

## **SPE SALVI ON ESCHATOLOGICAL AND SECULAR HOPE: A THOMISTIC CRITIQUE OF AN AUGUSTINIAN ENCYCLICAL**

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*Spe salvi emphasizes the difference between eschatological and secular hope, but does not adequately articulate their connection. Drawing on Aquinas, the article advances arguments that spell out the connection between eschatological and secular hope. Secular hopes not only participate in eschatological hope but are its means of realization. Aquinas's biblical reflections on the law and the beatitudes provide supporting examples. Finally, since an inadequate connection between eschatological and secular hope can issue in an unconvincing theological analysis of human suffering, concluding reflections reframe some of Benedict's comments on suffering.*

**I**N HIS SECOND ENCYCLICAL, *Spe salvi*, Pope Benedict XVI eloquently testifies to the meaning and significance of Christian hope. Its opening words quote the Apostle Paul's paradoxical assertion that hope for a future with God somehow constitutes salvation even now ("by hope we are saved"—"*Spe salvi facti sumus*" [Rom 8:24]). Generalizing Paul's claim, Benedict's first paragraph strikes a note that recurs throughout the document: hope does not avoid the challenges of the present; to the contrary, it is the very disposition "by which we can face our present, [since] the present, even if it is arduous, can be lived and accepted if it leads towards a goal" (no. 1). Christian hope, in particular, draws the person into Christ's self-giving love for humanity (no. 28). Thus, even though it is "certainly directed beyond the present world, as such it also has to do with the building up of this world" (no. 15). A central claim of *Spe salvi*, then, may be stated as follows: the desire for eternal life with God supports the aspirations of temporal life in the world (such as for political justice and

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economic development).<sup>1</sup> In Benedict's terms, the "great hope" for a future with God sustains all the "greater or lesser hopes" for human flourishing now.

Overshadowing this claim, however, is the repeated, forceful, and seemingly contrary insistence on the radical difference between two kinds of hope: eschatological and secular.<sup>2</sup> This insistence derives from the characteristically Augustinian warning against placing ultimate hope in finite goods.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For further examples, see the encyclical's comments on prayer. As prayer guides and deepens hope—because it purifies desire and thus directs one away from "meager, misplaced hopes" (no. 33) and toward authentic hope in God—we are "prepared for the service of our fellow human beings" (no. 34). In this way, Christian hope becomes an "active . . . [and] truly human hope" as it resists evil and "keep[s] the world open to God" (no. 34). For reasons such as these Benedict can claim that "all serious and upright human conduct is hope in action" (no. 35).

Similar arguments are advanced in his 1977 book-length treatment of eschatology: "eschatology does not sidestep the shared tasks of the world, shifting the focus of human concern to the beyond, or making us retreat into a private salvation for individual souls. The starting point of Christian eschatology is precisely commitment to the common justice guaranteed in the One who sacrificed his life for the justice of mankind at large and thus brought it justification" (Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, trans. by Michael Waldstein, 2nd ed. [Washington: Catholic University of America, 1988] 100). When quoting from this and other works written prior to his election as pope, I will refer to Benedict XVI as Ratzinger.

<sup>2</sup> By "secular hopes" is meant those temporal aspirations that properly belong to the world (e.g., for social justice and moral virtue) as distinct from the radically theological hope for an ultimate, eternal fulfillment with God that transcends time. Thus, the distinction is not between supernatural and natural hope—that is, between hopes that are explicitly graced and hopes that are proportionate to, and attainable by, ordinary human capabilities. Rather, the distinction is between the hope that intends a divine goal utterly transcending time (which must be graced) and the hopes that intend temporal realities in the world (which may or may not be graced).

<sup>3</sup> I use the terms "Augustinian" and "Thomist" as imprecise generalizations that attempt to name differing emphases in theologians who take their lead from Augustine or Thomas respectively. While it is difficult to capture this difference in an abstract definition, certain characteristics can be invoked. An "Augustinian" sensibility would insist on the sharp contrast between eschatological and secular hope, the deep and ineradicable nature of sin, and thus the limits—even tragic flaws—of all human projects. A good example of the roots of the less oppositional "Thomistic" sensibility can be seen in Aquinas's response to the question, "Whether any true virtue is possible without charity?" (*Summa theologiae* [hereafter *ST*] 2–2, q. 23, a. 7), in which he qualifies Augustine by defending "true yet imperfect virtues" that intend temporal goods, such as "the welfare of the state."

Benedict's Augustinian sympathies, from his 1953 doctoral dissertation on Augustine to his 1996 self-description as "decidedly Augustinian," are well documented—e.g., by Joseph Komonchak in "The Church in Crisis: Pope Benedict's Theological Vision," *Commonweal* 132.11 (June 3, 2005) 11–14—and lie behind his ambivalence over *Gaudium et spes*, a document heavily influenced by the decidedly Thomist thinker, Marie-Dominique Chenu. In *Spe salvi*, Augustine is by far the most cited theologian in the encyclical (seven times). The use of the term

Elide these two hopes and the perennial temptation to idolatry becomes harder to resist. But, while these hopes must of course be clearly distinguished, the encyclical's emphasis on their difference obscures the fullness of their relationship; for that relationship has two elements: (1) eschatological hope, precisely because it radically differs from and transcends secular hopes, enables and sustains them, especially as they encounter difficulty; and (2) notwithstanding that difference, secular hopes can themselves anticipate and participate in eschatological hope by preparing the person for God. By emphasizing the difference between secular and eschatological hopes, *Spe salvi* clearly brings out the first element of their relationship. But by only partially recognizing their unity, it obscures how secular hopes actively participate in, and are not only passively sustained by, eschatological hope. Thus, while the encyclical presents the crucial contrast between eschatological and secular hope, it does not fully acknowledge the equally crucial connection. As a result, it fails to convey adequately the participation of secular hopes in the comprehensive movement toward union with God. It therefore potentially detaches—contrary to its own intention—the secular human good from its deepest, theological source of moral motivation. That detachment, in turn, can lead to a theological misconstrual of, and pessimistic acquiescence in, the suffering to which hope responds.

The encyclical's profound Augustinian insight could benefit from arguments drawn from Thomas Aquinas that articulate how secular hopes participate in eschatological hope. Following the methodology of an earlier article by Joseph Ratzinger, which explored the idea of Christian hope through a Franciscan lens, my article uses a Thomistic lens.<sup>4</sup> But what follows is no facile appeal to winsome Thomistic principles (such as "grace perfects nature") that overlooks the reality of suffering or diminishes God's transcendence. The first half of this article supplements Benedict's defense of the vital difference between eschatological and secular hopes with Thomistic arguments. It concludes, however, that their very difference grounds their connection. The second half of this article develops that unity between eschatological and secular hope. Aquinas's general doctrine of

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"Augustinian," however, should not be taken to imply a bowdlerized account of Augustine's position. For example, in a telling discussion of Augustine's episcopal responsibilities (that involved liberating the oppressed and helping the needy) Benedict eschews any talk of "two cities." Instead, he states that it was precisely Augustine's hope that "enabled him to take part decisively and with all his strength in the task of building up the city . . . his city" (no. 29).

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, "On Hope," *Communio: International Catholic Review* 12 (1985) 71–84, originally a lecture given at the jubilee of the Franciscan college of Rome, the Antonianum. To the extent that this lecture depends on Bonaventure (the topic of Benedict's *Habilitationschrift*), it further indicates the Augustinian bent of his thinking.

hope explains not only how all secular hopes can be ordered to eschatological hope, but also how they constitute the very means through which eschatological hope is realized. Aquinas's specific discussions of hope, in the context of the law and the beatitudes, elaborate this claim. They also reveal the cruciform way in which he understands grace to perfect nature. Finally, concluding reflections challenge Benedict's theological interpretation of suffering that arise from his tenuous connection between eschatological and secular hopes. Despite these criticisms, however, this article fundamentally supports *Spe salvi*. Since the encyclical genre does not allow extended systematic presentation of ideas, the following Thomistic gloss serves to remove possible misinterpretation, to amplify incipient positions, and thereby to facilitate the effective communication of a powerful and authoritative expression of Christian hope.

### THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ESCHATOLOGICAL AND SECULAR HOPE

By way of entry into this argument, it is instructive to compare *Spe salvi* with Benedict's first encyclical, *Deus caritas est*. This comparison reveals a significant difference in their accounts of the relationship between worldly love/hope and theological love/hope.

#### Contrasting Emphases of *Deus caritas est* and *Spe salvi*

*Deus caritas est* is shot through with the insistence on, and exposition of, the unity between God's love and human charitable activity, the two central and "profoundly interconnected" themes that constitute the two sections of the encyclical (no. 1). Indeed, the encyclical transitions between its two sections via a discussion of "Love of God and love neighbour" (nos. 16–18), which are affirmed as an "inseparable . . . single commandment" (no. 18). Consequently, "the entire activity of the Church is an expression of love that seeks the integral good of man" (no. 19) through its intimately woven practices of sacrament, word, and service (no. 25a).

Further connections are elaborated in the first section, "The Unity of Love in Creation and in Salvation History," which explores the deep connectedness of natural love and graced love. Echoing Aquinas's famous dictum on grace, Benedict argues that Christianity does not destroy eros, but heals and restores it through agape (no. 5). Methodologically, these anthropological and philosophical reflections on human love prepare the way for the biblical and theological reflections on divine love (no. 7). Any "radicalized" separation of eros and agape into a "clear antithesis" is firmly rejected because then "the essence of Christianity would be detached from the vital relations fundamental to human existence, and would become a world apart . . . decisively cut off from the complex fabric of human life"

(no. 7). To the contrary, “the more the two, in their different aspects, find a proper unity in the one reality of love, the more the true nature of love in general is realized” (no. 7). Various images and analogies are invoked to convey this “inseparable connection”—e.g., Jacob’s ladder (no. 7) and the unity of body and soul (no. 5). The following passage communicates the unmistakably perfective nature of Christian love:

Fundamentally, love is a single reality. . . . When the two dimensions are totally cut off from one another, the result is a caricature. . . . Biblical faith does not set up a parallel universe, or one opposed to that primordial human phenomenon which is love, but rather accepts the whole man; it intervenes in his search for love in order to purify it and to reveal new dimensions to it. (No. 8)

As the encyclical draws to a close, Benedict strikes a more somber note, acknowledging the difficulties that impede the full realization of the Christian ideal of love. The final paragraphs turn to a discussion of the Cross and Job in order to show how it is still possible to move toward the fullness of love in and through difficulties. Thus, seen through a Thomistic lens, these closing reflections on love segue to the next encyclical’s reflections on hope, for hope, according to Aquinas, is the movement toward a future, difficult, yet possible good.<sup>5</sup> The overriding purpose of these closing reflections on love is to exhort those engaged in charitable work to find solace and encouragement in prayer. For prayer especially draws us into the “living relationship with Christ [that keeps] us on the right path” between, on the one hand, the naïve optimism that would solve every problem by controlling history and, on the other, the fatalistic resignation that thinks no problem can be solved (no. 36). Through this habit of prayer comes a disposition that relies upon God’s help and finds the mean between presumption and despair—a disposition otherwise known as the theological virtue of hope. This should come as no surprise because, for Aquinas, “prayer is the interpreting of hope” by which, one might say, we discern our way on that narrow path.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, *Deus caritas est* ends by affirming the decisive role of hope in sustaining the commitment to justice in the face of difficulties. Turning to the encyclical on hope, one might therefore expect an extended account of the unity between hope for eternal happiness with God and hope for temporal justice among people, or at least some elaboration of how worldly

<sup>5</sup> Benedict does not make this connection. For Aquinas’s presentation of the formal characteristics of hope, see *ST* 1–2, q. 40, a. 1. All translations from Aquinas are my own. When Aquinas is quoted in the body of the text, I provide the Latin in the footnotes. Unless otherwise mentioned, subsequent references to Aquinas are from the *Summa theologiae*.

<sup>6</sup> “Petitio est spei interpretative” (*ST* 2–2, q. 17, a. 2, obj. 2). More generally, “oratio est quodammodo interpretative voluntatis humanae” (*ST* 3, q. 21, a. 4, resp.).

hope anticipates theological hope and is perfected by it. These expectations, however, are only partially met, and through a circuitous route at that. For whereas *Deus caritas est* stresses how God's love perfects the human love that anticipates and participates in grace, *Spe salvi* emphasizes how graced hope contrasts with the human hopes that fundamentally cannot anticipate grace. My goal is not to criticize that emphasis in *Spe salvi*—for there are good historical and theological reasons for it—but to add some Thomistic reflections and distinctions that would forestall any misinterpretation that may arise from that emphasis, which, if not one-sided, remains incomplete.

*Spe salvi*'s emphasis on the difference between secular and theological hope can be seen, interestingly enough, in the very places where it clearly affirms their connection. Consider the example used to illustrate the point mentioned above: that eschatological hope, although it is “directed beyond the present world, as such it also has to do with the building up of this world” (no. 15). The evidence for this claim is the agricultural labor of medieval monks. While not wishing to slight this work, it seems strange that other fruits of medieval religious life that directly engaged human suffering were not mentioned, such as the foundation of hospitals or the formation of mendicant orders, both of which responded to the poverty attendant upon urbanization. It seems strange, too, that the one example offered here for the transformational nature of Christian hope now is agricultural development 800 years ago. One might therefore surmise that the invocation of medieval rustic purity serves more as a contrast to modern scientific hubris—the theme of the immediately following section (“The transformation of Christian faith-hope in the modern age” [nos. 16–23])—than as a viable model for contemporary Christians.<sup>7</sup> In any event, this passage certainly leaves plenty of room to develop the claim that eschatological hope builds up the world.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Perhaps one glimpses here a certain nostalgia for pre-1960s Bavaria. According to Nicholas Boyle, Benedict stands in that not atypical stream of German intellectual life that lacks “any instinctive understanding of the commercial, industrial, and financial world, the circle of investment, employment, production, and consumption.” Further, “no one who has their own memories of pre-industrial Catholicism (from Ireland perhaps) will fail to be moved by Ratzinger’s recollections of the Corpus Christi processions of his childhood, the self-expression of a unified, God-directed community. But in the world to which Benedict has to minister” things have changed (Nicholas Boyle, “The New Spirit of Germany,” *Tablet* 259.8587 [May 7, 2005] 4–5, at 5).

<sup>8</sup> To be fair, the section on Augustine as bishop (nos. 28–29) indicates how his hope in God “enabled him to take part decisively and with all his strength in the task of building up the city” (no. 29). But that brief account of the connection between secular life and eschatological hope is framed in terms of love, not hope. “Love of God leads to participation in the justice and generosity of God towards

There are further instances of the very assertion of the connection between secular and eschatological hope revealing a deeper emphasis on their difference. Consider, for example, the very clear and seemingly promising claim that would signal a fuller exploration of how secular hopes connect with Christian hope: “All serious and upright human conduct is hope in action” (no. 35). But this claim—which opens the section entitled “Action and suffering as settings for learning hope” (nos. 35–40)—is left undeveloped and hedged round with warnings of the emptiness of hope without God (e.g., it ends in fanaticism or burnout). In fact, of the six paragraphs in this section, only one deals with action, the rest with suffering. The promised discussion of “hope in action” is largely missing.

Consider, finally, how even the affirmation that “we must always be committed to the improvement of the world” is (1) set in a concessive clause that (2) follows upon another warning of the illusory nature of purely secular hopes and (3) is followed by the unambiguous caution that “tomorrow’s better world cannot be the proper and sufficient content of our hope” (no. 30). That caution is, of course, valid, but its negative phrasing does not express the positive content and role of secular hope. Granted, secular hope is not the proper and sufficient content of Christian hope, but how might it participate in, and even contribute to, its realization?

Thus, however clearly and forcefully the *connection* between theological and secular hopes is made, it remains overshadowed by the even clearer and more forceful insistence on their radical *discontinuity*. The structure of the document itself supports this reading. Whereas *Deus caritas est* began with the unity between natural and graced love, *Spe salvi*’s first major section<sup>9</sup> focuses on the difference between Christian hope and contemporary secular hopes (“The transformation of Christian faith-hope in the modern age” [nos. 16–23]). The next major section, which is meant to articulate “the true shape of Christian hope” (nos. 24–31), does so by way of contrast with false worldly hope that suffers from overconfidence in structural reform (no. 24) or in science (no. 25). Only after the fourth mention of Ephesians 2:12 (no. 27) is the “true shape of Christian hope” presented. Indeed, Ephesians 2:12 is mentioned five times (nos. 2, 3, 23, 27, and 44) and is by far the most cited scriptural text. (By contrast, Romans 8:24, from which the encyclical derives its name, is cited just once—at the start of the encyclical.<sup>10</sup>) So important is this text that Benedict glosses it as

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others. . . . The love of God is revealed in responsibility for others. This same connection between love of God and responsibility for others can be seen in a striking way in the life of Saint Augustine” (no. 28).

<sup>9</sup> After the semantic and historical reflections, “Faith is hope” (nos. 2–3) and “The concept of faith-based hope in the New Testament and early Church” (nos. 4–9).

<sup>10</sup> *Spe salvi* cites two other verses from Romans 8: 8:26 (no. 11) and 8:38–39 (no. 26), but they do not bear directly on the theme of rejoicing in hope.

follows to leave no doubt as to his interpretation: “the Ephesians . . . previously . . . were without hope and without God in the world—without hope *because* without God” (no. 3, emphasis original). Later, in one of the most terse statements in the document, Benedict writes: “Let us put it very simply: man needs God, otherwise he remains without hope” (no. 23). Given the centrality of this message for Benedict, it is not surprising that the emphasis of the encyclical falls on the vast difference between hope in God and hope in secular projects.

A final comparison between the two encyclicals encapsulates this difference. In *Deus caritas est*, the full verse of the scriptural text that gives the encyclical its name signals the notion of participation (“abides”) that runs through the document, specifically in the account of how human love anticipates divine love, and how divine love heals and perfects human love. The consequent claim of the unity between love of God and love of neighbor is thus presented as the crucial hinge section on which the bipartite document turns (entitled “Love of God and love of neighbour” [nos. 16–18]). In *Spe salvi*, however, the scriptural text that gives the encyclical its name signals the broken situation and frustrated worldly hopes from which only God-given hope saves. The consequent claim of the difference between secular and eschatological hope is thus communicated through the repeated citation of Ephesians 2:12.

This comparison between Benedict XVI’s first two encyclicals raises several important questions: Why do they differ so much in approach and accent? Why, if “hope has for its ultimate goal the fulfillment of love,”<sup>11</sup> does *Spe salvi* emphasize the contrast between secular and sacred, but *Deus caritas est* emphasizes their complementarity? More fundamentally, how might the relationship between secular and eschatological hope, which is overshadowed by *Spe salvi*’s insistence on their difference, be brought into the light? Any response to these questions, however, cannot deny or minimize that crucial difference. It must therefore first explain why that emphasis on difference is essential, and only then show how that very difference establishes an equally essential connection.

### **The Difference between Secular and Theological Hope Grounds Their Unity**

Drawing a sharp contrast between secular and eschatological hope is valid for historical and theological reasons. *Spe salvi* dedicates a section to exploring some of the factors in modern European history that warrant a clear separation (“The transformation of Christian faith-hope in the modern age” nos. 16–23). Those arguments raise numerous and disputed questions

<sup>11</sup> Ratzinger, “On Hope” 74.

of historical causation. Yet there remains a valid core to Benedict's wide-ranging claims. The primary factor in European modernity that warrants sharply distinguishing theological and secular hope is the need to counteract what Eric Voegelin has called the "immanentization of the eschaton,"<sup>12</sup> especially Enlightenment faith in material and moral progress, and the more radical Marxist hope for the kingdom of man. The vicious failure of the latter, and the inability of moral progress to keep pace with material progress in the former, exhibit the folly of restricting hope to solely human efforts to create a perfect society in this world. In this respect, Benedict's arguments echo those of Christopher Dawson on totalitarianism: "If we believe that the Kingdom of Heaven can be established by political or economic measures—that it can be an earthly state—then we can hardly object to the claims of such a State to embrace the whole of life and to demand the total submission of the individual will and conscience."<sup>13</sup>

In light of the European traumas that followed upon the collapse of the distinction between eschatological and political hopes, Benedict rightly urges their radical discontinuity. For "when this kind of duality does not exist, the totalitarian system is unavoidable."<sup>14</sup> From this conviction issues the forceful claim of his 1977 book *Eschatologie—Tod und ewiges Leben*: "the setting asunder of eschatology and politics is one of the fundamental tasks of Christian theology."<sup>15</sup> The vigor with which he prosecuted that setting asunder in the context of liberation theology was one of the hallmark features of his career, both as a theologian and as prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.<sup>16</sup> To the extent one agrees with

<sup>12</sup> Ellis Sandoz clarifies this phrase: "Gnosticism's proclamation of the meaning of history . . . commits the mistake of immanentizing the Christian eschaton, i.e., of treating faith symbols as though they represented immanent reality rather than the transcendental reality of man's supernatural destiny" (Sandoz, *The Voegelinian Revolution* [Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1981] 109; quoted in James V. Schall, S.J., "The Encyclical on Hope: On the 'De-immanentizing' of the Christian Eschaton," [http://www.ignatiusinsight.com/features2007/schall\\_onspesalvi\\_dec07.asp](http://www.ignatiusinsight.com/features2007/schall_onspesalvi_dec07.asp) [accessed October 18, 2009]).

<sup>13</sup> Christopher Dawson, *Religion and the Modern State* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1938) 109–10; quoted by Adam Schwartz in "Confronting the 'Totalitarian Antichrist': Christopher Dawson and Totalitarianism," *Catholic Historical Review* 89 (2003) 464–88, at 473. On this theme Aquinas writes: "Man is not ordered to the politic community according to all that he is and possesses. . . . All that a human person is, all that he can do, and all that he possesses, must be ordered to God" (*ST* 1–2, q. 21, a. 4, ad 3).

<sup>14</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism, and Politics*, trans. Robert Nowell (New York: Crossroads, 1988) 163, here in the context of the distinction between church and state.

<sup>15</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology* 59.

<sup>16</sup> The main ecclesial pronouncements of Ratzinger's opposition to liberation and political theologies are collected in Alfred Hennessey, ed., *Liberation Theology*:

the thrust of this historical argument, one will resonate with the fundamental theological argument for their difference: namely, the desire for a goal that transcends creation and exceeds natural human capabilities cannot be reduced to a temporal political settlement achieved by human hands alone.

This fundamental theological argument for the emphasis on discontinuity can be elaborated in light of the distinctive features of hope, as presented by Aquinas. As mentioned, he defines hope as the movement toward a future, difficult, yet possible good. In theological terms, it is the God-given virtue whereby the person relies on God's help (as efficient cause) to move toward his or her eternal happiness with God (as final cause).<sup>17</sup> Whereas faith considers God as truth, and charity considers God as goodness-in-itself, hope considers God as the good-for-me whose power and mercy assist me in the difficulties of the journey toward ultimate happiness.<sup>18</sup>

The most basic reason for the contrast between secular and theological hope is that Christian hope assists and strengthens the believer precisely when life is difficult. It therefore operates most noticeably when secular sources of help fail. In particular, hope arises when finitude and sin reveal the inadequacy of worldly resources for Christian aspirations. Since the need for God's help arises precisely when secular longings reveal their intrinsic limitation, any description of Christian hope must emerge from the contrastive realization that one cannot finally rely on anything finite (*qua* finite) but must rely instead on that which is not limited by finitude or compromised by sin, namely, God. Therefore, it is theologically valid, and not narrowly Eurocentric, to contrast eschatological and secular hopes.

Perhaps this suggests why *Deus caritas est* differs from *Spe salvi*. The discussion of charity can more readily begin with natural love in order to explore how it is connected with and perfected by divine love, since the

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*A Documentary History* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1990), documents 37, 40, 45, and 53. For Ratzinger's more personal reflections, see Joseph Ratzinger, *Milestones: Memoirs 1927–1977* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1998) 137, especially for his formative encounter with Marxist/political theology in Tübingen, which convinced him that “it took biblical hope as its basis but inverted it by keeping the religious ardor but eliminating God and replacing him with the political activity of man. Hope remains, but the party takes the place of God.” See also his retreat reflections on the theological virtues that contrast Christian hope with revolutionary “optimism [that is] the [new] theological virtue . . . of deified history” (Benedict XVI, *Yes of Jesus Christ: Exercises in Faith, Hope, and Love* [New York: Crossroad, 2005] 42). These versions of secular optimism are to be vigorously resisted, Ratzinger continues, because they are a “secularization of Christian hope: they depend ultimately on the transition from the transcendent God to the god ‘history’” (46).

<sup>17</sup> *ST* 2–2, q. 17, a. 4, resp.

<sup>18</sup> “*Spes innititur principaliter . . . divinae omnipotentiae et misericordiae*” (*ST* 2–2, q. 18, a. 4, ad 2). It is precisely the difficulty of the future good that distinguishes hope from desire.

neighbor, not God, is the first reality to evoke love, and it is through our love of neighbor that we reveal whether or not we love God.<sup>19</sup> By contrast, hope only becomes virtuous when it relies on God, not on a neighbor or oneself.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, the account of theological love can build on the experience of neighborly love, whereas the account of theological hope will, at least initially, contrast with the ineffective hopes in anything finite. For hope without God is more like the optimism that withers in the face of difficulty. That is why, for Aquinas, spontaneous hope without reference to God is not virtuous and is only found in the young or the drunk: that is, in those who have little experience or those who evade the difficulties experience brings.<sup>21</sup>

In any case, the difficulty and unhappiness that prompt the need for hope explain why this virtue approaches God under the aspect of mercy and power. For when a goal is distant and difficult to obtain, only a powerful and merciful helper can overcome that difficulty and distance. Thus hope pertains to the divine attributes of omnipotence and mercy, through which God is recognized as able and willing to fulfill hope's expectation. In hope, then, one acts on the belief that God possesses the means (power) and the motive (mercy) to overcome the impotence and difficulties of creaturely existence as it seeks happiness with God.

This crucial contrast between God's omnipotent mercy and our impotent misery exhibits God's radical transcendence, for only a God who fully transcends finitude and sin could effectively liberate us from them. In the experience of hope, then, the believer encounters that very transcendence of God that is discontinuous with our experience of limitation and brokenness. In fact, dissimilarity is written into the essence of hope because one seeks a goal that is not yet, by relying on a power that is not ours. Thus the idea of motion and the metaphors of journey and wayfarer (*viator*) convey the subject's correlative transcending that is distinctive of hope.<sup>22</sup> For whereas faith shows the goal, and charity unites or conforms one to the goal, hope is the very movement to the goal.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps this characteristic explains why Aquinas came to explain hope's relation to God in terms of efficient and final cause in the *Summa theologiae*, reformulating his earlier

<sup>19</sup> See *ST* 2–2, q. 26, a. 2, ad 1; and 1 Jn 4:20.

<sup>20</sup> In *ST* 2–2, q. 17, a. 1, Aquinas argues that it is precisely the leaning upon God that constitutes hope's virtuousness.

<sup>21</sup> "Utrum in iuvenibus et in ebriosis abundet spes?" (*ST* 1–2, q. 40, a. 6).

<sup>22</sup> A theme richly explored by Josef Pieper, *On Hope*, trans. Mary Frances McCarthy (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1986), especially in the opening chapter, "Reflections on the Concept *Status viatoris*."

<sup>23</sup> Aquinas, *In Epistolam I ad Timotheum*, cap. 1, lc. 2: "Fides autem ostendit [finem], spes facit tendere in eum, caritas unit" (*Expositio in Omnes S. Pauli Epistolas in Opera Omnia*, Parma ed., 25 vols. [New York: Musurgia, 1949] 13:587).

account in *De spe* in terms of material and formal object.<sup>24</sup> For whereas material and formal causes are intrinsic to the thing explained (What is it made from? What is its intelligible structure?), efficient and final causes are extrinsic to the thing explained (What caused it? What is it for?). By altering this technical language, Aquinas more emphatically conveys the transcendence of God in the experience of hope.

This discussion of the first, contrastive element of the relationship between theological and secular hopes can be summarized as follows. Hope arises from impotent misery and so seeks liberation in God's omnipotent mercy. It is precisely because this power and mercy are God's—and thus radically transcend our finite situation of impotence and misery—that they can actually help us now. That is why theological hope can sustain secular hopes, as Benedict repeatedly claims.<sup>25</sup> Thus, to contrast them is not to think they have nothing to do with each other. To the contrary, it calls to mind the very difference that is the condition of the possibility for their relation.

This argument simply transposes into eschatological terms the classic Thomistic account of the relationship between Creator and creation.<sup>26</sup> In summary form, that account argues that it is precisely the transcendent difference of the creator God from the world that establishes God's full presence in the world, or, otherwise put, creation's participation in God.

<sup>24</sup> *De virtutibus*, q. 4 (i.e., *De spe*), a. 1, co. (which parallels his presentation of faith in terms of material and formal object): “Sic igitur, sicut formale obiectum fidei est veritas prima, per quam sicut per quoddam medium assentit his quae creduntur, quae sunt materiale obiectum fidei; ita etiam formale obiectum spei est auxilium divinae potestatis et pietatis, propter quod tendit motus spei in bona sperata, quae sunt materiale obiectum spei.” Servais Pinckaers, *Le Renouveau de la morale: Études pour une morale fidèle à ses sources et à sa mission présente* (La Sart-Huy: Casterman, 1964) 231–32, attributes this change to the greater fittingness of the terms “efficient” and “final cause” to a virtue of the will, in contrast to the cognitional terms “material” and “formal object” that are more suited to a virtue of the intellect (revising his earlier opinion that the use of “formal” and “material object” in *De spe* suggests a development from the *Summa theologiae*—see Pinckaers, “La nature vertueuse de l'espérance,” *Revue Thomiste* 54 [1958] 405–42 and 623–44, at 634).

<sup>25</sup> E.g., no. 35: “Only the great certitude of hope that my own life and history in general, despite all failures, are held firm by the indestructible power of Love, and that this gives them their meaning and importance . . . can then give the courage to act and persevere.” See also no. 39: “the capacity to suffer for the sake of truth is the measure of humanity. Yet this capacity to suffer depends on the type and extent of the hope that we bear within us and build upon.”

<sup>26</sup> As argued, for example, by: Robert Sokolowski in *The God of Faith and Reason: Foundations of Christian Theology* (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1995); David Burrell in *Knowing the Unknowable God: Ibn-Sina, Maimonides, Aquinas* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 1986); and Kathryn Tanner in *God and Creation in Christian Theology: Tyranny or Empowerment?* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988).

The argument draws two conclusions from the same premise. Premise: God is the infinite creator of all existence. Conclusion one: God therefore radically transcends finite creation (because God is not another finite object alongside others on the same ontological plane, as it were, but is the source that brings all finite objects into existence). Conclusion two: God therefore is fully present in creation because there is nowhere that the infinite is not (i.e., God is fully immanent, because insofar as anything exists, it derives its existence from God and so participates in God).

In eschatological terms, this noncompetitive relationship between Creator and creation means that hoping for future union with the transcendent God does not enfeeble present commitment to hopes for the world. To the contrary, the very difference between God and the world is the reason why eschatological hope supports and sustains secular hopes. For the God who is the object of eschatological hope is not distant from the world, but “encompasses the whole of reality and . . . can bestow upon us what we, by ourselves, cannot attain” (no. 31). Correspondingly, the consummation of that hope—the kingdom of God—“is not an imaginary hereafter, situated in a future that will never arrive; his kingdom is present wherever he loved and wherever his love reaches us” (no. 31). That is why, in his earlier work *Eschatology*, Ratzinger forcefully argued that the kingdom is “not . . . a heavenly reality but . . . something God is doing and will do in the future *here on earth*.”<sup>27</sup>

At this point, I have made a bridgehead to the next stage of the argument that seeks to develop *Spe salvi*’s incipient claims concerning the unity of eschatological and secular hopes. For, while one fundamental task of theology is undoubtedly to “set asunder eschatology from politics,” there remains the equally fundamental task of relating them. As N. T. Wright points out in *Jesus and the Victory of God*, “the scandal inherent in this announcement [of the kingdom] lay not in its *religious* but in its *eschatological* and therefore *political* meaning.”<sup>28</sup>

One might argue, however, that on closer examination the difference between Wright and Ratzinger is more semantic than substantial. Does not Ratzinger himself assert the political relevance of eschatology?

The Kingdom of God is not a *political* norm of political activity, but it is a *moral* norm of that activity. . . . The message of the Kingdom of God is significant for

<sup>27</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology* 26, emphasis added.

<sup>28</sup> N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God: Christian Origins and the Question of God*, 3 vols., (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996) 2:310, emphasis original. Quoted in James Hanvey, “Charity Which Makes the Difference,” Institute Series 7 (Heythrop Institute for Religion, Ethics, and Public Life, 2008) 12, <http://www.heythrop.ac.uk/outreach/institute-for-religion-ethics-and-public-life/projects/words-in-action.html>. Hanvey’s article offers an incisive account of eschatology’s nonprogrammatic yet nonetheless profoundly political ramifications, e.g., in the parables’ vision of the “great reversal.”

political life not by way of eschatology but by way of political ethics. The issue of a politics that will be genuinely responsible in Christian terms belongs to moral theology, not eschatology. In this very distinction, the message of the Kingdom of God has something very important to say to politics . . . [namely] its own content is not eschatological.<sup>29</sup>

Insofar as this separation of the eschatological from the political reminds us that politicians are not messiahs, all is well and good. But if one wishes to make the journey from eschatological insight to political ethics—no matter how circuitous the route or how dangerous the pitfalls—some kind of relationship must be elaborated. Thus, in the final analysis, one cannot hide their connection because one fears their conflation. Yes, Benedict's well-placed concern over the disorder arising from any messianic conflation is indisputable. But that very judgment of their disorder presupposes some understanding of their proper order. Without that understanding, their connection unravels. And with that unraveling the question arises: why expend energy on a detached and distant "great hope," when the "greater or lesser hopes" so urgently demand attention?

### THE UNITY OF ESCHATOLOGICAL AND SECULAR HOPES

The thought of Aquinas can be used to demonstrate the unity between eschatological and secular hopes in three cumulative stages that: (1) consider what happens to secular hopes when eschatological hope is removed; (2) show how secular hopes participate in eschatological hope as the very means through which eschatological hope is realized; and (3) give some examples of how secular hopes prepare the person for union with God.

#### The Significance of Despair

According to Aquinas, the importance of eschatological hope for secular hopes can be seen by what results from the absence of any transcendent hope in God's mercy and power.

That through which people are led to sins seems to be not only a sin, but the foundation [or beginning = *principium*] of sins. But despair is of this mode, for the apostle says in Ephesians 4:19 of certain people: "They, despairing, have handed themselves over to lewdness in every work of impurity and avarice." Therefore despair is not only a sin but also the source [*principium*] of other sins.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology* 59

<sup>30</sup> "Illud per quod homines in peccata inducuntur videtur esse non solum peccatum, sed principium peccatorum. Sed desperatio est huiusmodi: dicit enim Apostolus de quibusdam, ad Ephes. iv (vers. 19): Qui desperantes semetipsos tradiderunt impudicitiae in operationem omnis immunditiae et avaritiae. Ergo desperatio non solum est peccatum, sed aliorum peccatorum principium" (*ST* 2-2, q. 20, a. 1, sed contra).

Aquinas develops this assertion concerning the perils of despair as follows: “Through hope, we are drawn away from evil things and led to seek good things; and therefore when hope is removed, people fall into sin without restraint, and are drawn away from good works.”<sup>31</sup> An intimate bond thus exists between eschatological and temporal hopes.<sup>32</sup> Since despair totally removes any hope of reaching eschatological happiness, it scatters the unity of the moral self that would integrate its secular projects within some overarching theological goal. Remove that final goal, and the secondary goods ordered to that end lose their coherence and purpose. Consequently, since despair pulls one away from good works *in toto*, it is not merely one sin alongside others, “but the source of other sins.”<sup>33</sup>

By moving the person in the direction opposite to despair, eschatological hope is presumably not merely one virtue alongside others, but, in some fashion, the origin of all other virtues as it orients all acts toward the final good. Since the term of its motion is God—who is not one thing alongside others, but the source and goal of all that exists—hope may be considered in some way the comprehensive and underlying modality of all moral intention.<sup>34</sup>

A further reason for despair’s deleterious effect upon the human good derives from a distinctive feature of hope. Among the theological virtues, hope especially (although not exclusively) regards human participation in divine goodness. For whereas faith pertains to divine truth, and charity regards the union with God’s goodness in itself,<sup>35</sup> hope anticipates that union as the good for the human person. Thus, while charity enables one

<sup>31</sup> “Per spem revocamur a malis et introducimur in bona prosequenda; et ideo, sublata spe, irrefrenate homines labuntur in vitia, et a bonis laboribus retrahuntur” (*ST* 2–2, q. 20, a. 3, resp.).

<sup>32</sup> The quotation from the gloss on Proverbs 24:10 that Aquinas includes in the *respondeo* of *ST* 2–2, q. 20, a. 3 includes, significantly, both the theological and secular consequences of despair: “nihil est execrabilius desperatione, quam qui habet et in generalibus huius vitae laboribus, et, quod peius est, in fidei certamine constantiam perdit” (emphasis added).

<sup>33</sup> *ST* 2–2, q. 20, a. 1, sed contra.

<sup>34</sup> Although in the final analysis, charity is the form of the virtues because it actually unites the person to the end and so orders all human acts to their ultimate finality. On charity as the form of all the virtues, see *ST* 2–2, q. 23, a. 8, “Whether Charity Is the Form of the Virtues?” But see Ratzinger’s comments on Ephesians 2:12 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13: “According to these texts, hope is not just one virtue among others; it is the very definition of Christian existence” (Ratzinger, “On Hope” 71). For a more rounded account of the foundational nature of all three theological virtues, see Aquinas’s commentary on the *Sentences*: “Spes est in homine principium omnium operationum quae ad bonum arduum ordinantur, sicut caritas omnium quae in bonum tendunt, et sicut fides omnium quae ad cognitionem pertinent” (*Scriptum super Libros Sententiarum III*, d. 26, q. 2, a. 2, ad 2).

<sup>35</sup> “Caritate diligitur Deus propter seipsum” (*ST* 2–2, q. 23, a. 5, ad 2).

to live no longer for oneself but for God, hope regards God as the object from whom one attains happiness.<sup>36</sup> Consequently, hope has the character of the concupiscible appetite, while charity is true friendship: “hope presupposes the love of what one hopes to attain for oneself, which is the love of concupiscence; by this love the one who desires a good loves himself more than anything else. Charity, however, means the love of friendship.”<sup>37</sup> Hope thus approaches God not disinterestedly as goodness itself, but self-interestedly as something that the person can benefit from and participate in—that is, as the human good. As Ratzinger himself claims, “by its very essence, hope refers to the person.”<sup>38</sup> It therefore awakens the sense that the *humanum* is capable of participating in God’s goodness.

It is precisely for this reason that sin arises when hope fails, because in despair “man does not hope that he participates in the goodness of God.”<sup>39</sup> Remove eschatological hope, and secular hopes are severed from their ultimate goal with vicious results. It follows that “from our point of view, despair is more dangerous [than infidelity and hatred of God] because through hope we are drawn away from evil things and led to seek good things.”<sup>40</sup> Eschatological hope, then, reverses sin and grounds the good now precisely because it recognizes God as the ultimate human good.

One might speculate as to why *Spe salvi* underemphasizes this connection between secular and eschatological. This connection presupposes some recognition of how hope approaches God as the human good. The concupiscent nature of this approach therefore presupposes self-love. But *Deus caritas est* conspicuously failed to explore self-love.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, without adequate recognition of self-love, the theological validity of hope’s concupiscent nature is overlooked. Consequently, the connection between secular and eschatological remains weak.

<sup>36</sup> On charity: “Caritas proprie facit tendere in Deum uniendo affectum hominis Deo, ut scilicet homo non sibi vivat sed Deo” (*ST* 2–2, q. 17, a. 6, ad 3); on hope: “[Spes] attingit [Deum] . . . sicut ultimam causam finalem, in quantum in eius fruitione beatitudinem expectat” (*ST* 2–2, q. 17, q. 5, resp.).

<sup>37</sup> “Spes praesupponit amorem eius quod quis adipisci se sperat, qui est amor concupiscentiae, quo quidem amore magis se amat qui concupiscit bonum, quam aliquid aliud. Caritas autem importat amorem amicitiae” (*ST* 1–2, q. 66, a. 6, ad 2).

<sup>38</sup> Ratzinger, “On Hope” 75.

<sup>39</sup> “Desperatio autem ex hoc quod homo non sperat se bonitatem Dei participare” (*ST* 2–2, q. 20, a. 3, resp.).

<sup>40</sup> *ST* 2–2, q. 20, a. 3, resp. This question also compares despair with the vices opposing faith and charity insofar as they relate to God in Godself: “unbelief and hatred of God are against God as God exists in Godself; despair, however, according as God’s good is participated in by us. Whence it is a greater sin, strictly speaking, not to believe God’s truth or to hate God, than not to hope to obtain glory from God.”

<sup>41</sup> See Janet Martin Soskice, “The Heart of the Matter,” *Tablet* 260.8625 (February 4, 2006) 4–5, at 5.

Whatever the merits of these speculations on despair and self-love, there remains the task of articulating a fuller and more positive account of the connection between secular and eschatological hopes.

### **Secular Hopes' Participation in Eschatological Hope Is the Means by Which Eschatological Hope Is Realized**

In light of the arguments presented above, the unity between eschatological and temporal hopes may be understood Thomistically in terms of participation. Consequently, instead of two hopes, it would be more accurate to think in terms of a single, all-encompassing hope whose primary, eschatological goal includes and perfects secondary, temporal goals by gathering them into the one, comprehensive movement toward God.

Aquinas lays out the basic structure of the unity between eschatological and secular hopes in his response to the question “whether someone can legitimately hope in a human person.”<sup>42</sup> That response begins by arguing that one must hope principally in God, but one may also hope secondarily in creatures. As principle efficient cause, God is the first agent that brings hope into existence, since hope depends principally on God’s help to attain a happiness that exceeds human power. But as secondary efficient cause, a creature may be an instrument of God’s action moving us to happiness.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, as primary final cause, God is the ultimate end of hope. But as secondary final cause, some other good may be an intermediate end that is ordered to the ultimate end.<sup>44</sup> Accordingly, finite goods proportionate to temporal human life can be caught up in hope’s fundamental orientation to eternal beatitude. Hope for a more just earthly city, for example, can be a legitimate auxiliary object of the theological virtue of hope.<sup>45</sup>

In fact, the range of secondary objects that may participate in eschatological hope is, in principle, unlimited, for, when “we hope *for anything* as

<sup>42</sup> See *ST* 2–2, q. 17, a. 4.

<sup>43</sup> “Non licet sperare de aliquo homine, vel de aliqua creatura, sicut de prima causa movente in beatitudinem; licet autem sperare de aliquo homine, vel de aliqua creatura, sicut de agente secundario et instrumentali, per quod aliquis adiuvatur ad quaecumque bona consequenda in beatitudinem ordinate” (*ST* 2–2, q. 17, a. 4, resp.).

<sup>44</sup> “Non licet sperare aliquod bonum praeter beatitudinem sicut ultimum finem, sed solum sicut id quod est ad finem beatitudinis ordinatum” (*ST* 2–2, q. 17, a. 4, resp.). Note that by acknowledging the critical role of secondary causation in hope, the mature Aquinas revised his earlier position that claimed hope was “only about eternal things” (*De potentia*, q. 6, a. 9, ad 10: “Spei non proprie attribuitur miracula facere; spes enim ordinatur ad aliquid consequendum, unde est solum de aeternis. Fides autem est de aeternis et temporalibus; unde potest se extendere ad facienda”).

<sup>45</sup> In the context of charity, Aquinas gives the example of the “preservation of the city or anything of that kind” as an example of a true virtue that is imperfect unless it be referred to God (*ST* 2–2, q. 23, a. 7, resp.).

possible to us through divine help, our hope attains God himself, on whose help it depends.”<sup>46</sup> Aquinas’s comments on prayer suggest some examples:

Prayer is the interpreting of hope. . . . But man prays to God lawfully not only for eternal happiness, but also for goods of the present life, both spiritual and temporal, and indeed for liberation from evil, which will not be in eternal happiness, as it shown in the Lord’s Prayer.<sup>47</sup>

The provision of the necessities of life (“our daily bread”) would be another example.<sup>48</sup>

Precisely how secondary hopes participate in eschatological hope can be seen by exploring what it means to say that they are ordered or referred to the primary hope of eternal happiness. The term *in ordine* refers to a commonplace Aristotelian understanding of the hierarchy of goods. In book one of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, for example, the good of bridle-making is said to be referred to horsemanship, which in turn is referred to military science, which in turn is referred to politics. Bridle-making is a subordinate skill ordered to horsemanship because blacksmiths make bridles so horsemen can ride horses, whereas horsemen do not ride horses so that blacksmiths can make bridles.<sup>49</sup> Likewise, war is conducted for the good of the

<sup>46</sup> “In quantum igitur speramus *aliquid* ut possibile nobis per divinum auxilium, spes nostra attingit ad ipsum Deum, cuius auxilio innitur” (*ST* 2–2, q. 17, a. 1, emphasis added).

<sup>47</sup> “Petitio est spei interpretativa. . . . Sed homo petit a Deo licite non solum beatitudinem aeternam, sed etiam bona praesentis vitae tam spiritualia quam temporalia, et etiam liberationem a malis, quae in beatitudine aeterna non erunt, ut patet in oratione dominica, Matth VI” (*ST* 2–2, q. 17, a. 2, obj. 2).

<sup>48</sup> Thus, while an exegesis of Hebrews 10–11, with which *Spe salvi* begins, warrants the contrast between God (the enduring “hypostasis”) and worldly possessions (the ephemeral “hyparchonta”), an exegesis of Jesus’ teaching on prayer demands some account of their connection. Oppositional rhetoric that presents their difference must cede to coherent explanation of how they relate. Something of that shift is seen at the end of Ratzinger’s “On Hope” article, which briefly discusses the Lord’s prayer. But those comments are a concluding afterthought (occasioned by Ratzinger’s rereading of the *Catechismus Romanus* while preparing the lecture) that sits uneasily with the earlier and far more elaborate comments on the difference between *hypostasis* and *hyparchonta*. Perhaps that is why Ratzinger said in the first, asterisked footnote to the article, “It seems to me that this [Franciscan] point of departure . . . remains to be completed” (p. 71). Benedict’s section on prayer in *Spe salvi* briefly develops this trajectory when it states that through prayer “we become capable of the great hope and thus we become ministers of hope for others” (no. 34). For an illuminating account of Augustine’s movement from oppositional rhetoric to a more explanatory theological framework, see Khaled Anatolios, “Oppositional Pairs and Christological Synthesis: Rereading Augustine’s *De Trinitate*,” *Theological Studies* 68 (2007) 231–53.

<sup>49</sup> In his commentary on Aristotle’s *Ethics*, Aquinas writes that Aristotle: “ponit ordinem habituum ad invicem. . . . Sicut ars quae facit frena est sub arte equitandi, quia ille qui debet equitare praecipit artifici qualiter faciat frenum et sic est architector, id est principalis artifex, respectu ipsius. . . . Equestris autem ulterius

city, instead of cities existing in order to wage war. It is in this way that bridle-making is referred to horsemanship; horsemanship falls under military science; and military science is ordered to the common good of the city. Thus, all these diverse works of the citizen participate in a shared political life that is directed toward the common good. Similarly, all the diverse hopes of the believer can participate in a unified religious life that is directed toward the final eschatological good.

Because secondary and primary goals can participate in one overall process, it is possible to intend more than one thing without dissipating intention.

If [two things] be ordered to one another, it is evident . . . that someone can intend many things simultaneously. For intention is not only of the ultimate end . . . but also of an intermediary end. Someone intends, however, both the proximate and the last end simultaneously; as in the preparing of medicine and bodily health.<sup>50</sup>

Thus, just as one can legitimately intend both bridle-making and horsemanship as part of the same overall goal (insofar as the former is ordered to the latter), so one can legitimately hope for both daily bread and the coming of the kingdom as part of the same overall process (insofar as the temporal good is ordered to the eschatological good). Something ordered or referred to a higher end, then, is at the service of, and not in opposition to, that higher goal.<sup>51</sup> In this way, secular hopes take part in (“participate” in) eschatological hope.

Moreover, since God is the ultimate end of the human person, all human acts ought to be referred to God. As Aquinas states in the closing sentence of the treatise on distinctively human acts: “All that a human person is, all that he can do, and all that he possesses, must be ordered to God.”<sup>52</sup> But just as all human action is referred to God, so all hope must likewise be ordered to God. Eschatological hope thus gathers in all secondary, temporal hopes and sets them in the context of an eternal destiny. It gives them an importance

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ordinatur sub militari. . . . Et per eundem modum aliae artes sub aliis” (*Sententia Libri Ethicorum* [hereafter *Sent. Ethic.*], in *Opera Omnia*, Leonine ed., 50 vols. [Rome: Ex Typographia Polyglotta S. C. de Propaganda Fide, 1969] 47/1:6). Although Aquinas does not use the precise term *in ordine* in this commentary on the *Ethics*, the meaning of an ordered relationship of a hierarchy of goods is essentially the same.

<sup>50</sup> “Si [duo] quidem ad invicem fuerint ordinata, manifestum est . . . quod homo potest simul multa intendere. Est enim intentio non solum finis ultimi . . . sed etiam finis medii. Simul autem intendit aliquis et finem proximum, et ultimum; sicut confectionem medicinae, et sanitatem” (*ST* 1–2, q. 12, a. 3, resp.).

<sup>51</sup> So important is the notion of order for ethical inquiry that Aquinas begins his commentary on Aristotle’s *Ethics* by citing the opening of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*: “Sicut Philosophus dicit in principio *Metaphysicae*, sapientis est ordinare. Cuius ratio est quia sapientia est potissima perfectio rationis, cuius proprium est cognoscere ordinem” (*Sent. Ethic.*, in *Opera Omnia*, Leonine ed., 47/1:3).

<sup>52</sup> “Totum quod homo est, et quod potest et habet, ordinandum est ad Deum” (*ST* 1–2, q. 21, a. 4, ad 3).

they would otherwise not have. The theological virtue of hope therefore adds dignity to the temporal project of constructing the human good *in via*. Gathered into the “great hope,” secular hopes cannot be regarded as ultimately insignificant, in the sense of bearing no relation to God as the final end. To the contrary, insofar as they participate in the primary goal of hope, they are caught up in the movement to God as the ultimate end.

Beyond general comments about participation, a more forceful and specific argument can be advanced for the unity of eschatological and secular hope. For secondary hopes not only participate in the primary hope; they also comprise the very movement that constitutes eschatological hope itself. This claim rests on hope’s nature as intention, that is, as a tending or moving to some end.<sup>53</sup> Unlike volition, which regards the end considered in itself, or enjoyment, which regards the end as achieved, intention considers the end “insofar as it is the term of anything that is ordered to it . . . [that is, when] we will to attain it through something else.”<sup>54</sup> More succinctly, intention is the movement of the will to the end as acquired by some means.<sup>55</sup> Thus, insofar as eschatological hope intends eternal happiness with God, it must will that end by means of something else. The specific means to the goal of eschatological hope are numerous and must be discerned through prayer, spiritual direction, and so on.<sup>56</sup> But the fact remains that eschatological hope has to be willed through something else, through some secondary objects of hope.

Citing—appropriately enough—Romans 8:24, Aquinas argues explicitly that eschatological hope is only approached through some action. One can be said to be “saved by hope,” even though salvation is not yet attained, because:

Someone is said, however, to already possess the end on account of the hope to possess the end: whence . . . the apostle says (Rom 8:24) “We are saved by hope.” The hope of attaining the end, however, arises from someone being fittingly moved to the end, and

<sup>53</sup> In addition to the numerous instances where hope’s act is described as tending, see the specific reference to hope as “the motion of intention” in *ST* 1–2, q. 62, a. 3, resp.: “voluntas ordinatur in illum finem et quantum ad motum intentionis, in ipsum tendentem sicut in id quod est possibile consequi, quod pertinet ad spem.”

<sup>54</sup> “Intentio est actus voluntatis respectu finis. Sed voluntas respicit finem tripliciter. Uno modo, absolute: et sic dicitur voluntas, prout absolute volumus vel sanitatem, vel si quid aliud est huiusmodi. Alio modo consideratur finis secundum quod in eo quiescitur: et hoc modo fruitio respicit finem. Tertio modo consideratur finis secundum quod est terminus alicuius quod in ipsum ordinatur, et sic intentio respicit finem. Non enim solum ex hoc intendere dicimur sanitatem, quia volumus eam, sed quia volumus ad eam per aliquid aliud pervenire” (*ST* 1–2, q. 12, a. 1, ad 4).

<sup>55</sup> “Motus autem voluntatis qui fertur in finem, secundum quod acquiritur per ea quae sunt ad finem, vocatur intentio” (*ST* 1–2, q. 12, a. 4, ad 3).

<sup>56</sup> I use the word “choose” deliberately because choice regards the means as ordered to the end, whereas intention regards the end as acquired through those means. See *ST* 1–2, q. 12, a. 4, ad 3.

coming near it: which indeed happens through some action. Now someone is moved to and draws near the end of happiness through the operations of virtues.<sup>57</sup>

It is, therefore, something of an understatement to say, as Benedict says, that “our behavior is not indifferent” before God (no. 35). That litotes could be expressed more directly as follows: human acts in the world constitute the way the person approaches the eschatological end. Consequently, not only do our secular hopes participate in eschatological hopes, but more fundamentally we only participate in eschatological hope in and through our secular hopes and actions. These “greater or lesser” hopes do not simply “keep us going day by day” (no. 31). They are the means by which we move toward the goal that eschatological hope intends; they are how our lives are gathered into and made worthy of union with God. Or, as Ratzinger stated in an earlier work, “the demands of truth, justice, and love upon our lives are eschatology’s very own content.”<sup>58</sup> Arguments such as these give substance to *Spe salvi*’s somewhat bare assertion that “all serious and upright human conduct is hope in action” (no. 35).

There exists, then, a deep unity between eschatological and secular hope; so much so that it is better to think of one comprehensive hope whose primary goal envelops all secondary aims. When the difference within this twofold finality was (for good reason) emphasized, the role of eschatological hope was understood primarily as sustaining secular hopes in light of their intrinsic limitations. In that context, eschatological hope saved secular hopes from the despair that follows from considering them without reference to God. But properly recognize the unity of eschatological and secular hope, and it becomes clear that the former plays more than a supporting role. Eschatological hope’s reach extends throughout the whole range of human hopes as it orders, perfects, and sanctifies the totality of secular desires. Crucially, those secular longings themselves are integral to the very process whereby we move toward eternal happiness with God. For while it is true that the eschatological goal is beyond time—and thus vastly differs

<sup>57</sup> “Beatitudo est ultimus finis humanae vitae. Dicitur autem aliquis iam finem habere, propter spem finis obtinendi: unde. . . . Apostolus dicit, Rom. viii:24 Spe salvi facti sumus Spes autem de fine consequendo insurgit ex hoc quod aliquis convenienter movetur ad finem, et appropinquat ad ipsum: quod quidem fit per aliquam actionem. Ad finem autem beatitudinis movetur aliquis et appropinquat per operationes virtutum” (*ST* 1–2, q. 69, a. 1, resp.).

<sup>58</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology* 100–101, translation slightly adapted. Original translation: eschatology “challenges us in most compelling fashion, to dare to realize in our own lives that justice and truth whose claims upon us—along with those of love—are eschatology’s very own content” (“Die Eschatologie die Ermutigung, ja die zwingende Herausforderung dazu ist, das Recht und die Wahrheit zu wagen; die Inanspruchnahme unseres Lebens für Wahrheit, Recht, Liebe ist geradezu der Gehalt der Eschatologie” [Ratzinger, *Eschatologie—Tod und ewiges Leben* (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1977) 89].

from secular goals—it is also true that “what comes after time is prepared by time” and so is deeply interwoven within our ordinary, temporal hopes.<sup>59</sup> The movement toward eternal happiness, then, is coordinate with the desire for secular happiness, as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* itself asserts: “The virtue of hope responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man; it takes up the hopes that inspire men’s activities and purifies them so as to order them to the Kingdom of heaven” (no. 1818).

Secular hopes, then, participate in eschatological hope because they are ordered to the eschatological goal and constitute the very means by which the goal is attained. How, specifically, they constitute those means can be seen by exploring how they can prepare or dispose the person for God. For if secular hopes can truly participate in the desire for eternal life, there must be something intrinsic to such hopes that in some analogical way corresponds to that eschatological desire.

#### **How Secular Hopes Prepare the Person for God: Fourth Commandment; Fourth and Fifth Beatitudes**

Developing *Spe salvi*’s implicit claims, one can argue that secular hopes prepare the person for God when they intend realities and values that are divine. When someone genuinely hopes for truth or goodness—that is, when someone seriously intends to achieve something true and good through some concrete action—that person reveals what he truly values, as distinct from what he says he values. But God is “Truth and Love in person” (nos. 38–39). Therefore, the moral agent who chooses truth and love in the world is adhering to God by participating in essential attributes of divine life. And so, while eschatological hope does indeed make us capable of secular hopes,<sup>60</sup> they can themselves prepare us for God.<sup>61</sup> In ways such as this, *Spe salvi* intimates how authentic secular hopes dispose the person for God. This incipient claim finds scriptural grounding and systematic exposition in Aquinas’s comments on the fourth commandment and on the fourth and fifth beatitudes.

<sup>59</sup> Jacques Maritain, *Integral Humanism: Temporal and Spiritual Problems of a New Christendom*, trans. Joseph W. Evans (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1936) 102.

<sup>60</sup> “We become capable of the great hope, and thus we become minister of hope for others” (no. 34).

<sup>61</sup> Similarly, while it is indeed true that “my encounter with God awakens my conscience” (no. 33), it is also true that the encounter with my conscience, and the consequent hope to attain what my conscience prescribes, awakens my sense of God. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* asserts, “when he listens to his conscience, the prudent man can hear God speaking” (no. 1777).

Aquinas's reflections on the fourth commandment reveal an important correspondence between secular and eschatological hopes. Those reflections are found in his commentary on Ephesians 6:1: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is just. 'Honor your father and mother'—this is the first commandment with a promise: 'so that it may be well with you and you may be of great age upon the earth.'"<sup>62</sup> In its original context, this promise referred to the temporal benefits of long, abundant life for the Israelites. But Aquinas maintains that in these words "great goods were expressed in figurative language, namely, spiritual goods."<sup>63</sup> The identification of those spiritual goods is reached through an examination of the nature of gratitude in the light of Christian revelation.

For one who is grateful for lesser benefits, deserves to receive greater ones. But we have the greatest of benefits from our parents: existence, rearing, and instruction. Therefore, when one is grateful for these, one is made worthy to receive greater benefits. And for that reason he says "that it may be well with you"; because, as 1 Timothy 4:8 says, "piety is useful to all things, having the promise of life that is now and of the future."<sup>64</sup>

The greater goods that one may receive, then, include eternal life, as the citation of 1 Timothy indicates. In fact, Aquinas explicitly presents this as a possible interpretation in response to the objection that many who honor their parents die young. "Or, it could refer to a spiritual meaning, that 'thou may be of great age' in the land of the living. Ps. 142:10–11: 'Your good spirit will lead me into the right land; on account of your name, O Lord, you will restore me to life.'"<sup>65</sup> What is important here is not the validity of Aquinas's

<sup>62</sup> "Filii, obedite parentibus vestris in Domino: hoc enim justum est. Honora patrem tuum et matrem (quod est mandatum primum in promissione) ut bene sit tibi, et sis longaevus super terram" (Eph 6:1, quoting from vulgate used in *In Epistolam ad Ephesios* [hereafter *In ad Eph.*], cap. 6, lc. 1, in *Opera Omnia*, Parma ed., 13:498). The promise read slightly differently in Exodus 20:12: "Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you." Deuteronomy is quoted above because Ephesians 6:1–3, on which Aquinas comments, quotes the Deuteronomic version of this commandment.

<sup>63</sup> "Figurabantur magna bona, scilicet spiritualia" (*In ad Eph.* cap. 6, lc. 1, in *Opera Omnia*, Parma ed., 13:499).

<sup>64</sup> "Nam qui gratus est in minoribus beneficiis, meretur maiora recipere; maxima autem beneficia habemus a parentibus, scilicet esse, nutrimentum et disciplinam. Quando ergo quis gratus est his, fit dignus ut maiora recipiat. Et ideo dicit ut bene sit tibi; quia, ut dicitur I Tim. IV, 8: pietas ad omnia utilis est, promissionem habens vitae, quae nunc est, et futurae" (*In ad Eph.* cap. 6, lc. 1, in *Opera Omnia*, Parma ed., 13:499).

<sup>65</sup> "Vel potest referri ad sensum spiritualem, ut sis longaevus in terra viventium. Ps. CXLII, v. 10 s.: spiritus tuus bonus deducet me in terram rectam; propter nomen tuum, domine, vivificabis me" (*In ad Eph.* cap. 6, lc. 1, in *Opera Omnia*, Parma ed., vol. 13:499). That this reference from the Psalms refers to eternal life can be seen from another citation of the same text in *ST* 2–2, q. 68, a. 2, resp.: "Sed in ordine ad

interpretation of Scripture, but the value of its accompanying insight into the relationship between the secular and the eschatological. In claiming that gratitude concerning lesser gifts disposes one to receive greater gifts, his position bespeaks a correspondence between one's desire for natural goods and one's fittingness for the supernatural good.

For more specific reasons, gratefulness to parents can apply analogously to hope in God. This analogical understanding derives from the fact that the fourth commandment closely resembles the first commandment to worship God, "because God must be honored as the source of our existence, and parents are also the source of our existence. . . . For that reason it is fitting that, after the commandments ordered to God, the first would be ordered to our parents."<sup>66</sup> It is especially appropriate, then, that the natural act of honoring the two people from whom one received finite life manifests an attitude of gratefulness that prepares one to receive eternal life from the One who created all life. There exists, then, an intrinsic and intelligible connection between secular act and eschatological reward. The reward is analogically continuous in character with the act it rewards. In fact, the eschatological reward takes the natural dynamism of the act and moves it to its finality. Aquinas's comments on the fourth commandment, then, elaborate what it means for grace to perfect nature, that is, how God takes up and transforms secular acts.

But that transformation of nature by grace should not be considered seamless. Commandments, after all, proscribe only those vicious actions that are all too often performed; otherwise there would be no need to proscribe them—or, in this case, they *prescribe* virtuous actions that are frequently left undone. As Aquinas himself notes, the fourth commandment includes a reward for more pragmatic reasons than the ones explored above: "because people, in other things they do, seek their own advantage; and because, from parents already old they expect no advantage, unless originating from God."<sup>67</sup> The comments above, then, about the correspon-

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finem ultimum supernaturalem, ad quem ratio movet secundum quod est aliquid et imperfecte formata per virtutes theologicas; non sufficit ipsa motio rationis, nisi desuper adsit instinctus et motio spiritus sancti; secundum illud Rom. 8:14,17, Qui Spiritu Dei aguntur, hi filii Dei sunt; et si filii, et haeredes, et in Psalmo 142:10, dicitur: Spiritus tuus bonus deducet me in terram rectam; quia scilicet in haereditatem illius terrae beatorum nullus potest pervenire, nisi moveatur et deducatur a spiritu sancto."

<sup>66</sup> "Quia Deus honorandus est sicut principium nostri esse, et quia parentes sunt etiam principium nostri esse . . . , ideo conveniens est, ut post mandata ordinata ad Deum, primum esset ordinatum ad parentes" (*In ad Eph.* cap. 6, lc. 1, in *Opera Omnia*, Parma ed., 13:498).

<sup>67</sup> "Quia homines in aliis quae agunt quaerunt utilitatem propriam, et quia a parentibus iam senibus nullam expectant utilitatem, nisi a Deo provenientem" (*ibid.* 498–99).

dence between secular acts and eschatological hope, should not lead one to think that grace perfects nature easily. In fact, insofar as sin corrupts nature, the agency that redeems nature will be complex and cruciform. Therefore, the claim that “grace perfects nature” must acknowledge the fact that Christ himself was “made perfect through sufferings” (Heb 2:10) and that the perfection of secular hopes in a world marked by sin will involve suffering. Thus, secular hopes participate in eschatological hope not only because they (1) are ordered to and gathered into the eschatological goal and (2) constitute the means by which the goal is attained, but also because (3) they can participate in the form of the paschal mystery, the dying and rising of Christ that is the heart of God’s response to human suffering and sinfulness.<sup>68</sup>

Something of that participation can be seen in Benedict’s comments on the difficult context of most moral decisions. When someone chooses what is good, true, or just in the face of difficulty (no. 38), that person places those higher goods above his or her comfort and security. As the “symptoms of creeping privilege disappear,”<sup>69</sup> the nonnegotiable or absolute element in the claim of goodness or truth intimates some encounter with God’s truth and love. This uncompromising commitment to truth or goodness constitutes a form of self-giving for others, a process of “allowing oneself to be drawn into [Christ’s] *being for others*” (no. 28, emphasis original). Thus, the one who suffers to realize these goods manifests a hope that participates in the form of Christ’s cross and resurrection.

The paschal nature of such hopes can be seen in Aquinas’s treatment of the beatitudes. For Aquinas, the beatitudes are the acts that flow from the theological virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.<sup>70</sup> Each of these acts (being poor in spirit, mourning, being merciful, striving for justice, making

<sup>68</sup> *Gaudium et spes* no. 22 asserts that this participation in the paschal mystery is possible for non-Christians. “Pressing upon the Christian . . . are the need and the duty to battle against evil through manifold tribulations. . . . But, linked with the paschal mystery and patterned on the dying Christ, he will hasten forward to resurrection in the strength which comes from hope. All this holds true not only for Christians, but for all men of good will in whose hearts grace works in an unseen way. . . . The Holy Spirit, in a manner known only to God, offers to every man the possibility of being associated with this paschal mystery” (*The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter Abbot [New York: America, 1966] 221–22). Note Ratzinger’s commentary on this paragraph, which recommends it above *Lumen gentium* no. 16 because it more clearly shows the priority of God’s agency. In *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, 5 vols., ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (New York: Herder & Herder, 1969) 5:159–63.

<sup>69</sup> From Seamus Heaney’s poem “From the Republic of Conscience,” *The Haw Lantern* (London: Faber & Faber, 1987) 12–13.

<sup>70</sup> “Beatitudines distinguuntur quidem a virtutibus et donis, non sicut habitus ab eis distincti, sed sicut actus distinguuntur ab habitibus” (*ST* 1–2, q. 69, a. 1, resp.).

peace, and so on) merits a particular reward. For example, those who mourn will be comforted and those who show mercy will receive mercy.<sup>71</sup> Thus, all the acts of the beatitudes operate in mode of hope, because they intend some future, difficult, yet possible, good. As the *Catechism* comments: “Christian hope unfolds from the beginning of Jesus’ preaching in the proclamation of the beatitudes. The beatitudes raise our hope toward heaven as the new Promised Land; they trace the path that leads through the trials that await the disciples of Jesus” (no. 1820). Hope is thus the underlying modality in which these acts of the beatitudes are performed.<sup>72</sup>

The seven beatitudes fall within three kinds of happiness—sensual, active, contemplative—that correspond, respectively, to the obstacles, disposition, and beginning or essence of future happiness.<sup>73</sup> Thus, the first three beatitudes (being poor in spirit, being mild, and mourning) refer to one’s sensual life, which, if desired as one’s final goal, obstructs the way to true happiness; the fourth and fifth beatitudes (seeking justice, showing mercy) refer to the active life lived in relation to one’s neighbors, which disposes<sup>74</sup> or prepares one for ultimate happiness; the last two beatitudes (being pure in heart, making peace) refer to the contemplative life in relation to God.<sup>75</sup> Since this article is concerned with how eschatological and secular hopes relate, it will concentrate on the two beatitudes that pertain to the active life in the world, that is, to the relation to neighbors.

In the beatitudes, the reward corresponds to the act by counteracting the false good that would impede the act. For example, someone is impeded from acting justly or mercifully by an inordinate love of self that, from greed, wants more than its due or, from hardness of heart, screens out

<sup>71</sup> It should be noted, however, that the final two beatitudes actually refer to the reward, not to the merit. “Et vero quae ad contemplativam vitam pertinent, vel sunt ipsa beatitudo finalis, vel aliqua inchoatio eius: et ideo non ponuntur in beatitudinibus tanquam merita, sed tanquam praemia” (*ST* 1–2, q. 69, a. 3, resp.).

<sup>72</sup> In general terms, “beatitudines praesentis vitae, quae sunt spei” (*ST* 1–2, q. 70, a. 2, obj. 2).

<sup>73</sup> “Beginning” if imperfect; “essence” if perfect. This paragraph summarizes *ST* 1–2, q. 69, a. 3, “Whether the beatitudes are suitably enumerated?”

<sup>74</sup> “Beatitudo vero activae vitae dispositiva est ad beatitudinem futuram” (*ST* 1–2, q. 69, a. 3, resp.).

<sup>75</sup> Interestingly, in his earlier commentary on Matthew’s Gospel, Aquinas parsed these three kinds of happiness (sensual, active, contemplative) not as (1) removing obstacles to, (2) disposing to, (3) beginning of future happiness, but as instead (1) removing from the bad, (2) doing good, (3) disposing to the best. See *Lectura super Evangelium S. Matthaei* cap. 5, pars 2, no. 433 (Rome: Marietti, 1951) 69. By describing the acts intending active happiness as not simply doing good but disposing to the future happiness, and by describing the acts intending contemplation as the beginning of future happiness and not only disposing to it, Aquinas’s later account in the *Summa theologiae* conveys a deeper sense of the participation of secular acts in the eschatological goal.

others' sorrow. "And for that reason the Lord assigns to these beatitudes those rewards on account of which persons forsake them."<sup>76</sup> Thus, since some forsake acting justly because they fear they will lose out, the reward for the just is to have their fill that the sinful conditions of the world currently prevent them from having. Likewise, since the merciless avoid the misery of strangers, God promises that the merciful, as they "enter into someone else's chaos" and risk being overwhelmed by another's problems, will be delivered from all misery.<sup>77</sup>

Aquinas's comments on the beatitudes, then, underscore the cruciform passage through which the "greater or lesser hopes" come to participate in "the great hope."<sup>78</sup> Whereas the fourth commandment presents a seamless continuation between secular act and eschatological reward, the beatitudes present a more complex connection. Their acts involve giving of self, at significant cost, for justice and goodness. The corresponding reward brings new and greater life out of the sinful situation of misery and injustice. As acts performed in the modality of hope, they exhibit the intelligibility of human participation in the paschal mystery: that in giving one's life to what is good and true, one will find a life worth living. More specifically with reference to the fourth and fifth beatitudes, which are especially relevant to this inquiry, a person who hopes to remove some of the injustice and misery in the world is, by that very process, disposing himself to God. For the extent to which a person shares in the living and dying of Christ is the extent to which he can authentically hope to be raised with Christ.<sup>79</sup>

It is not, to be sure, that the commitment to secular hopes brings about that eschatological fulfillment. But, as a dispositive cause, it sets the conditions for the realization of the effect. Just as the writings of the New Testament dispose one to receive the grace of the Holy Spirit through one's presentation of Christ,<sup>80</sup> or purity of heart disposes one to see God by

<sup>76</sup> "Et ideo Dominus attribuit illa praemia his beatitudinibus, propter quae homines ab eis discedunt" (*ST* 1–2, q. 69, a. 4, resp.).

<sup>77</sup> "Discedunt etiam aliqui ab operibus misericordiae, ne se immisceant miseriis alienis. Et ideo dominus misericordibus repromittit misericordiam, per quam ab omni miseria liberentur" (*ST* 1–2, q. 69, a. 4, resp.). The definition of mercy as "the willingness to enter the chaos of others to answer them in their need" comes from James Keenan, *The Works of Mercy: The Heart of Catholicism* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005) xiii.

<sup>78</sup> Ratzinger similarly discusses the beatitudes in the context of hope in his *Yes of Jesus Christ* 56–64, but focuses on their christological basis, their paradoxical structure, and their being more than "moralism." The only discussion of a specific beatitude is the second ("Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted"), and its primary purpose is to illustrate the beatitude's paradoxical nature; thus he paraphrases this beatitude as "Happy are those who are not happy" (56).

<sup>79</sup> See, e.g., 2 Tim 2:11–13; Rom 6:8, 8:17.

<sup>80</sup> *ST* 1–2, q. 106, a. 1.

cleansing inordinate appetites,<sup>81</sup> or indeed how faith, by showing the goal, disposes one to hope, or hope, by moving toward the goal, disposes one to charity's union with the goal,<sup>82</sup> so the commitment to justice and mercy in this world prepares one for a future happiness that transcends this world.

As in my discussion of the fourth commandment, there is no mercenary connection between act and reward. We have seen how gratefulness to the givers of one's finite life prepares one for union with the Giver of eternal life. Here, a corresponding claim is made: one's compassion for the neighbors who make possible social life prepares one for the community of saints with whom one shares eternal life.<sup>83</sup> In both cases, the act/reward structure reveals an intelligible correspondence between what one does now and what one will receive in future happiness with God.<sup>84</sup> The modality of hope that underlies this structure cannot be dismissed as extrinsic, since the hoped-for reward answers to the particular character of the act. Indeed, the promise of reward manifests God's compassionate response to the human striving for the good, especially as it encounters difficulty and sin. The "cost," as it were, of that encounter is met by the future "reward." Thus, in seeking some particular dimension of the good in this life, one constitutes oneself in such a way as to receive a reward in the next that completes one's human growth toward God. So while Benedict is right to insist on the difference between eschatological and secular hope, Aquinas, in his biblical reflections, shows their fundamental connection.

### Reframing *Spe salvi* on Suffering

Up to this point, I have been arguing that our understanding of the relationship between eschatological and secular hopes should broaden from contrast to participation. In light of that argument, I now suggest a modification to the encyclical's discussion of the suffering that results from moral evil. *Spe salvi* explores how meaning can be found in such suffering. For example, the suffering incurred by choosing the good reveals something about what it means to be authentically human. But a caution arises

<sup>81</sup> *ST* 2–2, q. 8, a. 7.

<sup>82</sup> *ST* 1–2, q. 66, a. 6, ad 2.

<sup>83</sup> For a creative extension and more communal account of Aquinas's view of the beatific vision, see Germain Grisez, "The True Ultimate End of Human Beings: The Kingdom, Not God Alone," *Theological Studies* 69 (2008) 38–61.

<sup>84</sup> Since "as Chrysostom says, all these rewards are one in reality, namely, eternal happiness; which the human intellect cannot grasp. And therefore it was necessary that it be described through various good things known to us, having observed the fittingness of the merits to which the promises are assigned" (*ST* 1–2, q. 69, a. 4, ad 1). In the beatitudes, then, one finds a more differentiated account of the ultimate end of eternal happiness than in the general discussion of ultimate happiness in the treatise on the last end of the human person in *ST* 1–2, qq. 1–5.

here. To focus on the good effects that can result from suffering could create the impression that suffering itself is good, and not simply an opportunity to manifest the good. For example, Benedict holds up the life of the Vietnamese martyr Paul Le-Bao-Tinh as a model of how terrible suffering can become “a hymn of praise” (no. 37). But it seems that the tradition has a more common way of responding to such hardships inflicted by the evil acts of others. The genre of lament expresses the prophetic no to this kind of suffering and so avoids the suspicion of a latent pessimism that, judging such suffering unavoidable, downplays the participation of secular hopes in the eschatological hope.<sup>85</sup> Some indication of this latent pessimism is suggested by the occasional unnuanced comment in *Spe salvi*. For example, when Benedict asserts that “the suffering of the innocent and mental suffering have, if anything, increased in recent decades” (no. 36), what evidence is he drawing upon? Similarly, while it is no doubt true that the “power of sin will continue to be a terrible presence” (no. 36), does not such homiletic brooding shortcut the political and cultural discernment of the variations in, and mitigations of, the inevitable influence of sin?

To avoid this impression of undue pessimism with respect to secular hopes, one could rephrase the discussion of suffering as follows. It is not always a case of encouraging people to find meaning in it,<sup>86</sup> but rather of giving voice to their experience that it often has no meaning, and then assisting in the process that removes suffering. For beyond the meaningfulness of the noble and voluntary suffering that results from taking a stand for the good, there lies the meaninglessness of the ordinary and involuntary suffering that results from being oppressed by the bad. It is one thing to willingly take Franciscan vows of poverty;<sup>87</sup> another to have an arranged marriage to Lady Poverty. Consequently, the accent should fall not only on finding meaning in the optional suffering that purifies character, but also on removing the imposed suffering that resists meaning and so often destroys character. And while it is true that much good can arise out of suffering caused by moral evil, that goodness does not arise from the suffering itself, but from the refusal to participate in the moral evil that caused it. Thus, any “hymn of praise” in the context of such suffering is to the goodness that is tested and proven by suffering, or to God’s fidelity through suffering, not to the suffering itself.

Once this suffering is recognized as a surd that resists meaning, there is no need to project its unintelligibility into God, as *Deus caritas est* seems to

<sup>85</sup> See, e.g., Brian Webster and David Beach, “The Place of Lament in the Christian Life,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 164 (October–December 2007) 387–402.

<sup>86</sup> E.g., *Spe salvi* no. 38.

<sup>87</sup> Ratzinger has written eloquently on the power of this witness in the second section of “On Hope”: “The dimensions of hope: its Franciscan element” 78–80.

do, by positing a contradiction between God's justice and love, which "turns against himself . . . against his justice" (no. 10). Rather, its unintelligibility resides exclusively within the human sin that causes injustice and misery. Consequently, the cross does not need to be asserted as an opaque paradox that "[culminates] that turning of God against himself" (no. 12). Instead, it can be grasped as the transcendent intelligibility of God's loving response to human suffering that reverses the cycle of social decline and heals the human alienation from God.<sup>88</sup>

### CONCLUSION

As a person comes to hope in God, especially in situations of impotence and misery, she clings to God's power and mercy as she seeks a deliverance that the world cannot offer. But that experience of eschatological hope, while initially contrasting with all other, secular hopes, gradually brings the person to participate in God's power and mercy. As a result, the person is empowered to become an agent of God's justice and mercy in the world. Indeed, Matthew 25 presents the criteria of judgment for eschatological worthiness as precisely the commitment to such secular concerns of justice and mercy. For all the undeniable contrast between secular and eschatological hopes, there exists a deeper analogical participation.

<sup>88</sup> See Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1992) 710–51.