New Blackfriars

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Heaven

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The second question of the old 'penny' Catechism was 'Why did God make you?' and the answer was: 'To know, love and serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him for ever in the next.' Every Mass contains prayers for this blissful life; in what does it consist? The official teaching of the Church has remarkably little to tell us. Before Vatican II people giving religious instruction to the young sometimes told them that they should try to get their heads into Heaven, not Heaven into their heads, and George D Smith, in *The Teaching of the Catholic Church*, the 1332 page book he edited in 1948, deals with Heaven in one paragraph. 'Of the reward of the blessed,' he says (p. 76), 'one would be happy to write. But if St Paul, who was rapt to the third heaven, tells us that "eye hath not seen nor ear heard what God hath prepared for them that love him," (1 Corinthians 2. 9) then it were folly for the writer to attempt to describe it.'[1] Disraeli in *Vivian Grey*, a novel written in 1826–7, just before Catholic emancipation, says that Catholics were advised by Parliament 'in the old nursery language, to behave like good boys – to open their mouths, and shut their eyes and see what God will send them.' (Book 4, Chapter 1). Before the Second Vatican Council the Catholic Church was apparently giving the same advice.

Since Vatican II official emphasis has been on this life. The Conciliar documents themselves say nothing of Heaven. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*[2] says only 'To live in heaven is "to be with Christ". . . . The life of the blessed consists in the full and perfect possession of the fruits of the redemption accomplished by Christ.' (ss.1025-6). The *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*[3] is even more succinct: 'By "heaven" is meant the state of supreme and definitive happiness' (s.209). The 2001

[1] Second edition, London, Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1952, p. 76. In fact Paul seems to be speaking more of what God has done for us this life than of what he will provide for us after death, since the passage goes on: 'But to us God has revealed it through the Spirit; the Spirit searches out all things, even the depths of God.' Similarly in Ephesians 3.20 God already working in us does more than we ask or conceive. Paul addresses life after death later in 1 Corinthians, in 15. 35-53.

[2] London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1999.

[3] London, Catholic Truth society, 2006

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conference of the Catholic Theological Association was supposed to be on 'Paradise, Our Once and Future End', but the contributions published in *New Blackfriars* (January 2002) contain no speculations about post mortem existence; instead they note a tendency to conceive Heaven as something attainable by the virtuous here on earth. So little is heard from pulpits today about life after death that one might wonder if Catholics are still expected to believe in it. If they do, are they not tempted to ask what it might be like?

Catholics may now be able to resist the temptation,[4] but in the thirteenth century they were not. Aquinas in *Summa Theologiae* 1a q. 89 discusses 'the cognition of a soul separated from the body' and considers eight specific questions. The *Supplement* qq. 69–96 deals with the life of the blessed after their bodily resurrection and raises such issues as their age, sex and stature. And 1a 2ae qq. 3 and 4 identify supreme and definitive post mortem happiness with contemplation of God. In the middle ages there was clearly an enthusiastic demand for paintings of life in Heaven, Purgatory and Hell, and the questions faced in the Supplement were bound to be asked by painters. But the idea that life in Heaven consists at least largely of contemplation, of seeing God 'face to face', appears in earlier Christian thinking. It perhaps owes more to Plato than to Judaism. In the Old Testament wisdom is largely practical, a matter of discerning right and wrong. Plato called attention to intellectual activities like quantifying, inferring and comparing, things all rational beings do but do not always realise they are doing; he represented these activities as particularly valuable and enjoyable; and at least was interpreted as holding that contemplative thinking, conceived on the model of vision, is superior to practical. In cultures uninfluenced by Greek philosophy people can be drawn to Christianity but have difficulty with this Platonic way of thinking. I do not think it follows, however, that those who recognise it as part of their own culture should simply set it aside. We should do the best we can with our intellectual heritage except when we see it contains error.

Nor do I think we should deny ourselves any speculation at all on what is the traditional hope of Christians, life with God after death, so long as we understand that it is speculation. Alphonsus Liguori in his Preparation for Death says we can no more conceive life in Heaven than a horse could conceive human happiness. If life in Heaven is some kind of sharing in divine life, it must be far more different from human life than the life of one created species is from the life of another. But unlike horses we have a nature which inclines us to speculate and, according to Aquinas, to speculate about God.

[4] And anyone tempted to yield to it should first read Fanny Penquite by Edith Saunders, London, Oxford University Press, 1932.

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Even, therefore, if we must become like little children in order to get to Heaven, I do not think this means we are obliged just to 'shut our eyes and see what God will send us.' That looks like a counsel, not, certainly, of despair, but of Hume's Demea. 'It is profaneness to attempt penetrating through these sacred obscurities'.[5]

There are two pictures which are apt to come unbidden into the minds of believers. One, suggested perhaps by many hymns, is of an interminable church service in which the blessed, assembled in the presence of God, praise him in unending song, *hymnum gloriae tuae concinunt, sine fine dicentes*. The other is of a vast housing estate in which the blessed are comfortably lodged and able to meet up again with the friends and relations they had on earth. This picture may be inspired by the saying at John 14. 2 – 'In my father's house there are many mansions [*monai*]' and is sometimes offered to mourners at funerals. It must be admitted, however, that in this life we occasionally feel that a church service has gone on long enough, we know virtuous people whose company we shun, and we can even be glad when friends or relations say they must leave. We can be uneasy about the prospect of endless time and about our relations with other human beings in heaven. I shall relate my speculations about heaven to these anxieties. They will be about how, after death, the blessed might share in God's life; and I shall so far follow the modern trend as to base them on a view of how people might share in God's life while still on earth.

The Lateran Council (1513) condemned the opinion that the thinking soul is mortal (D-S 1440) and Pius XII's encyclical *Humanae Generis* declared that it is 'immediately created by God' (D-S 3896). On the strength of these passages the Catechism of the Catholic Church declares (s. 366) 'that every spiritual soul is created immediately by God . . . and also that it is immortal.' It looks, therefore, as if theological orthodoxy is that every human soul is immortal from the moment at which it is created. It is its nature to continue to exist after death, and it is reunited with its resurrected body after the Last Judgement. The blessed would then share in the life of God in Heaven at least in the way in which house-guests share in the life of their host or hosts. They eat and drink at Christ's table (Luke 22. 30) and God prepares an endless succession of unimaginably delightful treats for them.

A number of Christian thinkers, however, have been unhappy with this teaching on philosophical grounds: they consider that it is makes a human being consist of two independent subjects, an immortal soul and a body, the former inserted into the latter either at conception or when the embryo has reached a certain stage of development, and that

[5] Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* Part ii.

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it identifies the human person with the former. The teaching may also be criticised on scriptural grounds. It does not give enough weight to passages in which eternal life, and not just eternal happiness, is said to depend on good behaviour, and indeed on some kind of union with Christ. And there are texts that suggest a different model from that of guests at a large house. This alternative model is of a vine with branches (John 15. 1–6). The branches are parts of the vine, and draw their life from the whole vine. In the application of this model the role of the vine is taken by Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity who is both God and man. Human beings do not grow out of Christ as branches grow out of a vine. Rather they are grafted into Christ as adopted offspring of God. They thereby acquire the immortality of God, or at least of the Second Person of the Trinity, as distinct from the immortality which, according to current orthodoxy, each has on its own before embodiment, and which enables them, if not admitted to the house, to stay weeping and gnashing their teeth in outer darkness or in everlasting fire. On the botanical model they do not become gods – the living branches of a vine are not vines – but they do share literally in Christ's life and that life is both human and divine.

A preliminary point in favour of the botanical model for life after death is that immortality, at least in Jewish and Greek thinking, is traditionally a divine attribute. In classical Greece the Homeric gods were thought immortal because they were gods, and the heavenly bodies were thought divine because, apparently, they were immortal. In Genesis 2–3, as Joseph Fitzpatrick recently emphasised[6], God prevents the first human beings from eating from the Tree of Life and says: 'So, Adam has become like one of us by discerning good and evil; and now, let him never stretch out his hand and take from the tree of life and then live for ever.' These words imply that Adam was not created immune to death; they do not rule out the possibility that he was so created as bound to live for ever after dying, but it is anachronistic to attribute to the author of this chapter a wish to leave that possibility open. The earliest Old Testament references to life after death (2 Maccabees 7. 9–14, 12. 45 and Wisdom 3. 1–3, 5. 14–15 though perhaps not Daniel 12. 2) represent it not as something natural but as a reward. Outside Judaeo-Christian thinking the idea that souls might be naturally immortal and never cease to exist is tied to the beliefs that they have existed from all eternity and migrate from body to body.

The Magisterium of the Catholic Church has not developed a theology of life after death that uses the viticultural model. Nor, however,

[6] *The Fall and the Ascent of Man*, Lanaham, Maryland, University of America Press, 2012.

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has it condemned talk of divinization, so theologians may feel free to speculate about a creature's becoming divine as a genuine possibility. What follows is such speculation.

The divine life of Christ is that of the Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity. If the three Persons are not to be confounded, the life of the Second must be somewhat different from that of the First and that of the Third. I have argued elsewhere[7] for interpreting the doctrine of the Trinity by using as a model the triune nature of a human being. We are, in the first place, living organisms, and we can act intelligently in seeking what we need to survive as living individuals, food, air, an ambient temperature within certain limits, and in avoiding bodily injury. As individual organisms we are sentient, pursuing pleasant bodily sensations and avoiding pain; and we also take pleasure in certain intellectual activities (piano-playing, say, or seeking proofs in arithmetic) or are bored by them. Secondly we are naturally social beings. We depend on society for language and for the way in which we conceive other people and natural phenomena like night and day and the succession of the seasons. We live as social beings in living with regard to the customs of our society, in thinking that these customs are mostly good and in playing social roles like those of doctor, priest and soldier. And thirdly we are disinterestedly benevolent; it is natural for us to make it our aim that other people and other living creatures should achieve their aims and flourish. In general rational behaviour has three dimensions: it is partly self-interested, but we pursue our interests as individuals with regard to the interests of other individuals, and with regard also to the customs of our society. My suggestion was that we match the Persons of the Trinity with these forms of agency in us: the Father is God as a unique and solitary being acting for the joy of acting; the Son is God as a social being, communicating with creatures ('the Angel of the Lord'), creating a society with them and acting as a member of that society; and the Spirit is God as a benevolent being, acting disinterestedly for the benefit of created individuals, and not merely, as we do, as someone external to them, but living within them.

If that is right, the divine life of Christ is his life as a divine social being. Being fully human his human life must include life as a human social being. But if his divine nature is different from his human, his life as a divine social being must be different from his life as a human social being and I suggest that we share in it in a different way.

I may be said to share in the life of another human being if I share in the life of a human society to which we both belong. The Church

[7] *The Physical, the Natural and the Supernatural*, London, Sheed and Ward, 1998, Chapter 8.

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is a human society to which Christ belongs. We imply this when we speak of him as a priest a king and judge, for these are social roles. Human societies have procedures, by which people become members. The simplest procedure – the default, one might say, - is to be born child of a member. We do not become members of the Church simply by having a Christian parent. We become Christians through being baptised.

Entering a society, however, is not the same as living as a member of it. Living as a social being is part of living intelligently. It is living in accordance with the customs of your society, and that is not just doing what the customs prescribe but thinking them good on the whole. If faced by a circumstance in which it is customary to do something or refrain from doing something you must see that circumstance as a reason, *prima facie*, for doing that thing or refraining. If in the end you act otherwise you do so consciously and reluctantly or unwillingly. Entering a society need not be a conscious act by the entrant. In the early years of Christianity people received baptism only when they were adults and asked for it. Today the Church has a practice of baptising infants. Baptism is still a matter of choice, but the choice is made by the parents or by other members of the infant's human society. In infancy we cannot make choices or act for reasons at all. We live as members of the Church, and we share in Christ's human social life in playing roles within the Church and in acting willingly in accordance with its rules and Christ's teaching.

In human societies into which people enter as infants, when children reach an age at which they can understand the customs of the society and act according to them, there is usually a rite of passage in which they accept the customs and enter fully into the life of the society. Among Catholics this is split into two rites, making a first Communion and receiving Confirmation. These rites were originally combined, and are still combined in some Christian denominations.

Receiving the Eucharist, however, is traditionally considered not just as a rite of passage, but as communion with Christ in closer way than merely by taking part in the life of the Church. In John 6. 53–7 Christ says:

> If you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life in you. He who munches [*trogon*] my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is genuine food and my blood real drink. He who munches my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. As the living Father sent me, so I too live through the Father; and he who munches me, he too lives through me.

This is a difficult doctrine, as, John informs us, Christ's listeners said when he taught it. The traditional Catholic interpretation, which goes back at least to Aquinas, is that when we consume the consecrated

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bread and wine we eat the living flesh and drink the living blood of Christ in the literal way in which we eat the living flesh of a raw oyster, and might eat the living flesh and drink the living blood of a small living bird caught in our lands. Christ is compared to the pelican, which is supposed to nourish its young with its own blood. This is a striking simile, but does not provide a model for sharing his life, since we do not share the lives of animals or plants we consume alive. What we consume in Communion, however, through the natural process of digestion turns into living flesh and blood in our bodies, and I have suggested elsewhere[8] that this flesh and this blood are literally alive with Christ's life in the way that the branches of a vine are literally alive with the life of the whole vine. If that is right we do share in Christ's life in the way in which parts of a single organism share in the life of the organism. If we understand the Eucharist in this way, we can think of baptism not just a procedure for entering a society, but as something analogous to the grafting of a cutting into a the stock of a vine or implanting an organ into a human body. My present suggestion is that we take this as the model for sharing in Christ's divine life, as distinct from his life as a human social being. Both models are used in the Pauline letters. Paul sometimes writes of Christ as standing to the Church as the ruling part, a head to a body (Ephesians 5. 23), but more often as the whole body to its parts: 'we, who are many, are one body in Christ' (Romans 12. 5; similarly 1 Corinthians 12. 12, 27; Ephesians 4. 12–13, 5. 30). It is this latter idea which allows him to speak of members of the church as being in Christ, and say 'I live, but it is no longer I, but Christ lives in me' (Galatians 2. 20).

The mode of sharing is different, and the life we share in this way is different. It is the life of the triune God. That includes creation and imparting creative life to creatures. Although in the Nicene Creed creation is attributed to the Father and vivifying to the Spirit, the Persons of the Trinity are one God insofar as they are a single source of the natural order, and theologians hold that these functions belong to all of them: 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not three principles of creation [*principia creaturae*] but one.'[9]

I find support for this in Christ's prayer for all the faithful [*pisteuontes*] in John 17. 21–23:

> As you, Father, are in me and I in you, so may they also be in us; so that the universe [*kosmos*] may believe that you sent me. And I have given them the glory [*doxa*] which you gave me, so that they should be one as we are one: I in them and you in me, so that they may come

[8] 'The Real Presence', *New Blackfriars* 82, 160-174, 2001

[9] Denzinger Schonmetzer 1331.

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> to completion [*teteilomenoi*] in one; so that the universe may come to know that you sent me, and you loved them as you loved me.

This passage follows the emphatic use of the vine analogy in John 15. 1–6 – 'He who remains in me and I in him, bears fruit in abundance,' etc. The word translated in English 'glory' and in Greek '*doxa*' means, I think, when applied to God not just brightness but creative activity.

Old Testament writers compare the effect on the Jewish nation of living according to Mosaic law with the domestication of a plant. Domesticated grapes or plums are different from wild, but the change takes place gradually, over many generations. Accepting a graft or implant also takes time, and we may hope that our coming to share in Christ's divine life could increase over a lifetime as we share in the life of the Church, honour the natural order as God's creation and ask God's help for those for whom we care. We may hope, that is, that insofar as we share in his human life as a social being we already share, however imperfectly, in his creative and animating activity. (I leave open the question whether this participation is limited to members of the Church or can embrace people who 'do God's will' without accepting the doctrine of the Incarnation or even having heard of Christ.)

We are accustomed to model asking God to help someone on asking another human being. If I ask you to help a sick friend, I hope that you will help the friend by yourself; my part is done when I have spoken to you. But I am suggesting that when we pray to God we may hope actually to share ourselves in the helping. Perhaps I can illustrate this by something said to me informally by the historian Gervase Mathew O.P. He offered to say Mass for anyone in classical antiquity that I named. It is traditional among Catholics to pray for the dead, and I think it is often understood that we are praying for them to be released from suffering in Purgatory at the time when we pray. I thought it would be odd to pray now, say, for the Emperor Tiberius to be released from Purgatory. But he said that for the dead time did not matter. I do not know if he had in mind the passage in Luke (20.38) where Christ says that to God 'all men are alive'; but I took him to mean that since God's divine action in sustaining the natural order is not itself in time, it was possible to pray now for God's help to a person at any time in that person's temporal life. This would not be trying to change the past. An utterance now is later in time than an event in the first century. But God's awareness of an utterance now is not later than God's action in helping someone alive in the first century. So we can pray to share in divine activity that had effects then. Accepting this possibility, I think, helps us to make sense of the idea of sharing in Christ's life after death.

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So much for sharing Christ's life in our earthly existence. What about after death?

Time is a feature of the natural order, and God as the source of the whole natural order cannot have a temporal existence. As a human being, Christ certainly had a temporal existence and acted in time, but as a person of the Trinity his existence must be atemporal. His choosing of his disciples and his instituting of the Eucharist were acts in time, but the Incarnation itself, his taking of flesh from the virgin Mary, and his communication of his life through the sacraments cannot be understood as temporal. They may have depended on temporal action – by Mary, by people receiving the sacraments – as necessary conditions, but they cannot have been effected by that action. It is this complementarity of divine and causal action which constitutes the Incarnation and extends it beyond Jesus of Nazareth to other human beings. But the sharing of Christ's life in Heaven, insofar as that life is divine, must be non-temporal – non-temporal rather than of unending duration. That there is actual atemporal existence we believe because nothing else will make intelligible the temporal order; but what it is like we are unable to conceive because the content of our thinking (though not its form) is derived from temporal things and their interactions.

The unity of parts of an organism is much closer than that of members of a society, closer even than that of lovers. Passionate lovers, indeed, desire a more complete and permanent union than that of sexual climax. With the right person, merging in timeless consummation might be bliss. But it may be disturbing to think that the blessed, numbering billions and coming from every background, should all have this intimate union with one another. The housing estate model of Heaven here makes an appeal. But earthly animosities should not survive into Heaven, Christ did command people to love one another without exceptions, and it may be helpful to consider his role as a judge.

In recent centuries we have come to think of judges as people who ordain punishment: death, flogging, imprisonment, fines. That is because judges are primarily ministers of justice, and we have come to think that justice is primarily retribution or returning pain for pain, *antilupesis*. But that is not a civilised way of thinking. Justice divides, at least according to Aristotle, into distributive and corrective justice. Human distributive justice involves distributing both good things and duties and burdens. For the blessed there should be no burdens but there could be need to distribute divine life and *doxa* according to how in their terrestrial lives people have made themselves able to receive it. Different people come to love different parts of nature, some the sea, some mountains, some particular species of plants or animals. They care for different individuals, embrace different causes. And though in human societies corrective justice sometimes takes a

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good thing from one person and gives it to another, in Heaven it might be limited to repairing damage. The sequence for Pentecost contains this prayer to the Holy Spirit:

> Wash in us what's dirty,
> Water what is arid,
> Heal in us what's wounded.
>
> Bend in us what's rigid,
> Warm in us what's frigid,
> Straighten what is crooked.

If Christ's role as judge is seen in these terms, the closeness of the blessed to each other may appear less claustrophobic.

To return to participating in God's life. Our present enjoyment of the natural world is through the senses, and it is the loss of that enjoyment that makes death hateful to many people: no more to see colours or hear sounds. If, however, the blessed share in God's life, they should share in the joy of creating the natural order. What is created is temporal but the activity of creation is not itself in time, and enjoyment of it would be eternal. In terrestrial life we can enjoy the world only from the outside; the creator must enjoy it from within. There is a hint of this in God's magnificent discourse in Job 38: 'Where were you when I fixed the foundations of the earth? Who was it that threw down its corner stone when the stars were born? Has the dawn received its orders from you, or the Morning Star learnt from you its course?' But our post mortem enjoyment of creation need not be limited to this inner view, for the created order includes sentient beings, and if we join in creating it we also know what it is to perceive it through the senses of sentient creatures.

We delight in nature partly as individual organisms. But as beings with disinterested concern for others, we enjoy getting to know and understand other people and helping them to achieve their aims; and we rejoice in their happiness. This too we can do only from the outside, and even our dearest friends remain to us in part opaque. If the blessed share God's divine life they must know their friends from the inside and perfectly, and must themselves breathe life into them. And this happiness must be atemporal; not long or short in duration, but not instantaneous either. Our conception of a durationless instant is temporal, being that of the beginning or end of a change, such as the switch from being in motion to being at rest.

Aquinas says in his *Summa Theologiae* that our 'ultimate and perfect happiness [*beatitudo*] consists in the contemplation [*visio*] of God's essence' (1a 2ae, q. 3 a.8). That sounds like a knowledge of the Creator as distinct from creation. The issues here are intricate, but Aquinas does not distinguish God from his activity, or his knowledge from what he knows (1a, q. 14 a. 2) and given the simplicity of God

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(1a, q.3) I am not sure that what Aquinas calls contemplation of God's essence is in fact anything different from the sharing in God's activity I have tried to describe.

I have not yet spoken of something which is an article of the creed, the resurrection of the body. We first hear of this in Maccabees 7. 9–14 and 12.44, and it is there simply identified with life after death. The Jews did not see human beings as having two components, a body and a soul, and assumed that a life after death must be that of a psycho-somatic unity. The gospels show Christ having a bodily resurrection, and Christian thinkers have reasoned that since we are beings that depend by nature upon sense organs, movable limbs and a nervous system, blissful life after death should be bodily. Hence Christians have traditionally held that though at death our bodies perish, at the end of the world we become once more embodied, and two questions then arise: what is life like for the blessed before the end of the world, and what is the body like after it?

In reply to the first question it might be suggested that the blessed already share in God's divine life, which does not depend on having a body. We depend on senses for information about the world and on limbs for acting in it. God's creative activity does not depend on these things, and if the blessed share in it they would have the same sort of knowledge as God about what goes on in time. They could not act causally themselves but if God helps and in some measure animates those of their friends who still can, they would join him in that. We ask the saints to intercede with God, but they cannot do this by speech or gesture; we may hope, however, that they actually unite with God in answering our prayers – as I have suggested we may hope to do ourselves now when we pray.

I also suggested that that in the course of our lives we become gradually implanted in Christ, and share in his life to a greater or less extent. That must depend on our behaviour, and our behaviour depends partly on when and where we live and what people we come to know. It may also depend on how far we do what we do because we think God wants us to do it, so that we act to be the people God wants us to be. In the course of our lives we not only undergo bodily changes but bring about changes in ourselves as persons. Perhaps it does not make sense to talk of sharing in Christ's life to a greater or less extent if we mean we become more or less divine; either we have God's life or we don't. But just as two vines of the same species have the same life, the life of that species, but may differ in size and shape, differ in the wood that has the life, so in the course of our lives there may come to be more or less of us to share in the one divine life, and what shares in it will differ according to the circumstances of our human lives. Different people, as I said, have different friends, different tastes, different charitable projects. These differences are acquired in our lives on earth, and at the same time, neurologists

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tell us, we acquire physical structures in the brain which we did not inherit and which enable us to behave accordingly. Perhaps it is not possible for beings of our nature, bodily beings, living organisms, to acquire new orientations after death. Perhaps the share of the blessed in divine activity is limited initially to fields for which before death they have prepared themselves. But the limitation need not be strict. If we have had concern for others in this life, and are united with them in Christ, we should be able though that union to share concerns they had or have, even if we did not did not ourselves have them when alive. I mean that if, say, I acted to help you, I might after death have insight into friends of yours of whom I never heard; if I prayed for a grandmother who died before I was born I might be able share her interests; and conversely she, though she never heard of me, might, through my prayers and our union in Christ, share in mine.

The only scriptural basis for answering the second question consists in the Gospel texts describing the risen Christ. Apparently he was sometimes not recognised at first by people who knew him (John 20. 14–16, 21. 4–14; Luke 24. 13–32), though sometimes he was recognised at once (John 20. 19–29), and the same texts show him cooking, eating able to be felt and not excluded by locked doors. Not much can be built on this. We need a body in order to act causally in the natural world, and the risen Christ acted causally on food and on the senses of those to whom he appeared. But causal action is temporal, so the end of time must be the end of causal action. If our ability to share in God's life reflects, in the ways I suggested just now, what we have learned and done on earth, at the end of the world our eternal participation in the creative action of God might sufficiently perfect our nature as bodily beings.

If, indeed, there will be an end of the world. There must have been a beginning of time because there cannot be an infinite stretch of time, and if time had no beginning an infinite stretch of time must have actually elapsed already. But there need not be an end of time, since for any finite quantity, whether of time or material, there could be a greater. Hence so far as logical possibility goes - I say nothing about physical possibility - for every physical event there could be a later.

Christians are accustomed to think that the Last Judgement of the living and the dead will occur at the end of time. If, however, at death people can immediately share timelessly in God's creative and animating activity, while traditional Church teaching places the Individual Judgement at death and the General Judgement at some finite time after that, perhaps we need insist on that order. Divine judgement, as a divine act like creation, should be in eternity: neither later than an individual's death nor simultaneous with it; not temporally

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related to human deaths at all. But we could distinguish the Individual from the General Judgement, so vividly described in Matthew 25. 31–46, though not dated in Matthew 24. 36, by attributing the former to Christ in his divine nature and the latter to him in his human.

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