The whole of theology is profoundly eschatological according to St Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*. Theology is a knowledge or science that is dependent upon the knowledge of God and of the blessed in heaven for its principles. This demonstrates the foundational importance of revelation and faith for the whole of theology, and with that the expectation of the human quest for understanding and the knowledge of faith flowering in the beatific knowledge of glory.

Aquinas' theological vision moves from the most sacred mystery of the Triune God to take in the cosmic sweep of the procession of all creation from God and the return of all to God. The end is in the beginning and the beginning in the end. The whole of reality and being is theologically viewed as coming from the Triune God and returning to a most intimate and intense interpersonal communion of knowing and loving the Father in the Son with the Holy Spirit.

Eschatology is the teleology of redeemed creation in the fullness of the kingdom of God. This redemption of fallen creation is fulfilled in the visible and invisible missions of the Word incarnate in Jesus Christ and by his Holy Spirit. The Church carries forward these missions in her sacramental worship with the preaching and teaching of the apostles and their successors down the ages. The realities of the end or *telos* of all creation include: (1) its fulfilment in the eternal joy in the beatific kingdom of God; (2) the resurrection of all humanity in Christ; (3) Christ's judgement of the living and the dead, eternal punishment or eternal joy in the new heavens and the new earth.

The greatest contribution of Aquinas to eschatology is his profound analysis of beatitude as the fulfilment of the deepest desires of intelligent creatures and the whole of creation. He spelt out in careful cognitive and metaphysical terms the full implications of St Augustine's 'our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee.' Eternal beatitude in the beatific vision contextualizes Aquinas' eschatology within the orders of wisdom so fundamental to his entire systematic theology. Moreover, it was precisely the intellectually challenging analysis of the beatific vision in Aquinas that enabled him to show the intelligibility of the resurrection of the body and the *telos* of the whole material universe in the whole Christ.
In speaking of God creating, redeeming, becoming incarnate, sending the Holy Spirit, beatifying the saints, and all the 'great deeds of God' revealed in the Scriptures, it is important to observe what Aquinas calls 'the order of wisdom'. Divine being is infinite act and infinite wisdom, so that 'in God his operation is his substance; thus, as his substance is eternal, so is his action. But it does not follow that an operational effect is eternal, but that the effect is according to the order of wisdom, which is the principle of [divine] operation.\textsuperscript{13} Divine wisdom can be known by intelligent creatures in ever fuller ways according to how they participate in the divine wisdom or divine light. Indeed, the divine wisdom is the Triune God knowing and loving himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and knowing and loving all else into being as finite participations of the divine trinitarian being. All created beings do not exist by themselves but receive their being and existence from God.

From late medieval nominalism and voluntarism, moderns are used to reading the creative and redemptive action of God as an expression of his power and will, rather than as an expression of his wisdom. Wisdom attunes the mind to the whole of reality, to the whole pattern in which all the parts can be understood as reaching their full purpose and nature. Wisdom discerns the patterns and ends of each in relation to the end of the whole.\textsuperscript{4} Aquinas developed what might be termed wisdom eschatology, discerning the ordering patterns of fulfilment of creation and redemption in the eternal kingdom of God.

Such a wisdom, or sapiential, eschatology stresses the wholeness of the divine wisdom in creation and redemption, as well as continuity with patristic eschatologies.\textsuperscript{5} This is very different from the post-Enlightenment efforts to interpret biblical apocalyptic and eschatology as arbitrary exercises of divine power. As such, as Sir Isaac Newton and other moderns asserted, the final catastrophe would only be understood at the final age of the world, so moderns often present themselves as at the final stage of the world.\textsuperscript{9} Modern science rejected an approach to the universe in which attunement towards the whole of the world is needed by cultivating a metaphysical wisdom. Instead modern empirical science tended to concentrate upon individual things and events, seeking any relations among particular things as only an exercise of more or less arbitrary power. Where modern science would wrest knowledge as power from observing and instrumentalizing nature, so modern fundamentalists would wrest from biblical apocalyptic eschatology, by various exegetical instruments, the secrets of the end time as immanent.\textsuperscript{7}

Aquinas' sapiential eschatology is most important to overcome these tendencies toward instrumentalizing both nature and divine revelation. He also overcomes the dualisms of soul and body, subjectivist mind and objectivist matter, which underpin instrumental rationality and so derail not a few modern efforts at understanding eschatology.\textsuperscript{8} This dualism is rooted in the modern failure to appreciate, as Aquinas' sapiential eschatology does, how the revelation of eschatology in Holy Scripture supernaturally fulfils the finality of the created universe rather than simply destroying and negating it in a final conflagration. The trials of the end time are not the final act in the drama of human history but the birth pangs to the eternal consummation of the universe and history in the kingdom of God.\textsuperscript{6}

Not surprisingly, therefore, the whole of Aquinas' theology is a knowledge subaltern to the knowledge of God and of the blessed.\textsuperscript{10} The interplay of metaphysical wisdom and revealed wisdom is masterfully elaborated in his treatment of the divine essence and the distinction of the three divine persons. The Greek and Latin Fathers had drawn upon the philosophical contemplative wisdom that clearly differentiated the intelligible from the sensible. St Augustine dramatized this in the narrative of his own gradual intellectual conversion as he came to understand that God is infinite intelligence and love transcending all material and imaginable images. Indeed, he came to this realization by discovering how his own mind was spiritual.\textsuperscript{11}

As Augustine had indicated how the intellectual and moral excellence advocated by the best of the philosophers could be lived only through his conversion to Jesus Christ, so Aquinas indicates how the intellectual and moral virtues are integrated within the absolutely supernatural communion with the Triune God operative in the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity.\textsuperscript{12}

Aquinas' treatment of the divine essence, divine knowledge, love, providence and beatitude is a masterful theoretical exposition of the analogous knowledge of God that springs from the metaphysical wisdom of such an intellectual conversion. Only in this context of an explanatory exposition of the divine Being, Knowing, Loving, can Aquinas then develop the revealed interpersonal distinctions of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as in the simplicity and unity of the divine nature.\textsuperscript{13}

This synthesis of philosophical and theological wisdom set an immense task for Aquinas' eschatology. Without the light of faith, philosophers had tended to ascribe evil to matter and a resulting weakness in the human mind. The Averroists at the University of Paris made it imperative that Aquinas indicate how theological wisdom can overcome the limitations of an unenlightened metaphysics that turns the distinction of the intelligible and sensible into an opposition and contradiction.\textsuperscript{14} As grace perfects nature, so the revelation of the last things perfects the finality of all of creation.

Everything created is made 'for the divine goodness itself', for God 'does not create in order to acquire some end' extrinsic to himself. In creating all things, 'He intends only to communicate His own perfection, which is His goodness'. This divine goodness means that each and every
creature 'intends to attain its own perfection, which is a likeness of divine perfection and goodness'\. Indeed, it is precisely the wise ordering of all things to the infinitely transcendent divine goodness, that assures the ultimate unity of all created things in their multiple and dazzling diversities\. As the divine act of creating is 'the emanation of all being from the universal cause who is God'\(1\) and the finality of all created things is the divine goodness, so a primary differentiation of things is in terms of good and evil, where evil cannot exist of itself but only as the privation or absence of good. The very diversity of things means that corruption, as a privation of good, can occur insofar as something either is not what it should be, or wilfully acts in disordered, evil ways\. Only intelligent creatures can act evilly, wilfully turning away from the wisdom of the divine order. Yet even this evil of sin can never totally corrupt the good created by God, let alone frustrate his divine wisdom\. So at the very beginning of his analysis of creation Aquinas introduces what stymied the best of the Greek and Latin philosophers: evil. The best of acquired human wisdom was unequal to the task of showing how all is ordered to divine wisdom and goodness. The creation of angels and humankind indicates how the drama of human history is caught up in the larger drama of angelic worship and demonic fall and hate\. This indicates how the problem of evil is not due to material creation, which is revealed as good, but to a spiritual pride that only intelligent creatures can cause by wilfully turning away from the divinely ordered wisdom.

Wisdom attends to the whole of the creation as divinely ordered and redeemed, so Aquinas indicates how no amount of evil agents and actions can thwart God's wisdom. Citing Dionysius and Augustine, Aquinas provides a fundamental principle of sapiential eschatology, one that was reiterated by many Greek and Latin Fathers: just as God alone can create out of nothing, so God alone can bring good out of evil:

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\text{God and nature and any other agent make what is best in the whole, but not what is best in every single part, except in order to the whole, as was said above (47, 2). And the whole itself, which is the universe of creatures, is all the better and more perfect if some things in it can fail in goodness, and do sometimes fail, God not preventing this. This happens, firstly, because 'it belongs to Providence not to destroy, but to save nature', as Dionysius says (De Divinis Nominibus iv); but it belongs to nature that what may fail should sometimes fail; secondly, because, as Augustine says (Enchiridion 11), 'God is so powerful that He can even make good out of evil'. Hence many good things would be taken away if God permitted no evil to exist; for fire would not be generated if air was not corrupted, nor would the life of a lion be preserved unless the ass were killed. Neither would avenging justice nor the patience of a sufferer be praised if there were no iniquity.}
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The justice of wisdom is central to Aquinas' eschatology. First of all, there is the justice of our worship and praise to the all-just and good God, whose infinite love brings good out of evil and so enables us to respond in faith, hope and charity. If the theological virtues have God as their proper object, the moral virtue of religion, as integral to justice, fosters acts of devotion in the will, and acts of prayer in the reason. The 'Our Father' indicates how all prayer is eschatologically oriented to the glory of God and the coming of his kingdom. For all the acts of religion, like prayer, devotion, adoration, worship, sacrifices and vows, render what is due to the Triune God as the end or final cause of all creation.

The justice of divine wisdom is also manifested in the longing of hope for that eternal kingdom of God where the full redemption of human history will be manifest. 'If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied' (1 Cor. 15:19). Commenting on this verse Aquinas indicates the importance of our eschatological hope for eternal life in the risen Lord for the personal, intellectual and moral excellence of the apostles, Christians and all human beings:

If there is no resurrection from the dead, it follows that only in this life would humans have anything good; and if this is so, then those are the more miserable who in this life suffer many evils and tribulations. Since, therefore, the Apostles and Christians suffer many tribulations, it follows that they are more miserable than other men who at least enjoy the goods of this world. Moreover, man naturally desires the welfare [salutem] of his very self. However, the soul is only a part of an embodied human being, and is not the whole human being, so the soul is not the self or 'I'. Thus if only the soul gained welfare in another life, it would not be the self or 'I' or any unique human being. And besides, since man naturally desires the welfare of even his body, a natural desire would be frustrated. Moreover, the good of the intellect is truth, and so if there were no resurrection their faith would have been false and the good of morals requires the resurrection so that all that they gave up of the pleasures of this life and despising death itself not be reputed as utter foolishness.

Without the future life the present life becomes futile and all work for truth, goodness and justice collapses in futility. For both good and evil persons die, and no matter how justice is meted out in this life, no human justice can raise the dead and make whole the broken and murdered lives of so many victims of injustice and hate. That is why, in line with how grace perfects nature, Aquinas defines a general notion of justice as including 'the proper ordination of man to God' and so in this sense includes the justification of sinful man, the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, with their fulfilment in eternal beatitude.

No finite being can fulfil the desires of the human mind and heart. In accord with his emphasis upon wisdom, Aquinas indicates how ultimate and perfect human happiness or beatitude can only be realized in
knowing and loving the infinitely intelligent and loving cause of all that is, the Triune God. Here the immaterial image of God in the human mind finds a fulfillment beyond anything we could humanly hope for in this world. Just as the context for humanly acquired virtues is friendship, so the theological virtues result from the forgiving and infinitely generous friendship of the Triune God, who wisely loved us into being, and even more wisely redeemed us from sin in the life, death and resurrection of the Word incarnate, Jesus Christ. In this life we come to know God through the effects he causes. By charity, however, we love God immediately and directly, and love all else through God. In heaven the blessed enjoy a cognitive immediacy proportionate to their immediacy with God in charity:

The more the intellect is participating in the light of glory the more perfectly will it see God. But it will participate more in the light of glory the more it has charity since where charity is greater there is greater desire; and desire somehow makes the one desiring more apt and ready to receive what is desired. Hence the more anyone will have of charity, the more perfectly will he see God and the more blessed will he be.

It is important to recall the ‘order of wisdom’ – it is not that the infused habit of charity or the light of glory mediates the immediacy of the Triune God to us. Rather it is the immediacy of God’s interpersonal presence that causes the created effects of the habit of charity and the light of glory. United in ecstatic intimacy with the Triune God, the blessed know the Triune God and simultaneously know all other things in the divine Word. The intimacy of communion with God in the beatific vision is analogous to the intimate union of soul and body, for God himself will be united immediately to the beatified created intelligence.

To grasp both the intimacy and ecstasy of the blessed communion with the Trinity, one must reflect on all the great insights and discoveries and knowledge of one’s entire life, and of the whole of human history – all the genial discoveries and knowledge. That would be but a flicker of the understanding and knowledge enjoyed by the blessed in heaven. Think of all the acts of love one has experienced in one’s entire life, and join to those all the acts of love of each and every human being through the whole course of history. All of that love would be no more than a spark compared to the infinite love of the Triune God. Each and every blessed is enraptured in infinite understanding, generating infinite knowledge, spiriting infinite love. Our human minds and hearts are indeed restless until they rest in this divine beatitude.

The blessed know the divine wisdom that redeems us through the Word incarnate, and why this wisdom chose not to remove evil through power, but to transform evil into good through the mysterious life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This beatific wisdom will completely

fulfil the most profound desires of our minds and hearts. The specific desire of human nature is to know truth and love the good. We desire to understand everything, knowing both individual things and all things. There is no opposition between the universal and the particular, the individual person and the human race. The light of reason is elevated and healed by the light of charity-informed faith; this in turn is elevated by the light of glory. All are ever higher created participations in the Divine Eternal Light who is the Triune God.

One of the great joys of the beatific vision will be finally to understand the beauty and wisdom of each and every thing that has occurred in one’s life, in the lives of loved ones, and indeed in the whole of human history. The blessed will understand why God allowed evil and sin to wound and murder so many, and how God’s wisdom and Christ’s redemptive mission has transformed all of that evil and suffering into goodness and glory. And this understanding will be such that even the most insignificant event will be finally intelligible within the beauty of the whole of creation. Why this daughter died in infancy, why such a promising son was cut down by an auto accident, why that father was murdered, why that mother was so brutally raped – all of these most painful questions and ‘whys’ that spring from what to our feeble minds and hearts are countless histories of suffering and genocide, all will be answered in the joy of the beatific vision. As the risen Christ’s glorified body had the wounds of his passion, so the blessed will understand how God’s wisdom transformed both their own sins and sufferings, as well as those of all others, including the justice of any damned in hell.

The special gifts and auras of each of the blessed will show forth the harmony and beauty of the whole of creation in the symphonic glory of the entire created universe.

The Resurrection of the Whole Body of Christ

This leads us to the bodily resurrection. For during his earthly life Jesus Christ in his human knowledge knew by the light of glory what faithful Christians believe because of his teachings. The more we love someone, the more we suffer in his or her sufferings. The more we love someone, the more our hearts are broken when they offend us. Divine wisdom chose to redeem us, not by removing evil through power, but by transforming evil into good through suffering. So the Word became incarnate. He whose infinite love creates all things, loving them into existence, becomes man to redeem sinful humans through his passion and death.

The fact that Jesus Christ in his human consciousness had not the light of faith, as we do, but the light of glory, in no way dulled his pain, suffering and sorrow. Since he was not yet glorified in his humanity, the light of glory did the opposite. The higher the created consciousness,
the greater will be the suffering. As a weak analogy might put it, someone with a finely tuned ear for music will suffer more intensely when someone sings off-key. Knowing and loving the Triune God both divinely and humanly, only Christ’s human nature united hypostatically to the Word could take up into his human mind and heart each and every human being with all his and her sins and sufferings. Jesus Christ as the divine person of the Word incarnate suffered more than all the sufferings of human beings throughout history put together.

Indeed, he gathered into his heart each and every human being in all the uniqueness of each and every one of us. Every human being is present in Christ’s human mind and heart, as the beloved is present in the lover, the known present in the knower. The concrete universality of all the uniquely individual and most painful histories of suffering are present in Christ’s love for each and every one of us on the cross. 35 So it is that we are baptized into Christ’s death. And so it is that we fill up in our own lives what is wanting in the sufferings of Christ, for as disciples of Christ the Church carries forward the visible mission of the Word incarnate in her rendering present Christ in his paschal mystery. 36

So the sapiential eschatology of Aquinas situates the bodily resurrection within the context of the paschal mystery. In the Summa contra Gentiles Aquinas introduces the resurrection of the body after discussing the sacrament of marriage as embodying the love of Christ for his Church. 37 Since the first man brought sin into the world, and through sin death (Rom. 5:12), so Christ redeems us from both sin and, at the end of the world, death. The resurrection of the body is caused by the resurrection of Christ. 38 Aquinas indicates how faith in the resurrection of the body in no way contradicts what we know of human nature by reason. Reading his reflections over seven centuries later, it is remarkable how the metaphysical principles validly illuminate the issues involved. 39

A wisdom approach emphasizes the intelligibility of the cosmos and of all that God creates and redeems. Any miraculous character of events does not mean their ‘unintelligibility’, as if God were doing something irrational. Rather, there are events which we cannot understand by the light of reason, but their intelligibility will be understood by the light of glory. What we know by faith as miraculous we shall understand by the light of glory – hence the efforts of the Fathers and Aquinas to offer natural analogies to provide a fruitful but imperfect understanding, at least insofar as what is affirmed in faith does not contradict the truths of reason. They take up a series of possible objections to the resurrection of the body, responding to them in turn. 40

Aquinas’ metaphysics demands the kind of intellectual conversion recounted by Augustine in order to understand how the intelligibility of the human soul causes the corporality of the human person. Thus he is able to dispatch the concerns of those who point to the obliteration, disintegration or disappearance of corpses. As he writes:

None of any human’s essential principles yields entirely to nothingness in death, for the rational soul which is man’s form remains after death, … the matter, also, which was subject to such a form remains in the same dimensions which made it able to be the individual matter. Therefore, by conjunction to a soul numerically the same a human being will be restored to matter numerically the same. 41

Due to nominalism and a pervasive Cartesian dualism, contemporaries tend to imagine that body and soul are two different things, much as Descartes’s res cogitans and res extensa. Various forms of idealism cling to the former, while forms of empiricism cling to the latter for their definitions of reality. Soul and body are not, for Aquinas, two distinct things but components of one reality, a human being. Thus he can write that an immortal soul without bodily resurrection would satisfy neither the promises of the gospel nor the deepest desires of the human heart.

For Aquinas argues that human beings cannot attain perfect happiness, beatitude and justice in this life, and therefore the resurrection is needed if human beings are to realize their natural and supernatural end willed by God. 42

Throughout his resolution of objections to bodily resurrection, Aquinas maintains the God-given dignity of individual persons. God’s knowledge and love creates the totality of all things and the singularity and uniqueness of each and every thing. 43 The resurrection guarantees that the unique singularity of each and every human being, with the fullness of their individual personhood, will be rewarded or punished according to their own unique responses to God’s loving gifts to them. Thus Aquinas shows that human beatitude requires specifically human and personally individual resurrection, not some vague or abstract perpetuation of the species:

Wherefore humanity signifies nothing else besides the essential principles of the species; so that its signification is only partial. On the other hand man signifies the essential principles of the species, without excluding the principles of individuality from its signification: since man signifies one having humanity, and this does not exclude his having other things: wherefore its signification is complete, because it signifies the essential principles of the species actually, and the individualizing principles potentially. But Socrates signifies both actually, even as the genus includes the difference potentially, whereas the species includes it actually. From this it follows that both the very same man and the very same humanity rise again, by reason of the survival of the rational soul, and the unity of matter. 44

He goes on to point out how the mystery of the resurrection, while natural insofar as ‘it is natural for the soul to be united to the body’, is not natural in its cause since it is the divine power alone that can bring it about. 45
We know that there are billions upon billions of human beings who have lived, are living, and will live and die. Each and every one of them has an immortal soul, which, Aquinas points out, is the substantial form of each and every human being. There is a unique individuality to each and every human being. Aquinas sees the resurrection of the body as the clear testimony to the profound interpersonal character of all the Triune God does for us. As he remarks, if God only intended the immortality of the human race as a species, generation would suffice for that.

But the resurrection is not ordered to the perpetuity of the species, for this could be safeguarded by generation. It must, then, be ordered to the perpetuity of the individual: but not to the soul alone, for the soul already had perpetuity before the resurrection. Therefore it regards the perpetuity of the composite. Man rising, therefore, will live forever. 36

The interpersonal intimacy is such that the risen glorified bodies are totally transformed to be fully iconic of the holiness and love of the Triune God and the risen Jesus. Intussusceptive and reproductive functions are no longer present in the immortal and transformed human persons in the ecstasy of ever fuller understanding and love of the Triune God. That there is no food or sex in heaven is a tribute to the iconic beauty of each and every embodied human person. The bodies of the blessed will be totally transparent in the joy and ecstasy of communion in the body of Christ. 47

Aquinas' sapiential eschatology attends to the whole in a way that, far from neglecting individuals, realizes how God knows and loves each and every human being into being. Only an infinitely wise and loving Father could know and love through the Holy Spirit so many countless human persons into existence as members of the mystical body of his own Son, the Word incarnate. They are not 'countless' or an 'abstraction' to God's infinite intelligence and love; each and every one is known and loved as only God knows and loves them. 48 The ultimate dignity of the human person is his or her eschatological communion with all the blessed in the new heavens and new earth of the eternal kingdom of God:

Accordingly, just as the soul that enjoys the vision of God will be filled with spiritual brightness, so by a kind of overflow from the soul to the body, the latter will be, in its own way, clothed with the brightness of glory. Hence the Apostle says (1 Cor. 15:18): 'It is sown', namely the body, 'in dishonour, it shall rise in glory': because now this body of ours is opaque, whereas then it will be translucent, according to Matthew 13:43: 'Then shall the just shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father'. 49

Christ's Judgement: Reward and Punishment in the New Heavens and New Earth

Having already discussed the justice of divine wisdom in connection with creation, evil and redemption in the first part of his *Summa Theologiae*, it is important to realize how for Aquinas this is both profoundly personal and universal in Christ Jesus. Jesus Christ knows and loves each and every human being far better than any of us know ourselves. This concrete universality of Jesus Christ's knowledge and love of us is the theological reality of his judgement of each of us at our death, and all of us in the last judgement:

When it is asked whether Christ knows all things in the Word, 'all things' may be taken . . . properly to mean that 'all things' include whatsoever is, will be, or was done, said, or thought, by whomsoever and at any time. And in this way it must be said that the soul of Christ knows all things in the Word . . . Now everything belongs to Christ and to His dignity, inasmuch as 'all things are subject to Him' (1 Cor. 15:27). Moreover, He has been appointed Judge of all by God, 'because He is the Son of Man', as is stated in John 5:27; and therefore the soul of Christ knows in the Word all things existing in whatever time, and the thoughts of men, of which He is the Judge, so that what is said of Him (John 2:25), 'For He knew what was in man', can be understood not merely of the Divine knowledge, but also of His soul's knowledge, which it had in the Word. 50

The judgement of Christ manifests both the justice and mercy of God insofar as he who judges us is the one who suffered for us on the cross. 51

Wisdom attends to the whole of the creation as divinely ordered and redeemed, so Aquinas indicates that the judgement of Christ reveals that no amount of evil agents and actions can thwart God's wisdom. Those intellectual agents who wilfully turn a created good away from the divinely ordered wisdom - which is always a violent removal of the particular good from its order - suffer the just punishments due such acts. The evil of such punishments is indeed willed by God's all-good wisdom, where the evil of sin is not so willed by God. For in sinning any agent is violently offending his own being and nature. Again, it is only in the perspective of Aquinas' sapiential eschatology that we can understand the mystery of divine justice and mercy. It is only in the context of nominalism and voluntarism that predestination and damnation were misunderstood as exercises of an inscrutable divine power. In the wisdom perspective that places the intelligibility of all of reality as present in the divine infinite intelligence and love of God, one can appreciate how it is precisely because of the divine intelligence, love, justice and mercy that God respects the free decisions of intelligent creatures. Aquinas' analysis of the punishments of the damned indicates how God respects the choices they have made in turning away from the...
The sapiential eschatology of Aquinas, building upon patristic eschatologies, understands the eschatological and apocalyptic passages in Scripture as revealing the transformation of the whole of creation so that it fully manifests the divine wisdom, beauty and goodness. This contrasts with those who view these passages as involving or portending widespread devastation or ultimate doom. A wisdom approach indicates clearly how what is catastrophic from the viewpoint of this world is only the purification needed for transition to the kingdom of God. Because the whole material universe is created for human beings to give glory to God, so it will share in their glorious beatitude. Where sin and evil turns the universe into idolatrous darkness and disorder, grace and glory will render the universe fully iconic of the divine wisdom.

In enjoying beatific communion with the Father in the Son with the Holy Spirit, the blessed will see how God has disposed all things with divine wisdom, how he brought good out of all the evil and suffering endured by all the blessed when they lived on earth. The final state of the whole of creation will find its glorious consummation in the ecstatic union of all the blessed with the Triune God, so that they will understand how their lives here on earth were conformed to the wisdom of Christ Jesus who redeemed us, not by removing evil through power, but by transforming evil into good through his passion, death and resurrection. The whole cosmos will be transfigured in the glorious presence of the whole Christ in whom each and every one of the blessed will be enframed in communion with each other in the infinite understanding and love of the Triune God.

Since then the corporeal creation is disposed of finally in a manner that is in keeping with man’s state, and since men themselves will not only be delivered from corruption, but also clothes in glory, as we have stated, it follows that even the material creation will acquire a certain glory of brightness befitting its capacity. Wherefore it is said in Revelations 21:1: ‘I saw a new heaven and a new earth: and in Isaiah (65:17-18): I create new heavens, and a new earth, and the former things shall not be in remembrance, and they shall not come upon the heart. But you shall be glad and rejoice for ever.’ AMEN.

Notes

1 ST, 1, 1, 2.
2 St Augustine, Confessions 1, 1. See also Jean-Pierre Torrell, Saint Thomas d’Aquin: maître spirituel (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires de Fribourg, 1996), pp. 656-69.
3 See I Sent., 8, 3, 1, ad 4: In Deo autem operatio sua est sua substantia: unde sicut substantia est aeterna, ita et operatio. Sed non sequitur operationem operatum ab aeterno, sed secundum ordinem sapientiae, quae est principium operandi. Also, ibid., 35, 1, 5, ad 3; De Ver., 23, 2; De Pot., 1, 1, ad 8.
4 ScG. II, 24, 4:ordo enim aliquorum ad invicem est propter ordinem eorum ad finem.
6 See Isaac Newton’s Observations Upon the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse of St John, ed. S. J. Barnett (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1993). Newton was convinced that the prophecies were divinely revealed secrets about history that could be rationally uncovered like the secrets of nature. As Frank E. Manuel writes in his The Religion of Isaac Newton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), p. 88: ‘That the complete content of prophecy had been hidden until the seventeenth century was for Newton “nothing but what ought to have been”... he reasoned that the very circumstance of his revealing in his commentaries the fullness of prophecy was no mean sign that the consummation of the times was not far distant.’ It is ironic that moderns would tend to project their own conviction of a swift fulfilment of prophecy back into ancient texts.
Order to God as to the highest principle of all and font of beatitude and the legislator of the
world of justice.'

238

ST, I, 45, 1.

38 See ST, I, 45, 1 and 4; 48, 1-6.

39 See ST, I, 48, 4. Aquinas says that even if sins were added infinitely, ever more
lessening someone’s ability (habilitas) to receive grace, still such an ability could never be
totally taken away since it belongs to the nature of the sinner that is created for the good.

40 See ST, I, 50-74.

41 See ST, I, 48, 2, ad 3.

42 See ST, II-II, 81-83; 83, 9.

43 See ST, II-I, 81, 5; 84-91.

44 In 1 Cor. 15:19 (2023-25).

45 De Ver., 28, 1, 4; ad 11; De Perfectione Spiritualis Viae, 13: ‘For as human beings are
consorts of one city, all under one prince and governed by his laws, so also all men,
inasmuch as they naturally tend toward beatitude, have a certain general congruity in their
order to God as to the highest principle of all and font of beatitude and the legislator of the
whole of justice.’

46 See ST, I-II, 3, 8.

47 See ST, II-II, 23; 26, 13; 27, 3, ad 2.

48 See ST, II-II, 27, 4.

49 ST, I, 12, 6

50 See ST, I, 12 and 10; Suppl., 92, 1: ‘As from the natural form (whereby a thing has
being) and matter, there results one thing simply, so from the form whereby the intellect
understands, and the intellect itself, there results one thing in the understanding. ... Hence
if there be a self-subsistent reality, that has nothing in itself besides which is intelligible,
such a reality can by itself be the form whereby the intellect understands. Now a thing is intelligible in respect of its actuality and not of its potentiality (Met. ii): a sign of this is
that an intelligible form needs to be abstracted from matter and from all the properties of
matter. Therefore, since the Divine essence is pure act, it will be possible for it to be the
form whereby the intellect understands: and this will be the beatific vision. Hence the
Master says (Sent., ii, d. 50, c. 6) that the union of the body with the soul is an
illustration of the blissful union of the spirit with God.’ From this it does not follow that
the blessed become divine; see ibid., ad 9. I am referring the Supplement since it is more
readily available to readers than Aquinas’ Commentary on the Sentences. Aquinas died
before completing the Summa Theologicae, so Rainaldio da Piperno, companion and friend
of Aquinas, completed the work by taking texts from Aquinas’ much earlier commentary
on the Fourth Book of the Sentences of the Master, Peter Lombard. I do not cite any texts
of the Supplement where later writings of Aquinas indicate that he had changed his mind.
For those who wish to consult Aquinas’ Scripta super libros Sententiarum, references are
provided at the beginning of each article in the Supplement.

51 See De Ver., 18, 1, ad 1; ST, I, 84, 5; De Trin., I, 3, ad 1.

52 See ST, Suppl., 93, 94.

53 See ST, Suppl., 95, 96.

54 See ST, III, 9, 2. See also Guy Mansi, ‘Understanding St Thomas on Christ’s

55 See ST, III, 10, 2; 46, 5-8. Note the importance of the highest Christology possible,
as it is defined by the great Councils, if one is going to take the concrete histories of
suffering seriously. Only God incarnate can redeem a human history, each page of which
is stained with so much suffering and blood.

56 See ST, III, 66, 2.

57 See SCG, IV, 78-79.

58 See ST, Suppl., 76, 1.

59 See, for example, Bernard Lonergan, Insight: A Study of Human Understanding
(Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), pp. 410-617; Benedict Ashley, Theologies
565-645; John Wippel, The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being

60 See St Augustine, De Civitate Dei, XXI, and Aquinas, ST, Suppl., 75-86; SCG, IV,
81-90.

61 SCG, IV, 81. 7. For the dualism of Descartes’ notion of human beings as a composite
of two ‘natures’, one corporeal and the other intellectual, see René Descartes, Discourse
on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy, trans. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis:
Hackett, 1985), pp. 17-42; and his Treatise on Man, in The Philosophical Writings of
Descartes, trans. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff and D. Murdoch, vol. 1 (Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 99-108. It is ironic that moderns tend to project
their own dualism back into the ancients and medievals, when the latter would never say
that humans had two natures.

62 See ST, Suppl., 75, 1-3.

63 See ST, 1, 14, 11.

64 SCG, IV, 81, 10.

65 SCG, IV, 81, 14.

66 SCG, IV, 82, 6.

67 See SCG, IV, 83-85.

68 See ST, I, 20, 2.

69 SCG, IV, 86, 2.

70 ST, III, 10, 2.

71 ST, III, 14, 2; 59, 2 and 3; Suppl., 90, 1; In Heb. 2:14-18 [136-54]. Both justice and
mercy are present in Christ’s freeing mankind of sin; see ST, III, 46, 1, ad 3: ‘That man
should be delivered by Christ’s Passion was in keeping with both His mercy and His justice. With His justice, because by His Passion Christ made satisfaction for the sin of the human race; and so man was set free by Christ’s justice: and with His mercy, for since man of himself could not satisfy for the sin of all human nature, as was said above (1, 2), God gave him His Son to satisfy for him, according to Rom. 3:24: “Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath proposed to be a propitiation, through faith in His blood.” And this came of more copious mercy than if He had forgiven sins without satisfaction. Hence it is said (Eph. 2:4): “God, who is rich in mercy, for His exceeding charity wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together in Christ.”

52 See ST, Suppl., 98, 1-5.
53 ScG, III, 144, 10.
54 See ST, I, 47; 3; 48, 3, 5 and 6; 49, 2. See also Robert Royal, Dante Alighieri: Divine Comedy, Divine Spirituality (New York: Crossroad, 1999); and Anthony Cassell, Dante’s Fearful Art of Justice (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984).
57 Thus the various dictionary definitions of apocalyptic as ‘involving widespread devastation or ultimate doom’. See also references in note 7 above.
58 See ScG, IV, 97, 4-6.
59 ScG, IV, 97, 7-8. For how this is prefigured in the transfiguration of Christ, see In Matt. 17:1–13 [1417-52].