

# THE RESTLESS-HEART BLUNDER

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On the first page of his *Confessions*, St. Augustine addresses God: “You have made us for yourself and our heart is restless until it rests in you.” Scripture verifies that dictum. Colossians teaches that all creatures came to be not only through God’s Son but also for him (see 1.14-16).<sup>1</sup> Hebrews teaches that those with erring hearts ignorant of God’s ways will never enter into his rest (see Heb 3.9-10; cf. Ps 95.10-11), but that “a sabbath rest still remains for the people of God” (Heb 4.9-10). So, our only prospect of rest is to enter into God’s rest, and since God made everything for his divine Son, he made us for himself.

At the end of the *Confessions*, Augustine again speaks of resting in God and alludes to the Letter to the Hebrews. But it seems that he understood our heart’s relationship to God in light of the neo-Platonism he continued to hold, although with many Christian amendments, so that the dictum meant: *Because God constituted us so that we naturally tend toward as close a union with him as possible, our heart cannot rest unless we are united to God by the beatific vision.*<sup>2</sup> I call that *the classical restless-heart thesis*.

Many think an excellent explanation and defense of this thesis is provided by St. Thomas’s treatise on beatitude (see *S.t.*, 1-2, qq. 1-5). In that treatise, six points are particularly relevant to the restless heart thesis.

First, Thomas soundly argues that human beings always act for an end, and that, while proximate ends often are sought for the sake of ulterior ends, a person always must act for some ultimate end (see *S.t.*, 1-2, q. 1, aa. 1, 4, and 6).

Second, in proposing the first of three arguments meant to show that people cannot have more than one ultimate end at the same time, Thomas holds that they *necessarily* tend toward fulfillment in a good that would fulfill them so completely that they could desire nothing more. I shall deal with that argument later.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This and other quotations from the Bible are from *The Catholic Study Bible, New American Bible including the Revised New Testament*, ed. Donald Senior et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

<sup>2</sup> See Robert J. O’Connell, *St. Augustine’s Confessions: The Odyssey of Soul* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1969), 26-27, 40, 115-18, 160-61, 178-85.

<sup>3</sup> The relevant premise is: “Since everything tends to its own perfection, what human persons tend toward as their ultimate end *must* be something that they tend toward as a good that is perfect and utterly fulfilling of themselves. . . . So, *it is necessary* that the ultimate end fulfill the entire human appetite in such a way that nothing more is left to be desired” (*S.t.*, 1-2, q. 1, a. 5, c.; emphasis added).

Third, Thomas explains that the expression *ultimate end* means both the idea of the ultimate end and the concrete reality in which that idea is thought to be verified, and explains that “as to the idea of the ultimate end, all agree in their desire of the ultimate end, since all desire their own perfection to be fulfilled—which is the idea of the ultimate end. But as to that in which the idea is verified, not all agree, for some desire riches as the consummate good, others pleasure, and others still other things” (*S.t.*, 1-2, q. 1, a. 7).

Fourth, Thomas distinguishes between two aspects of any end: the good that fulfills and how it is attained (see *S.t.*, 1-2, q. 1, a. 8). Here is an example of what he has in mind: The good that fulfills theologians as such is theological truth; that good is attained by being known.

Fifth, after eliminating other candidates, Thomas argues that the good that ultimately fulfills human beings—a good which he calls “*beatitude*”—can be found only in God:

The beatitude of human beings cannot possibly be in any created good. For beatitude is the perfect good, which totally satiates desire; it would not be the ultimate end, if it left something still more to be desired. But the object of the will, which is the human appetite, is the good universally; just as the object of the intellect is the true universally. Plainly, then, nothing can satiate the human will except the good universally. And that is not found in anything created, but only in God, since every creature has participated goodness. So, only God can satisfy the human will . . . . Therefore, human beatitude is found in God alone. (*S.t.*, 1-2, q. 2, a. 8, c.)

Finally, Thomas argues that for their beatitude, human beings must attain God by intellectual vision of the divine essence. One premise of that argument is, again, that “a human being cannot be happy as long as there is something more for him or her to desire and seek.” The other premise is that the human mind, made aware by created realities that God exists, would remain unsatisfied if it did not understand what he is in himself (see *S.t.*, 1-2, q. 3, a. 8).

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If beatitude were what we usually call “happiness,” it would be true that all human beings desire it as their ultimate end. For *happiness* often refers to a state of mind that includes only or almost only those experiences one prefers having to not having, and we all would like to have only the experiences we prefer. But that subjective notion of happiness does not capture the meaning of *beatitude*, which refers to an objective state of fulfillment. For Thomas, everyone must expect his or her ultimate end to provide—and the true ultimate end *will* provide—complete fulfillment that totally satiates desire. That is initially plausible, for we all do *wish* that all our desires were satisfied.

Nevertheless, I shall offer seven arguments to show that Thomas’s theory of beatitude is untenable. Several conclude that the proposition that the will necessarily tends toward complete fulfillment in a good that totally satiates the appetite is false; the second concludes that the proposition that the beatific vision instantiates that idea is false; and the seventh concludes that both propositions are false. Each argument is independent. If only some of them are rebutted, a strong case will remain.

Many proponents of the classical restless-heart thesis affirmed false propositions that Thomas denied.<sup>4</sup> If his theory is untenable, the classical restless-heart thesis—which he may not have held—is even less tenable.<sup>5</sup> So, my arguments, if cogent, will show that the classical restless-heart thesis was a theological blunder.

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The first begins from our need to make choices.

Children learn at an early age that not all their desires can be satisfied. Seven-year-old Miriam's family is about to leave for a long-planned, all-day boat ride, provided by her dad's employer. The phone rings. It's Miriam's best friend, Angela. Her dad learned last night that the family must move tomorrow to Australia. Angela wants Miriam to spend the day with her at her aunt's house. Miriam's dad says: "It's up to you. Spend the day with Angela if you like or tell her goodbye right now and come along with us."

Miriam wishes she could be in two places at once but she must choose, not between means to an end, but between two things she greatly desires and sees as good in themselves. Neither today nor ever will she obtain fulfillment in the unchosen possibility. The possibilities for her are to spend today with Angela and to spend today with her family; and today's unchosen possibility will be gone forever tomorrow.

But Thomas's theory of beatitude concerns our *ultimate* end. Can unsatisfied desires in this life falsify it? Yes, in the following way. Only if people believe all their desires *can* be satisfied can they intend something as their ultimate end in the expectation that it will provide fulfillment that leaves nothing else to be desired. By their experience of having to make choices, however, most people become convinced that there is no way for all their desires to be satisfied.<sup>6</sup> Now, one can *wish* for something one thinks is impossible, but one cannot *intend* it as an end and choose to act to bring it about. So, what Thomas argues everyone *must* do, most people *cannot* do, namely, tend toward something as their ultimate end expecting its attainment to leave nothing more to desire.

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My second argument against Thomas's theory of beatitude will show that Christians who do expect the beatific vision to satisfy all their desires are mistaken.

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas's views on these matters are subtle, and commentators disagree about how to reconcile the relevant texts with one another. For a brief and easily accessible approach to this problem, see Thomas Gilby, O.P., "Appendix 5: The Vision of God," in St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, vol. 16, *Purpose and Happiness*, ed. Thomas Gilby, O.P. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1969), 153-55. A somewhat dated but still useful, richer approach is provided by William R. O'Connor, *The Eternal Quest: The Teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas on the Natural Desire for God* (New York: Longman's, Green, 1947), 7-72.

<sup>5</sup> Some texts suggest that he held it, e.g.: "Ultimus enim finis cuiuslibet rei est Deus, ut ostensum est. Intendit igitur unumquodque sicut ultimo fini Deo coniungi quanto magis sibi possibile est" *Summa contra gentiles*, 3, 25.

<sup>6</sup> This argument cannot be rebutted by saying: "Thomas is doing metaphysics here, not psychology." He is doing metaphysics but also is drawing a conclusion about a matter of fact that pertains to psychology. Against truths of faith—e.g., the substantial presence of Jesus in the Eucharist—experience cannot count. But when someone argues from a metaphysical assumption to a thesis about what people must do and one then finds that one need not do it, or about what one cannot do and one then finds that one can do it, one's experience falsifies both the thesis and the metaphysical assumption.

One can ask others for things one does not really desire. For example, people sometimes ask for something to test someone else's willingness to give it. But one cannot *sincerely* ask for anything without desiring it. When we pray to God for something, we ask him for it. So, we desire whatever we sincerely pray for.

In praying to Mary and other saints, we ask them to pray on our behalf. We want them to take an interest in us, desire for us what we need, and ask God for it. And they do intercede for us.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, although Mary and the other saints already enjoy the beatific vision, they desire still more: the benefits they desire God to give us.

Not only do Mary and the other saints intercede for us, so does our Lord in glory: "He is always able to save those who approach God through him, since he lives forever to make intercession for them" (Heb 7.25). Moreover, Thomas maintains that Jesus enjoyed the beatific vision from the "beginning of his conception" (see *S.t.*, 1-2, q. 5, a. 7, ad 2; 3, q. 9, a. 2; 34, 4). But during his earthly life he desired many things, and some of his desires were frustrated—for instance, he desired to gather Jerusalem's children as a hen gathers her brood, but she would not cooperate (see Mt 23.37).

In sum, the saints and Jesus himself, while seeing God, continue to have desires. Therefore, Thomas is mistaken in holding that those who attain God by the beatific vision have nothing more to desire.<sup>8</sup>

Some will admit that intercession by the blessed shows they have ongoing, unsatisfied desires but say: "They desire benefits for others but the beatific vision completely fulfills them and they desire nothing more for themselves." However, that view makes an exception to Thomas's claim that beatitude *totally* satiates desire.

Moreover, intercessors do desire something for themselves.<sup>9</sup> In interceding for her children, Mary desires to be a good mother to them, and she surely hopes to have them with her. In laying down his life, Jesus desired his own glory: "For the sake of the joy that lay before him he endured the cross, despising its shame" (Heb 12.2). And even now,

<sup>7</sup> In Eucharistic Prayer I, the Church recalls that the faithful are praying in union with Mary and the other saints, and asks the Father: "May their merits and prayers gain us your constant help and salvation." When very holy people die, we pray for them at first, but later we pray to them, sometimes for miraculous cures; unless they are martyrs, miraculous responses to their intercession are required for their beatification and canonization. Such practices make it clear that the faith of the Church includes the belief that the blessed do take an interest in us and desire God to meet certain of our unsatisfied needs. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §969, quotes *Lumen gentium*, 62: "This motherhood of Mary in the order of grace continues uninterruptedly from the consent which she loyally gave at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect. Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this saving office but by her manifold intercession continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation."

<sup>8</sup> James Walsh, S.J., and P. G. Walsh, *Divine Providence and Human Suffering*, Message of the Fathers of the Church, 17 (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1985), 175, quote a passage from Augustine (commentary on Psalm 62.2) that includes the assertion "that if [Christ] has suffered and we have suffered with him, and he is now ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father, whatever his Church suffers by way of this life's tribulations, temptations, constrictions, and deprivations (for she must be schooled to be purified like gold in the fire), this he also suffers" (Latin text: *Corpus Christianorum*, series Latina, 39:794).

<sup>9</sup> Vatican II: "The human being, who is the only creature on earth that God willed for its own sake, cannot fully find himself or herself except by a sincere gift of himself or herself" (*Gaudium et spes*, 24).

he surely not only desires what he asks the Father to give those who approach God through him but also desires the fullness he will have when all things, not least the people for whom he intercedes, are united in him (see Eph 1.10, 22-23).

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The third argument against Thomas's theory of beatitude begins from his view of Aristotle's theory. Thomas knew that some philosophers held that beatitude is impossible in this life but that the soul can attain it after death. He also was familiar with Aristotle's view, according to which human beings, within the conditions of life in this world, can enjoy some fulfillment. Thomas also notes that Aristotle neither affirms nor denies the possibility of beatitude after death (see *In 4 Sent.*, d. 49, q. 1, a. 1, qu'la 4). Since Aristotle's so-called beatitude does not satisfy Thomas's definition, he calls it *imperfect beatitude*, points out that it leaves much to be desired, and says it is a participation in beatitude (see *S.t.*, 1-2, q. 3, a. 2, ad 4; a. 3, c.; q. 5).

However, imperfect beatitude would be imperfect perfect fulfillment, and that notion is self-contradictory. Still, what Thomas calls "imperfect beatitude" can be the ultimate end of people trying to be all they can be in this world. Therefore, it is not true that everyone must take as his or her ultimate end something expected to satiate desire. However, nobody could settle for less if the will necessarily tended toward complete fulfillment that leaves nothing more to desire.

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The fourth argument against Thomas's theory begins from what he says about the unbaptized who die without ever having personally sinned.<sup>10</sup> He holds that they have the knowledge due a separated soul according to its nature, including the knowledge that it was created for beatitude and that beatitude consists in the attainment of perfect good. But they lack supernatural knowledge: they know neither that beatitude consists in the beatific vision nor that they lack it. Therefore, they are not sad (see *De malo*, q. 5, a. 3). Rather, they rejoice because they participate greatly in divine goodness and natural perfections (see *In 2 Sent.*, d. 33, q. 2, a. 2).

Thomas holds both that those separated souls know that God exists and that anyone who knows that God exists naturally desires to know what he is (see *S.t.*, 1-2, q. 3, a. 8). However, not having the beatific vision, the desire of those souls to know what God is remains unsatisfied. Yet Thomas says that they know that beatitude consists in the attainment of perfect good. What, then, must they think about their own situation? They must think they are attaining that perfect good, for otherwise they would be sad. So, they must not think that beatitude is complete fulfillment leaving nothing more to desire. Rather, they must think that, despite their unsatisfied desire, beatitude is what they have: fulfillment in goods proper to human nature, including knowing the creator as they do

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<sup>10</sup> The Church is not committed to the theory that the unbaptized who die without personal sin end neither in hell nor in heaven, and many theologians today think such unbaptized souls reach heaven. But even if that is so, the implications of what Thomas says about such souls can falsify his account of beatitude, just as it would if he had agreed with the theologians who think those souls reach heaven and had considered limbo only a possibility to which he applied his theory of beatitude solely for the sake of responding to the questions of someone who does believe in limbo.

and being at peace with him. If they were mistaken and Thomas right about beatitude, they would necessarily desire complete fulfillment that would leave nothing more to desire. Their hearts would be restless, and they would be sad. So, their understanding of beatitude must be correct.

In holding that the separated souls of unbaptized babies know many things and participate in natural perfections, Thomas implies that they engage in human acts. So, they act for ends and therefore for an ultimate end—the beatitude they have—and they are not mistaken in settling for that. It follows that a beatitude that consists in nothing beyond the fulfillment proportioned to human nature is the true ultimate end of these human beings. Therefore, the human will does not necessarily tend toward complete fulfillment that totally satiates desire, but towards fulfillment proportioned to human nature.

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A fifth argument begins from Thomas's claim about the first choice of unbaptized children. He says that every such child, on reaching the use of reason, must deliberate about himself or herself. If unbaptized children turn toward God and direct their lives toward their true end, they receive pardon for original sin; failing to do that is a mortal sin (see S.t., 1, q. 89, a. 6, c. and ad 3). In saying this, Thomas clearly means that such children must take God as their ultimate end, for otherwise he would be implicitly conceding that his theory of beatitude is mistaken.

Thomas of course knows from Scripture that there are many false gods, and he hardly means that people should order their lives to any of them. He has in mind the true God, the creator and provident lord of the universe, who rewards those who seek him (cf. Heb 11.6). But, as we know, the vast majority of people have not known the true God. Many great philosophers and leaders of religious movements had views of the source and destiny of human beings very different from those of Christians, Jews, and Muslims. Plainly, the knowledge of God needed to direct one's life to him as one's ultimate end was not available to them. Yet many of them seem to have shared the resolve of Socrates to seek and live by the truth about what is good for human beings.

If Thomas had applied to those philosophers and religious leaders, and to their followers, what he says about unbaptized children in general, one would have to conclude that all of them lived and died in mortal sin. However, Vatican II teaches that people who lack express awareness of God through no fault of their own receive the saving help of his grace in striving to lead upright lives.<sup>11</sup> Thus, for children in that situation, starting out by taking as their ultimate end a life shaped by what they sincerely believe to be the truth about what is good for human persons and humankind is salvific, not sinful.

Someone might say such people implicitly seek God by resolving to follow their God-given conscience. I grant that such a commitment is an implicit act of faith. But I deny that God can be the implicit ultimate end of those lacking express knowledge of him. Because hunters must guide their aim by what they see or think they see, only what is or seems to be visible can be a target. Similarly, because intelligible goods shape will

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<sup>11</sup> See *Lumen gentium*, 16; *Gaudium et spes*, 22.

acts, any end intended by someone making a choice must be understood, thought to be good in some definite way, and intended on the basis of that judgment. Therefore, an ultimate end cannot be implicit. When people without express knowledge of God through no fault of their own uprightly take something as their ultimate end, it cannot be God but must be a good they understand just as they understand it.

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In articulating his theory of beatitude, Thomas also tries to show that nobody can have more than one ultimate end at a time. The argument is this:

Since everything tends to its own perfection, what human persons tend toward as their ultimate end must be something that they tend toward as a good that is perfect and utterly fulfilling of themselves. . . . So, it is necessary that the ultimate end fulfill the entire human appetite in such a way that nothing more is left to be desired. That could not be so if something else were required for one's perfection. So, it is impossible that the appetite tend toward two things as though each were its perfect good. (*S.t.*, 1-2, q. 1, a. 5).

If it is true that human persons must take as their ultimate end a good that they expect to fulfill them so completely that nothing else is left to be desired, the argument as a whole is sound. So, if the conclusion is false, that premise is false.

A sixth argument against Thomas's theory of beatitude can therefore be developed by showing that people can and do act for more than one ultimate end at the same time. That can be shown in several ways.<sup>12</sup> One of them begins from Thomas's account of the venial sins committed by Christians living in grace.

He holds that Christians living in grace who commit a mortal sin abandon God as their ultimate end, but those who commit only venial sins, even deliberate ones, still have God as their ultimate end.<sup>13</sup> That raises a question that Thomas never directly addresses: What ultimate end does a Christian living in grace intend in choosing to commit a deliberate venial sin?

Thomas cannot say that such Christians intend an ultimate end other than God. For that would mean either that venial sins are mortal sins or that such Christians intend two ultimate ends at the same time—a possibility he has excluded because an ultimate end, he thinks, necessarily excludes desiring and so precludes intending anything else. Nor can Thomas say that Christians in choosing to commit deliberate venial sins intend no ultimate end at all, for he has shown that to be impossible. He says: "Those who sin venially involve themselves with a temporal good not as enjoying it, since they do not take it as their end, but as using it, while referring it to God not actually but habitually" (*S.t.*, 1-2, q. 88, a. 1, ad 3). Again, he says: "what is loved in a venial sin, is loved habitually for God's sake, even if not actually" (*S.t.*, 2-2, q. 24, a. 10, ad 2).

Those remarks do not tell us what ultimate end Christians in grace intend in committing venial sins unless they mean that such Christians choose to sin for the sake of

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<sup>12</sup> This line of argument has been developed more fully than I shall undertake here: Peter F. Ryan, S.J., "Must the Acting Person Have a Single Ultimate End?" *Gregorianum*, 82 (2001): 325-56.

<sup>13</sup> For references and a fuller treatment of the context of Thomas's view about the ultimate end of venial sins committed by persons living in grace, see Germain Grisez, *Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol. 1, *Christian Moral Principles* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983), 390-93.

God, habitually though not actually intended as ultimate end. An example will clarify what it means to act for the sake of God, habitually intended as one's ultimate end.

Preparing for confirmation, thirteen-year-old Miriam makes a retreat. Listening to her retreat master, she reflects on the many blessings she has received and is filled with gratitude and joy. She hears about the universal call to holiness and how to respond by taking up one's own personal cross, discerning God's will in everything, and doing it. She also learns that following Jesus in that way would be walking in the life of good deeds God has prepared for her (cf. Eph 2.10), playing her own special part in his all-embracing, providential plan for bringing about his kingdom. And since God really does love her, his plan is that she make the most of his gifts so that she will become all that she can be in his kingdom and then, after serving the Father in this life, be given her own special place in his house.

That evening, the retreat master leads the group in Evening Prayer, something new to Miriam. As they read the Gospel canticle, it seems to her that Mary is there, reading her holy manifesto by using Miriam's voice and lips:

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,  
My spirit rejoices in God my Savior  
For he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.  
From this day all generations will call me blessed:  
The Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name.

Profoundly moved, Miriam resolves to try to discern God's will in everything and do it—to seek the kingdom first of all and to leave unsatisfied any other desire she might have, no matter how innocent in itself.

Miriam learns how to discern and perseveres in trying to keep her resolution. But during adolescence, that is hard. Feeling Jesus is letting her down, she prays anxiously. She also begins going to daily Mass when she can. Her love for Jesus grows, and on July 15 between high school and college she has another extraordinary experience. Awakening early, her room flooded with sunlight, she feels very peaceful. She recalls her confirmation and Jesus' promise to send the Holy Spirit. The conviction fills her heart that the Spirit is with her and will always take good care of her. From that moment, she trusts Jesus completely and prays simply: "Here I am Lord. Do with me what you will."

During her college years, Miriam thinks she might be called to be a Franciscan sister. But in her senior year she becomes friendly with a classmate and shares her spirituality with him. He makes a commitment like hers, and they discern the call to marry. They do so after graduation, and they soon begin having children. Busy nursing her babies, being a good wife, and homemaking, Miriam often is preoccupied. Nevertheless, her action continues to be shaped by her ultimate end even when she is not thinking about it. How? She is faithfully carrying out the responsibilities that flow from commitments she made because she had discerned them to be God's will. Thus, Miriam habitually always is acting for the kingdom, but actually does so only at Mass and when she has time to pray.

This example makes it clear that habitually intending God as ultimate end in choosing to commit a venial sin would mean that one had made a previous choice for the sake of God, and then, to implement that choice, had made another choice, and so on—

right down to the choice to commit the venial sin. However, no sinful choice whatsoever can implement a previous upright choice. The Christian in grace who chooses to sin venially does love God habitually and does not love him actually. But he or she must also actually love something else enough to choose to act for its sake, yet without expecting much from it. In technical language: the ultimate end of Christians precisely insofar as they are in grace cannot be the *per se* final cause of their venial sins. Such Christians love God, but other goods are the *per se* ultimate ends of their venial sins.

For example, Miriam's twin sister, Aarona, single but inconveniently pregnant, has an abortion and confides the truth to Miriam. Saddened but understanding, Miriam simply embraces Aarona and cries with her until Miriam's babies demand attention. Aarona, repentant, goes off to confession. She tells others, including their mother, that she lost the baby. But their mother—suspicious and sure Miriam will know—asks her by e-mail. Not having committed a deliberate sin in years, Miriam does not want to lie. She delays but her mother presses, and Miriam reluctantly replies: "I'm worried about Aarona, too, but I don't know what's going on with her these days. She hasn't been talking with me like she used to."

That is almost true, and Miriam realizes many people would not consider it a lie. But she does. She thinks: "I don't want to lose Aarona's trust. Without our good cry, she might not have gone to confession. But I'm not following God's plan on this, and he really cannot be pleased. Still, it's only a venial sin, and Jesus will somehow deal with it." Plainly, Miriam is deliberately choosing to lie and, equally plainly, she simultaneously has two ultimate ends: the kingdom and her relationship with Aarona. So, while everything does tend toward its own fulfillment, human persons, in making free choices, can intend as their ultimate end something from which they do not expect complete fulfillment. Therefore, Thomas is mistaken in holding that one must intend as one's ultimate end something from which one expects such complete fulfillment that there will be nothing more to desire.<sup>14</sup>

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

Thomas's argument that the body is not essential to beatitude begins by quoting St. Paul (2 Cor 5.6) to show that a soul can enjoy the beatific vision without the body. He also argues: "Since the perfect beatitude of human persons consists in the vision of the

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<sup>14</sup> Miriam is convinced that her relationship with her sister is part of God's plan for her life and, in choosing to lie, she intends Aarona's spiritual welfare. So, many would say that Miriam's lie cannot be a sin. But it certainly is a sin to do something, as Miriam does, that one thinks, even mistakenly, to be a sin. And Miriam makes no mistake. While she intends as ends only what is good, choosing to act for them by lying is a bad means. Miriam gives her mother a self other than her true self, and intending that untrue self is self-injurious. And because God loves Miriam, her self-injury distresses him, even though he is pleased by her self-sacrifice for her sister's sake in the very same act. The Father wills only good for his children. In lying to their mother, Aarona and Miriam manifest defects in their relationships with her and with each other. When asked for the truth, Miriam should have explained to Aarona why she could not lie and urged her to admit to their mother that she had lied. If Aarona refused, Miriam should have told their mother the truth, but urged her to cooperate in improving their defective relationship with Aarona.

divine essence, their perfect beatitude does not depend on the body. So, the soul can be blessed without the body" (*S.t.*, 1-2, q. 4, a. 5, c.). His argument that the company of friends is not essential is similar: "If we speak of the perfect beatitude that will exist in heaven, the company of friends is not essential to beatitude, since the human person has the whole plenitude of his or her perfection in God" (*S.t.*, 1-2, q. 4, a. 8, c.).

In both cases, Thomas goes on at once to indicate the relation between the beatific vision and the human good he has excluded from beatitude, and thus from the true ultimate end of human persons. The explanation in the case of the body is:

But one must consider that something can belong to an entity's perfection in two ways. In one way, by constituting the thing's essence, as the soul is required to the perfection of a human being. In another way, what is required for an entity's perfection belongs to its well-being, as bodily beauty and quick-wittedness belong to a person's perfection.

Therefore, although the body does not belong to the perfection of human beatitude in the first way, it does belong to it in the second way. For since a thing's operation depends on its nature, when the soul will be more perfect in its own nature, it will more perfectly have its proper operation, in which felicity consists. Thus, Augustine (*Super Genesim ad litteram*, xii, 35), when he asks "whether the highest happiness can be ascribed to the disembodied spirits of the dead" answers that "they cannot see the immutable substance as the holy angels see it; either due to some more hidden reason or because there is in them a certain natural desire for managing the body."

Thomas employs the same distinction in the case of friends: "The companionship of friends makes for the well-being of beatitude."

That attempted explanation fails. What contributes to anything's well-being perfects its fulfillment. If something contributes to the well-being of perfect fulfillment, it further perfects fulfillment that is already perfect. But what is perfect by definition cannot be further perfected. Therefore, since Thomas defines beatitude as perfect fulfillment, he cannot meaningfully claim that anything makes for its well-being.

Moreover, in the explanation quoted above, Thomas includes Augustine's suggestion that the disembodied soul enjoying the beatific vision still might have an unsatisfied desire for managing the body. Thomas also deals with an objection based on another suggestion of Augustine, namely, that the body's absence somehow prevents the separated soul from fully enjoying the beatific vision. Thomas responds that what is lacking is not essential to beatitude but only to its perfection, and that the soul desires to enjoy God in such a way that its joy will overflow into the body, insofar as possible (see *S.t.*, 1-2, q. 4, a. 5, ad 4). However, in wrestling with Augustine's suggestions, Thomas provides additional evidence of his explanation's failure. For if the complete good that satiates all desire is attained by the vision of God alone, the disembodied soul enjoying the beatific vision cannot have any desire whatsoever bearing upon the body.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> In other contexts, Thomas holds that because the human person is the composite of soul and body, the ongoing existence after death of one's soul without one's body is not the survival of oneself, but only of, as it were, a spiritual remnant of oneself. The point is made most strikingly in the report of Thomas's commentary on Paul: "A person naturally desires the salvation of himself or herself; but, since the soul is part of the human body, it is not the entire human being, and my soul is not I; so, even if the soul reached salvation in another life, neither I nor any human being would thereby do so" (see *Super primam epistolam*

The Apostles' Creed ends with "the resurrection of the body and life everlasting" and the Nicene Creed with "We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come." The words *We look for* make it clear that we hope for both the resurrection and the life of the world to come. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* treats resurrection and everlasting life in two separate articles and makes it clear that bodily resurrection is an object of hope (see §989).

Under "Life Everlasting," the *Catechism* implies that friends are essential to it. In describing heaven, that article says among other things: "Heaven is the blessed community of all who are perfectly incorporated into Christ. This blessed communion with God and all who are in Christ is beyond all understanding and description" (§1026-27; italics added).

In his argument, Thomas affirmed what Benedict XII solemnly defined in 1336: the souls of deceased Christians, while without their bodies, can enjoy the beatific vision. Benedict also solemnly defined that the souls of the damned will rise.<sup>16</sup> So, neither resurrection nor everlasting life includes the other, and the two objects of hope are distinct. Since neither will be a mere means to some ulterior end, both must be included in the true ultimate end of Christian life. And of course, the human body, raised in glory, remains a created reality. Therefore, it is not only false but implicitly contrary to Catholic faith to say, as Thomas does, that the true ultimate end "is not found in anything created, but only in God" (S.t., 1-2, q. 2, a. 8, c.).

For this and other reasons, I believe that the classical restless-heart thesis is at odds with Catholic faith. Our hearts do not naturally tend toward complete fulfillment in God.<sup>17</sup> Rather than necessarily desiring perfect, we naturally tend toward a rich and growing fulfillment of our capacities possible within the conditions of life on earth. I shall briefly sketch the ultimate end toward which human beings should naturally direct their lives and how divine revelation complements that end.

Whenever human individuals or groups choose, they intend some benefit for some person or group of persons. In carrying out their choices, they hope to protect or promote some element of the well-being or flourishing of those for whose sake they act. Therefore, in thinking about ultimate ends, we must consider both the persons for whose

<sup>16</sup> See *Benedictus Deus*, DS 1000-1002; in J. Neuner, S.J., and J. Dupuis, S.J., *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, 6<sup>th</sup> rev. ed. (New York: Alba House, 1996), 942-44. Unfortunately, Thomas did not bring that point to bear in treating beatitude. Had he done so, he might have been moved to redefine beatitude rather than accept his own teaching's implication that Christians who are not yet saved attain their true ultimate end.

<sup>17</sup> See *Benedictus Deus*, DS 1000-1002; in J. Neuner, S.J., and J. Dupuis, S.J., *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, 6<sup>th</sup> rev. ed. (New York: Alba House, 1996), 942-44. Benedict also states that "by this vision and enjoyment the souls of those who have already died are truly blessed and have eternal life and rest." But that does not preclude a desire for the resurrection they had hoped for. However, all sadness and unrest surely is precluded by their absolute certitude that in due time their bodies will be raised and that their other holy desires will be satisfied.

<sup>18</sup> Human persons' calling to share in divine life is entirely gratuitous and supernatural (see DS 1921, 1923). Revelation is absolutely necessary only because God has called human persons to a supernatural end (see DS 3005). God could have created intellectual beings without ordering and calling them to the beatific vision (see DS 3891). So, human beings could have been created without being called to the beatific vision, and God did not constitute them so that their heart naturally tends toward that maximal union with himself.

sake we ought always to act and the elements of well-being or flourishing with which we should try always to benefit them.

Because those elements are diverse goods intrinsic to persons and communities, they are parts of the complete well-being and flourishing of persons, parts of their fulfillment as a whole. Since a whole is greater than its parts, persons and communities for whom we act are always greater than any good for the sake of which we act in trying to benefit them. We love both. But we love persons and communities for themselves, while loving the benefits we seek as contributions to their good. Thus, those benefits are means, not means to any extrinsic end, but means of fulfilling those benefited.

The elements of human well-being and flourishing are the fundamental goods of human persons: harmony with God; harmony among human beings; harmony among one's own judgments, choices, feelings, and behavior; life, including health and bodily integrity; skillful work and play; knowledge and esthetic experience; and marriage, including parenthood. Everyone knows these goods naturally with practical insights that direct actions toward them. Those insights do not tell us in whom the good is to be realized. For example, the insight that harmony with God is to be protected and promoted does not say: protected and promoted in me or in any particular individual or group.<sup>18</sup>

Finding ourselves contingently existing and directed naturally toward our own good, we can and should come to know God as creator and provident Lord, and recognize the principles of practical reasoning as his guidance. But besides that general guidance for everyone, we also should recognize God's guidance in the unique gifts and opportunities to use them afforded to each of us and each community we participate in. We also should strive to discern in those data indications regarding which courses of action open to us and compatible with God's general guidance seem to pertain to his actual plan for us.<sup>19</sup>

With respect to those to be benefited, we should take as our ultimate end an inclusive community of human persons along with God and also other intelligent creatures, insofar as we know them and can somehow cooperate with them. As for God, without revelation we can cooperate with him only by following his guidance in acting for human goods and can intend his good only by thinking of it in terms of various perfections for which we can acknowledge, praise, and thank him. In doing those things, we protect and promote the human good of harmony with God.

With respect to benefits, our ultimate end should include the protection and promotion of all the fundamental human goods in every way compatible with loving all persons and all the intrinsic aspects of their well-being and flourishing.

Obviously, no possible course of action that any human person or purely human group can choose and carry out will in every way possible promote and protect all the fundamental goods in every person. However, the realization of all the fundamental

<sup>18</sup> For a much richer summary of the natural-law theory briefly sketched here, see Germain Grisez, Joseph Boyle, and John Finnis, "Practical Principles, Moral Truth, and Ultimate Ends," *American Journal of Jurisprudence*, 32 (1987): 99-151. What we said about ultimate ends there is developed and in some respects corrected by the present treatment.

<sup>19</sup> This point and some others in what follows are treated more fully in Germain Grisez, "Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment," *American Journal of Jurisprudence*, 46 (2001): 3-36.

goods in every person, which I call “integral human fulfillment,” can be intended in choosing any good human act, just as a proximate end, such as the health of a whole family can be intended in every act that family members choose to promote and protect their own and one another’s health, although no action any of them can do protects and promotes the whole family’s health in every possible way. Similarly, individuals and groups making choices always can try to play their part in the vast community of humankind by making their contribution to integral human well-being and flourishing. And they always can avoid intentionally impeding or detracting from integral human fulfillment.

Because human possibilities are always unfolding and human powers are always limited, the ultimate end cannot be complete fulfillment that satiates the appetite. Moreover, experience and reflection continually deepen insight into what the fundamental human goods concretely involve and how to protect and promote them.

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God’s self-revelation confirms all that human beings can naturally know about their ultimate end. It corrects mistakes about matters people could naturally know. It also provides information they could not otherwise obtain, thus opening up otherwise unavailable possibilities for human choice and action. The revelation of the fall and of diabolical activity explains distressing aspects of the human condition. God’s revelation in Christ provides information about living uprightly in the world as it is and the ability to do so, and in this way empowers us to contribute to integral human well-being and flourishing in the everlasting kingdom not of this world.

In teaching about the new earth and new heaven, Vatican II explains that resurrection will be communal. Those who die in Christ will rise in him, and somehow the whole of subhuman creation, which God created for humankind’s sake, will be renewed. With respect to human goods, the Council explains:

After we have promoted on earth, in the Spirit of the Lord and in accord with his command, the goods of human dignity, familial communion, and liberty—that is to say, all the good fruits of our nature and effort—then we shall find them once more, but cleansed of all dirt, lit up, and transformed, when Christ gives back to the Father an eternal and universal kingdom: “a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love, and peace.”<sup>20</sup> On this earth the kingdom is present in mystery even now; with the Lord’s coming, however, it will be consummated. (GS 39)

Vatican II thus teaches that every human good is an essential constituents of the kingdom, our true ultimate end.

Strictly speaking, God is not the ultimate end toward which we should direct our lives. That end is God’s kingdom, which will be a wonderful communion of divine persons, human persons, and other created persons. Every member of the kingdom will be richly fulfilled in respect to all human goods, including friendship with God. Given the openness of human capacities, they never will be so completely fulfilled that they will

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<sup>20</sup> The Council’s note: “24. *Roman Missal*, Preface of the Feast of Christ the King.”

have nothing more to desire, but will be increasingly fulfilled. The heavenly wedding feast will never end but will forever become still better and still more joyful.

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

What about the beatific vision? It is the Father's infinitely precious gift to created persons who love him, for it is sharing, somehow, in the intimacy he enjoys with his Word and Spirit. The fact that human persons *humanly* accept it as God's gift contributes to the human good of friendship with God. Nevertheless, it is not itself a human good. It does not fulfill any capacity of human nature; it is not attained by a human act of intellect, will, or any other power. It is beyond anything human beings could ask or imagine. But through the Spirit God revealed "what eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and what has not entered the human heart, what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor 2.9). Our *human* heart is not restless for the beatific vision precisely because that gift is a *divine* perfection toward which we *human* persons can tend only if and insofar as we share in the *divine* nature and truly are children of God in the Child, Jesus Christ, who is at once our brother and our Lord.

As God, Jesus could not suffer and die, nor could he give us flesh and blood of his own to make us one body with him and in him. As human, we could never go with Jesus to his Fatherland and see him, his Father, and their Spirit. But they gave us a share in their nature, and "we are God's children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 Jn 3.2). Because what God has prepared never entered into our heart, our heart never was restless for the beatific vision. But something besides the human heart now acts within us. The spirit of adoption cries out: "Abba, Father" (Rom 8.15)—Daddy, daddy!—and we long to be embraced by his everlasting arms.

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Revelation falsifies the classical restless-heart thesis. It came not from the New Testament but from the neo-Platonism of Plotinus and Porphyry. For them, human souls, having come from the One by emanation through several stages, were naturally akin to their source, though much diminished by their threefold unreality: otherness from the One, individuality, and corporeality. On their view, human hearts were naturally restless, not for any fulfillment proper to the unrealities that made them human—which was impossible—but for the closest possible approach to union with the One.

Augustine rejected anything he recognized as wrong with neo-Platonism but overlooked other things wrong with it and transposed them into theological propositions about God and us. The restless heart was not his only blunder. Another was regarding God as the good that fulfills human hearts, which led him to oppose the love of God,

even to the contempt of self, to the love of self, even to the contempt of God.<sup>21</sup> The true opposition is between, on the one hand, love of God and neighbor as oneself and, on the other, unwillingness to cooperate with God, culpable self-deception, and indifference toward or hatred of others. The love at once of God, self, and neighbor characterizes the heavenly city. The earthly city is characterized, not by love's opposites, but by diverse mixtures of love and of its opposites that disturb the hearts of all those still dwelling in this broken world.

In many cases, Thomas unobtrusively corrected errors into which Augustine and other Church Fathers were led by neo-Platonism. But he missed some, especially when the neo-Platonism the Fathers had known was reinforced by that of the theological author who, probably in the sixth-century, pretended to be Paul's disciple, Dionysius. Believing that he was and that the ultimate end is the beatific vision, Thomas readily accepted the pseudo-Dionysian view that Christians become holy by detaching themselves as completely as possible from worldly goods, contemplating divine things, and becoming as united with God as possible in this life. On that view, the universal call to holiness is answered in only one way. Nobody will try to respond to it, as every Christian should, in the way Miriam perseveringly although imperfectly did, by discerning and embracing her personal vocation, and participating worthily in the Eucharist.

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Provoked by the preceding arguments and annoyed by my bold and unsparing presentation, many are likely to take offense. Their reaction might be:

How dare he attack a doctrine held not only by St. Augustine and St. Thomas but by most other Church Fathers and Doctors, and taken for granted in many Church documents? Why should faithful Catholics believe him against great saints with brilliant minds? Isn't his lack of diffidence and circumspection evidence of presumptuous pride and insensitivity? And isn't irresponsible for anyone even to call into question—much less reject as at odds with Catholic faith—a perennial doctrine that is tantamount to faith?

That reaction cannot be dismissed as *ad hominem* sophistry. It deserves a thoughtful response.

Since I hold that faithful Catholics should not believe even the great theologians who have been recognized and commended by the Church's pastors, I certainly do not expect anyone to believe me. Every theological statement I make should be read as qualified by "It seems to me" or "If I am not mistaken." I simply ask fellow believers to try to understand the theological alternative I am proposing, consider the possibility that it is sound, and evaluate it by the standard we all accept, namely, the faith of the Catholic Church.

John XXIII knew that today's world, pervaded by the cancer of secularism, desperately needs God's revelation in Jesus and that the Christian people need the light of faith to guide their feet through the darkness that has grown ever deeper since the Enlightenment. He therefore asked the Second Vatican Council to provide a fresh

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<sup>21</sup> See *City of God*, xiv, 28.

presentation of the substance of the ancient truths of faith, always retaining the same meaning and the same position.

The Council did so. Its beautiful teachings, such as that on the new earth and new heaven, from which I quoted above, could contribute powerfully to the evangelization of the unbaptized and the re-evangelization of fallen away and lukewarm Christians. But they have been almost entirely ignored. The Council's teaching about personal vocation, exemplified above by the story of Miriam's spirituality, has hardly been received, despite John Paul II's richly detailed development of it. Yet that teaching would help many hear God calling them by name and show them how to respond to his call to holiness—a call God addresses to all by addressing it to each of his children personally.

In considering why such teachings are not taking hold and bearing fruit, I concluded that dissenting moral theologians are preoccupied with legalistic minimalism while faithful theologians are preoccupied with the theology and spirituality I have criticized above. More than twenty years ago, I published a book in which I gave reasons and evidence for the alternative proposed here. That volume's message has reached few, perhaps because its rhetoric was rather temperate in tone and low in intensity.

Augustine and Thomas were great pastors, anxious to make God's saving gifts in Jesus available to more people. Like Paul, they were impelled by the love of Christ. One honors such men by sharing their commitment and doing one's bit to carry on the Church's mission. That is not done by clinging to elements of their theological views that have been shown to be untenable and that render potential and weak believers vulnerable to the onslaught of dogmatic secularism.

Considered as a whole, the theology of beatitude which St. Thomas ably articulated, and many others shared, helped innumerable people without faith to hear and respond to the Gospel and innumerable others with faith to keep it, grow in it, and hand it on. Still, new and more difficult projects can reveal unsuspected defects in tools that have served well for a long time. The secularism of modern times has presented new challenges to Christian faith by championing the human goods to which Catholics, influenced by neo-Platonism, failed to give their due.

In the works of the Church Fathers, Doctors, and other good theologians, as well as in the documents of the magisterium, one finds many things that tell against the views I criticize and support elements of the alternative I propose. The few items I have mined from those sources are only samples of their rich lode. Thus, I am not challenging the whole Catholic theological tradition but sharply calling attention to irreconcilable oppositions within it.

Those oppositions within the theological tradition of Christian anthropology—which I would prefer to call “Christianology”—need to be settled just as conflicts within Christology needed to be settled when the first six general councils of the Church began settling them in 325. I am convinced that they will be settled and that, after they are, the affirmation of the classical restless-heart thesis will be heretical. But I am not so sure the alternative I propose will avoid the same fate.

How will these oppositions be resolved?

The faith of the Church judges theological views and their alternatives. No existing solemn definition or infallible teaching of the ordinary magisterium can settle these issues. The only sure available witness to the Church's faith is the Bible. Now, many New Testament passages by several sacred writers make it clear that bodily resurrection pertains to Christian hope. Even more passages throughout the Bible identify the kingdom as the principal object of hope and describe it as a real community where God dwells with his people. Passages regarding the beatific vision are comparatively few. So far as I can see, none of them supports the view that the vision of God alone is the principal object of hope and the sole constituent of the ultimate end of Christian life.

The faith of the Church is an essential part of the communion of the new covenant, which is God's gift in Jesus to humankind; theologies are products of human thought and work. The faith of the Church develops as she holds and contemplates, protects against misunderstandings and attacks, and hands on to generation after generation all that she herself is and all that she believes (see *Dei Verbum*, 8). And this tradition of faith is carried on in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, who ensures that what God has given for the salvation of all humankind will remain available to the ends of the earth and to the end of time. Theologies develop as believers, striving to appropriate and communicate all that the Church has and hands on, contribute to an ongoing dialogue with one another. In that human work, as in all other intellectual disciplines, errors are inevitable, and progress is made only by detecting errors and proposing alternatives—which, of course, will have their own defects. Therefore, while it is irresponsible for any believer to call into question even the least central truth of faith, treating perennial theological doctrines as if they were truths of faith is no less mistaken and likely to be just as damaging to the Church's life and mission.

Still, one can understand the tendency of faithful Catholics to cling to theological doctrines from which they should detach themselves. A theological doctrine that has served its purpose for a long time may well have come to seem as essential to the Church as some of the less central truths of her faith. It might help to reflect on the fact that Jesus founded his Church less than two thousand years ago. For all we know, the Second Coming might well be millions of years from now. In that case, the first two thousand years of Christian theology's long walk will eventually seem to have been hardly more than baby steps.

Although the Holy Spirit, in building up the kingdom of God, can use not only materials of poor quality but defective tools, each of us nevertheless is called to offer better material and provide better tools if we can. Of course, whenever we do something good, our doing was God's gift. For lowly servants, the mighty Lord does all good things, little as well as great, and holy is his name.

