good and real ultimate Purpose, the only one able to unify, by subordinating them and directing to Himself, the many purposes that constitute the object of our aspirations and our work at different times. Science and culture, therefore, take on a full, consistent and unified meaning, if they are ordained to reaching man's ultimate purpose, which is the glory of God." John Paul II, *The Whole Truth about Man: John Paul II to University Faculties and Students*, ed. James V. Schall (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1981), 171. Italics in the original.

¹²² König, *The Eclipse of Christ*, 29. He references Col 1:16–17, 20; Eph 2:14, 16; 2 Cor 15:18–19.

The truth that God alone, as substantial Goodness, is man's true ultimate end is of supreme importance to Catholics. We have seen that the Church has repeatedly taught this doctrine, with the most binding levels of her authority, in a variety of contexts, including considerations of eschatology, God's nature, Scriptural interpretation, and the role of creaturely goods in human fulfillment. The importance of this truth can hardly be overestimated. As Donnelly wrote in his careful study of St. Thomas's thought on man's ultimate end, it is a truth that "is not merely basic in dogmatic theology but also constitutes the necessary foundation of Christian morality and of all asceticism that is not chimerical."¹²³ N·V

¹²³ Donnelly, "Ultimate Purpose of Creation," 53.