

"Beatitude: What Heaven is Like." For delivery & discussion at a symposium on 'Heaven, Hell, ... and Purgatory?', sponsored by the Center for Catholic & Evangelical Theology in Baltimore, Maryland, 10-12 June 2013. By Paul J. Griffiths, Warren Chair of Catholic Theology at Duke Divinity School. Drafted May 2013.

I'm grateful and honored to be here. My thanks are due especially to Mike Root for the invitation, and to all of you for being here to listen and discuss. The Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology does splendid and important work, and I'm always pleased to be connected with its events as I've had the good fortune to be on occasion in the past.

My topic is beatitude, or what it's like to be in heaven. There's a standard Christian story about what happens to human creatures like us when we die, almost every element of which is shared by Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox Christians, as well, probably, by those Christians who would prefer to use none of these labels. It'll be useful to have the part of that story that ends with beatitude, which is the same as to say with heaven, in our minds before we go on to entertain together some more speculative questions about heaven, so here it is.

1. Getting to Heaven

The first moment in the story is the last in this life: it's the first death, the death of the body. This occurs at the moment when the soul, the *anima*, separates from the body, the delicate fleshly organism an instance of which stands before you speaking right now. When that happens, the creature that was a human person is, temporarily, no more; what remains are the traces or vestiges of that person.

Some among those vestiges are material: they are the person's fleshly remains, his or her corpus, or corpse. As soon as the soul separates from the body, the person's fleshly traces begin to disaggregate, whether by rotting or in some more violent way. Ordinarily, the corpse will have disaggregated within a few dozen years sufficiently that it is no longer recognizable to anyone living. The corpse, everyone would agree, is not a human person; it is, at most, a human person's material remains. It does not, however, exhaust the remains of the now-dead person.

There are also psychic traces, the ordinary name for which among Christians is the soul, now separated from the body which it had until the moment of death informed. This too, the separated soul, is not a human person, and that is because human persons are constitutively and definitionally ensouled bodies, or, if you prefer, embodied souls. Anything that lacks either body or soul is by definition, not a human person, and is therefore not a person at all.

But this is not to say that the dead person's traces, whether physical or psychic, are nothing at all, or are without interest. This is evident by what, according to the Christian story, happens to them next. The separated souls are judged by the LORD immediately upon death, as soon as they separate from the body. I'll leave aside the criteria for this judgment, itself a complex topic, and say only that Christian orthodoxy requires the view that some (perhaps all, but certainly some) separated souls are judged worthy eventually to live in eternal and unsurpassable intimacy with the triune LORD who created them. This group, the souls bound for heaven, does not immediately enter it, however, and this for a variety of reasons which, again, it would divert us too far to go into now. Common to all the heaven-bound souls, whatever their differences, is that they will reach their final beatitude, their final degree of intimacy with the LORD beyond which there is nothing more exalted, nothing greater or newer, only when their bodies are resurrected so that their souls can be rejoined with them and they can thereby become once again the human persons they once were. Once this has happened, those judged worthy to do so enter heaven. Separated souls cannot do this even though they can enjoy to some degree the beatific vision, the delightful vision of the LORD. The full, unsurpassable, heavenly vision of the LORD is possible only for human (and angelic) persons, and since human persons do not exist without bodies, they enter heaven only when the general resurrection has occurred and they are once again enfleshed with the self-same flesh they once had.

Even the person's physical traces are not nothing. The dead body is ideally treated with reverence, and its place honored. Relics, which is another name for the physical traces of a person (body-parts and other objects that were intimate with the person while he or she lived), are objects of importance in the Church's life, as well as in the lives of those who remember the dead. And, it is in some sense the very same body — *idem numero*, identical in number, the self-same, as the Latin scholastics like to say — that will be resurrected at the end, to join again with the soul and thus to reconstitute the person.

That's the story. It's an interesting and complex one. It rests upon a particular understanding of human persons as embodied souls, psycho-physical unities. These come into being at conception, continue in being until the separation of soul from body that is their death, continue then for a while --

perhaps a long while -- only as physical and psychical traces, and are then reconstituted (resurrected) as a precondition for entering heaven.

The lineaments of this story, the story of souls bound for heaven, are firmly grounded in the tradition's authoritative sources, which is to say in Scripture, creeds, conciliar texts, and (for Catholics), other authoritative magisterial texts. But not much else about heaven is so grounded. If you think for a moment about the credal confessions of the Church, whether Apostles' Niceno-Constantinopolitan, or (even) Pseudo-Athanasian, you'll agree with me, I'm sure, that while they are at one in their promise of eternal life to the faithful, they are equally unanimous in having nothing much to say about what it is like, the means by which it is attained, or the process of getting there. Scripture says not much more, at least not explicitly, about these matters. And for Catholics, while there is a little more given dogmatically about the nature of heaven than is contained in the sketch I've just given -- for example, that it is indefectible (one you're there, you don't leave), and that it never comes to an end -- it doesn't amount to all that much. Christianity is doctrinally parsimonious in matters of eschatological detail, and for good reasons: these are mysterious matters, about which it is reasonable to think that our capacities for understanding are bound to be very limited. This lack of doctrine, however, is matched by luxuriance in speculation at every level of the tradition -- there are visions, theological speculations, novels, poetry, hymns, paintings, musical compositions, and much more, in which more or less detailed pictures of what heaven is like are given. But I will leave these aside, fascinating and important though they are. I want instead to think with you about what heaven is like, rather than to try to imagine it. Imagination is an over-rated faculty anyway, and thought an under-rated one, so let's try what we can do by thinking, within the generous constraints of orthodoxy, about heaven.

2. How to Think About What Heaven is Like

Restricting our attention to heaven as it is for human creatures (though they are certainly not the only creatures present there), we can say that heaven is our glory, the last thing for which we were intended and for which we hope. A glorious last thing for any creature, we can say with formal confidence, necessarily involves the preservation of all goods proper to the creature in question, as well as the maximization of those goods capable of a maximum. That's the positive rule. The negative form of the same rule is that a glorious last thing involves the removal from those creatures that enter it of any and all damage they have suffered between conception and the first death. When the

preservation and maximization of all the goods proper to a creaturely kind, together with (what is really another way of describing the same state of affairs) the removal of all loss and lack and damage from it, then the creatures belonging to that kind have reached their glory. They are in heaven, existing now in heavenly mode.

This is a useful but very abstract pattern of thought. It permits easy and accurate definition of what it is for a creature to be in heaven, and, further, a definition that moves thought about the matter in a certain direction. In order to put flesh on its bones, decisions need to be made about which are the goods proper to human creatures, and, concomitantly, about what counts as damage to them. Some such decisions are easy enough, or seem to be; and some of them are even given dogmatically for Catholic Christians, such as the view that flesh is a good proper to human creatures, which at once entails the conclusion that heavenly human creatures are fleshly, as we've already noted. The separation of soul from body that occurs at death is an instance of damage that heaven will heal. But many are not so easy. Consider the property, *having active relations to nonhuman fleshly animate creatures*. If this is a good proper to human creatureliness, then this fact may entail the continuation of such relations in heaven by means of the presence of such creatures there. But it is by no means obvious that this is a good proper to human creatures, which is why Christians who have thought about it have arrived at no consensus on that question. There are similar difficulties about what counts as damage to human creatures. The pattern of thought in play here, then, fundamental and essential though it is, is limited in its yield, and seeing the nature of these limitations clearly should moderate the degree of confidence we have in the judgments we make about such matters. Nevertheless, the yield of this pattern of thought is far from negligible.

We Christians have some further aids to judgment about which are the goods proper to human creatures.

One among these is that we have a form of life given to us that we know to be supremely good for us here below, and know therefore also to foreshadow more fully than can any other form of life what life in heaven will be like. The form of life I have in mind is liturgical. This is our forestaste of heaven, and attending to its structure, purpose, meaning, and effects upon those who engage in it tells us something about what heaven is like, and about what it will seem like to human creatures to be there, to arrive at a glorious last thing. Thinking about the liturgy, then, is helpful for arriving at conclusions about what are the goods proper to human creatures. Thinking in this way, however, also does not yield easy conclusions. We must, for example, try to discriminate what is proper to the liturgy from what is accidental to it; we must also make some ticklish decisions about what it is that the liturgical life does to those who live it. It is

easy to be wrong, substantively or by way of emphasis, about matters such as this. Nevertheless, attending to the liturgy is the closest we can get, here below, to attending to heaven.

Attending to Jesus and Mary is another aid to reflection upon the question of which are the goods proper to human creatures, and, therefore, upon the question of what heaven will be like for us. If, as Christian doctrine requires, the resurrection and ascension of Jesus show us something of heaven, and if, as doctrine also requires, heaven is the place where the ascended flesh of Jesus and the assumed flesh of Mary are to be found, then thinking about that flesh – the flesh of each of those people – must have something to tell us about what heaven is like and about what it is like for human creatures to be there. Again, it is not at once obvious what we learn about heaven by attending to the risen Jesus and the assumed Mary; but attending to them is necessary if thought about the last things is to yield what it might.

3. Experience in Heaven

Suppose we understand 'experience' very generally to mean 'what it seems like to you to be you.' Much of the time, when you're in dreamless sleep say, or for some other reason, it doesn't seem like anything at all to you to be you. But often it does. There's often a flood of sensory and affective and (even) intellectual seemings: you feel hot or cold or hungry or worried or bored or in pain or pleased at having solved a mathematical equation or ecstatic in the arms of your lover, or well, you can fill in a lot more blanks. We are, that is to say, at least some of the time, conscious beings, and we share this with many, perhaps most, other living beings. They too feel hot, cold, hungry, and so on, even if in particular ways that we cannot easily imagine because of the deep differences between our bodily nature and theirs. Consider, for instance, what it seems like to a bat to locate itself in three-dimensional space by echo-sounding. You'll discover that you can't.

But the kinds of experience I've just mentioned – first-order seemings, we might call them – aren't the only kinds of experience we have. We also layer or stratify our experience, and one of the ways in which we do this is to take them to be ours, as belonging to us. This possessive layering is most clearly evident in states such as boredom, embarrassment, delight in praise, and response to threat. Consider, for instance, what happens when you overhear a conversation about yourself. What you overhear might be an anatomy of your defects or an encomium to your virtues. In either case, there'll be ordinary auditory

experience: you'll hear some things. But you'll also categorize what you hear as about you, not about someone else, and it will therefore become quite different for you than would a conversation about someone you don't know casually overheard on the subway or the bus. The affective feel of your response to this possessively-layered experience will ordinarily be quite intense, and it may include smug self-satisfaction, anger, embarrassment, revulsion, and more. A useful shorthand for possessively-layered experience is 'the inner theater.' It's on that stage, surrounded with eye-lined mirrors, that you play out the drama of what it seems like to you to be you – and that's a pretty important drama for most of us here below, I should think.

Now let's think about this in terms of the principles of eschatological thinking we've already laid out. Is possessively-layered experience, the inner theater, a good proper to human creatures, or is it an instance of damage? If the former, it will be present in heaven; if the latter it will not. I want to suggest to you that possessively-layered experience is an instance of damage, an artifact of the fall we might say, and that it will therefore not be present in heaven.

Here are some reasons for thinking so.

The first is that the inner theater is unnecessary for most human activity, and indeed very often absent. Habit is its enemy, and when I am engaged in an activity that I've done often before, it often doesn't at all seem to me that I am doing it. Rather, it occurs. Consider, for example, the ordinary gestures of etiquette – the handshake, the bow, the ritual greeting. I don't have to decide to perform these; all that's necessary is the appropriate situation. When I'm introduced to you and I shake your hand, the inner theater's stage is just about empty. As we shake hands or air-kiss or whatever it is that we do, nothing about the texture of our experience – its phenomenology, if you want the twenty-dollar word – requires us to layer what we're doing possessively, to note it as ours. Indeed, were we to do that, we precisely wouldn't be being polite, but rather something much worse, something that might require judgments about our respective worthiness to have this etiquette-exchange. It's exactly the gift of etiquette that it doesn't require decisions like that. We can, I suggest, do most of what it's important for us to do here below without the inner theater.

Here's a second brief example of habit as experience's enemy, this one perhaps a little more controversial. I mean the activity of writing. I do a good deal of this, and, so far as I can tell, I ordinarily do it largely without any sense as I write that it is me writing, that this writing is mine; neither, ordinarily, do I note and categorize the first-order seemings that do occur to me -- the feel of fingers on keyboard, for instance, or the changing visual patterns as words take form on the screen in front of me. The experience that does occur, first-order and unlayered, passes mostly at a low level of intensity, demanding and receiving

little attention. Some of it can be reconstructed retrospectively without too much difficulty: I can recall, later, that the telephone rang while I was writing, or that no antonym for 'categorical' came rapidly to my fingers. But at the time of writing, all that can, and usually does, remain below the conscious level – and it certainly requires no possessive layering, no inner theater.

This may seem odd. Doesn't writing involve searching for the appropriate word or phrase, imagining the balanced syntax of a well-ordered sentence in advance of tapping that sentence out on the keyboard, actively considering various lexical alternatives, and so on? In some sense it must involve all these, and more; but in terms of what seems to me to be going on, experientially, there is nothing like this. The sentences are formed in very much the same way as the gestures of etiquette are performed; and the processes that permit their formation are about as evident to me as I write as are the causally-connected chains of physical events that make it possible for me to shake the hand of someone I meet -- which is to say, not at all. As I write, the words flow; sometimes there is some accompanying first-order experience, but more often not; and, after a while, something has been written. An advantage of this way of thinking about what it seems like to writers to write is that it moderates our tendency to think of what we have written as ours, which is, theologically speaking, pure gain.

One of the rules of thought I suggested earlier, in thinking about the heavenly life, was to attend to the liturgy as the clearest forestaste of heaven we have here below. How does this help us with the question about the inner theater?

Living the liturgical life requires, like any other complex communal practice extended over time, the establishment of habits of body and speech on the part of its practitioners. It is much less clear that it requires the establishment of habits of layered, possessive experience. Developing the required habits of body and speech may require that explicit instruction be given by those who are already practitioners to those who would like to be. The church has recognized this, and provided it by catechizing adults preparing to undertake the liturgical life by way of baptism's ritual death and rebirth. But even when such instruction is given, it plays an insignificant part in becoming a habituated liturgical agent – someone who knows how to live the liturgical life, how to go on, what to do next. Vastly more important is simply living it, doing what those who are already living that life do. As we become habituated liturgical agents, our sense that it is us – me, this particular person – worshipping the LORD is increasingly attenuated.

But it's not just that liturgy habituates. Baseball and piano-playing do that, too. Liturgy habituates in a particular way. There's a lot to say about this, and

I've time to make only one among the points I'd like to make — and I should say that it's now, more than at any other point in this talk, that it'll be evident that I'm speaking as a Catholic. You may have to do some translation.

Liturgical agents, those who have become habituated to the worshipping work of the Christian people, have learned to act as do those who accept a gift of love. They have, that is, learned what it means to respond gratefully to a loving gift given freely outside the economy of exchange: a gift given without establishment of obligation, without expectation of return, and without calculation about the merits of the recipient. There is reasonable debate about whether gifts of that sort are possible. Ordinarily, perhaps always for us, gifts are given within the economy of exchange: the transfer of a good from one person to another carries obligation with it and, when it is accepted, establishes a bond of reciprocal intimacy between giver and recipient that permits return of the gift. But the liturgical life is a performance rich with signs that what is being celebrated in it is exactly the pure gift, the gift that establishes no debt and expects no return. God owes us nothing; and to that we might add that God demands nothing from us. He simply, preveniently, and endlessly, gives. The liturgical life is in very large part a training in how to receive such a gift as that.

For example. As you enter the church building, you bless yourself with holy water from the baptismal font and genuflect before the sacrament reserved in the sanctuary's tabernacle. As the drama of the Mass unfolds, you will, *seriatim*, stand to listen to the Gospel proclaimed; sit to receive its exposition; stand again to begin participation in the sacrifice performed upon the altar; kneel after the Sanctus as the elements are consecrated; stand again to recite the prayer given by Jesus; kneel to confess your unworthiness to receive Jesus into your house, in imitation of the centurion appealing to Jesus to heal his sick servant; and then receive the body of Christ on your tongue.

This constant up-and-down writes upon the bodies of those who perform it frequently a habit of acting as an unworthy recipient of a prevenient gift. This is not to say that those whose bodies have been so written upon will, as a result, be able to provide an account of how their bodies have been overwritten, or of what that overwriting may be taken to mean. Doing that will be as common among liturgical agents as is giving an account of their language's grammar and syntax among those who speak it well -- which is to say vanishingly rare. But whether or not the skill of theoretical articulation is present, permitting your body to be overwritten by God's sentence of eternal life as given in the formalized play of the liturgy alters you as agent exactly in the direction of attenuating the inner theater.

The proper end of the liturgical life, I suggest, is the radical attenuation of experience. The inner theater is at best epiphenomenal to the liturgical life, which

is also the Christian life, and at worst inimical to it. What that life points us to, and what it provides a real participation in, is a condition in which the one thing we will then do, which is to praise the Lord who gives, has no significant place for experience. The end of possessively-layered experience, for those resurrected for salvation, is its erasure. It will not seem like anything to the saints in heaven to be who they are. They will not identify the flood of seemings that is their heavenly life as belonging to them, being their own. Their existence will, grammatically, be entirely dative -- they will be constantly addressed by the LORD's voice, and constantly confronted by his face; and their response will be exclusively one of adoration, to which the inner theater does not and cannot belong. They will have become habituated to the repetitive stasis of the praise-filled gift-exchange in such a way and to such an extent that the self-reflexive understanding of themselves as such is impossible, and would be a trivial distraction if it were possible.

4. Heavenly Flesh

We humans are fleshly creatures. That is given dogmatically and scripturally, and is part of the grammar of Christian orthodoxy. Attending to the end of Jesus' earthly life, which was by way of the ascension of his resurrected flesh into heaven, and to the end of his mother's earthly life, which was by way of the assumption of her flesh into heaven, only underscores all this. Flesh is a good for humans, and, thus, it will be present, perfected, in heaven. Until it is, we will not be fully there.

What can we say more than this? What is heavenly flesh like? We need to begin by saying something about the flesh here below, which is what we know.

Locatedness is intrinsic to the flesh in all its states. Being enfleshed locates us -- gives us a place -- in the world, whether it's this devastated world, the edenic one, or heaven itself. To be flesh is to be here, somewhere particular, not everywhere, and not somewhere else. This is not to say that fleshly creatures are located, or find themselves in a place, as inanimate creatures do. For those latter, locatedness is exclusively spatial, and a complete account can be given of it by specifying cartesian coordinates of space. The Ordnance Survey map will tell you all you need to know, for instance, about the place of the building we're in now. But your locatedness, as flesh, means something more than this. It means, also, an erotic relation, one of desire or delight or their opposites, to the place you're in. The spatial location of mere inanimate bodies is evenly distributed, mappable geometrically by coordinates and representable with mathematical precision on a

grid. But the being-in-place of flesh is always uneven, stumbling, incapable of adequate representation on a grid. For flesh, there is holy ground and unhallowable, the soft and welcoming place and the place of despair; and the distance between such places is not capable of measure by rule. When the flesh is located by GPS at a place in the world, and represented by a glowing blue dot on the googlemapped screen of your smartphone, it is being shown as a body; showing it -- locating it -- as flesh rather than as body is beyond the skill of software. For that, you'd need a device that could show space gathered and furled and concentrated and distended, a panorama of shrines and altars and places of pilgrimage as well as of death-pits and bomb-sites and concentration-camps. Flesh genuflects here, is embraced there, is fed elsewhere, and flees in horror through devastated places elsewhere again. The map of its locatedness would be more like a weather-map of isobars unevenly concentrated into zones of high pressure and low than like a gridded plan on which all places are alike. Inanimate body is undifferentiatedly present in all the furled and folded spaces of the flesh – the glowing googlemapped dot of location is the same for all inanimate bodies even though the flesh knows the difference.

The extent to which you are fleshly rather than bodily is the extent to which place is given you under the sign of desire and delight. Flesh in heaven has its locatedness in a constant awareness of its place before the risen flesh of Jesus and the assumed flesh of Mary. Fleshly locatedness in heaven is, then, a matter of repetitively static ecstasy, in the strict, etymological sense of that word – flesh stands outside itself, worshipping and being loved.

As well as being located, flesh is fundamentally and essentially erotic, desirous and delighting, or repelled and disgusted, that is, in all its states and conditions. The flesh's erotic character is not, as we perhaps most often and easily think of it, a drive or appetite internal to itself by means of which it relates itself to a world external to itself. On that model, the flesh's eros is what moves it toward the world, what motivates it to ingest, touch, and enter into the world. A lover, on that understanding, begins as a self-enclosed monad, and seeks contact with other such monads: she is a lonely aspirant to love until she finds other flesh with which to connect. But this way of thinking has it backwards. The flesh's eros is received as gift, not possessed as aspiration: it's only by being caressed, for example, that fleshly persons are capable of caressing; it's not that we are brought into being as caressers, awaiting occasion for the exercise of that potency. No, in order to be lovers, those capable of caressing (rather than merely touching) the flesh of another, we need first to receive the other's caress. That is, the lover becomes such only by receiving the gift of her- or himself as beloved. The flesh's eros, on this more adequate view, is received as gift, and necessarily so.

This is an implicitly theological view of the flesh's eros, of course, and I'll return in a moment to an explicitly theological construal of it. But it is also a view that coheres well with what we know of the growth and change of human persons as infants. Babies receive the gift of their flesh as erotic, as desirous of and erotically responsive to the flesh of others, only by being caressed, usually, at least in the first instance, by their mothers. Absent the maternal caress, the eros of the baby's flesh remains surd, unvoiced and inactive, a possibility unrealized. Babies and small children – and indeed the young of other mammals – systematically deprived of the fleshly caress fail not only to be eroticized themselves, but also to flourish in other ways. Death in fact is the ordinary outcome of such deprivation. It is also the case that newborns do not have a good sense of the boundary between their own flesh and both the inanimate world of objects that surrounds them and the flesh of others. You can see this in a baby's surprise when it gums or sucks its toes with sufficient energy that it feels the result. The sense that the flesh has boundaries, and that the erotic is the principal mode of the flesh's interaction with what is outside itself, is learned, and is learned by receiving the caress, whether of inanimate objects or the flesh of others. Eros, then, is received as gift, and once received is intensified, shaped, and ornamented, by repetition.

Consider, in this connection and for example, the kiss. Becoming one who kisses is dependent, causally (and indeed definitionally), on being kissed. The impress of the lover's lips on one's own provides the gift of being one who, in virtue of being kissed, can kiss. Kissing is not a possibility for the un-kissed; the flesh's eros, concentrated in this case in the lips, is without remainder received from without – and the extent to which the flesh's eros appears to function non-reciprocally, not in response to gift but rather by autonomous self-generation, is the extent to which it is a simulacrum of eros rather than the real thing. This account can be extended without much difficulty to all the other aspects and dimensions of the flesh's eros, though I won't do that here. The key point to bear in mind is that the flesh's trembles of desire before the flesh of others are possible for it only if and as it is first desired. To say, 'I love you,' then, is to return a benison received, not to make an offer. It is, ideally, something said simultaneously, lip to lip and eye to eye, in harmonious counterpoint, not a tentative word-bridge thrown across the gulf between one person and another. On this model, unrequited love is something close to an oxymoron, and when it appears to occur, that appearance is always evidence of erotic damage or confusion of one kind or another.

The theological version of the flesh's receipt of itself as erotically charged is not far to seek. Its charter text is I Corinthians 4:7, where Paul asks what he has that he has not received. He expects the answer 'nothing.' The gift in this case is the Lord's to us; the kiss, too, is the Lord's, as the opening verse of the Song of Songs says: "Let me be kissed with your mouth's kiss," we read there. And if you

accept that the addressee of these words is the LORD, and the petitioner a representative of us all, then what is being asked for here is the gift of the flesh as erotically capable because itself loved and desired. This is the erotic version of the doctrine of creation out of nothing. Our flesh – we as fleshly – are not properly thought of as autonomously or by nature possessed of the capacity to desire, a capacity which can seem then be actualized by receiving the gift of being desired. No. our very fleshliness, eroticized, is brought into being *ex nihilo* by the LORD's kiss. The only thing we can do about it is to open our mouths to the kiss, or to turn our faces away from it. And in heaven's ecstatic locatedness we endlessly, repetitively, open our mouths for that kiss and thus return it.

Should we be resurrected for eternal life, that fleshly condition will be maximally social, maximally erotic, located in a flexed and furled space-time in which every moment of desire is also one of delight, and in which we are in fleshly relation to all the saints and, especially, erotically and delightedly, with the risen flesh of Jesus and the assumed flesh of Mary. A consummation devoutly to be wish'd

5. Heaven's Population, Heaven's Lineaments

I've suggested, speculatively of course, that when you're in heaven it won't seem to you like anything to be you, even though you will be maximally happy, blissfully in beatitude. The bliss of beatitude, I think, requires exactly this conclusion; another way to put this is to say that an essential part of what beatitude consists in is erasure of the damage to our sense of ourselves produced by the fall. In the fall we became self-conscious self-possessors; in heaven's beatitude we shall leave all that behind, and will delight in the fleshly and intellectual vision of the LORD which is what we were made for, and all this in deep, non-possessive fleshly intimacy with the other saints in heaven that our resurrected flesh makes possible. There's much more to say about what heaven is like, and I'll end this talk by indicating what the main topics are, and, in utterly summary fashion, what should be said about them.

First about heaven's population: What's there? Angels, certainly; all the unfallen ones; we will join with them in the endless liturgy of praise. Humans, certainly: we know some of their names already – they are the saints – and we hope for our own presence there and for that of all those human creatures who have ever lived or ever will live. Other animate creatures, probably: it belongs to the human good to have relations with nonhuman animate embodied creatures, and that is, if not reason enough, at least good reason for thinking that there will

be such creatures in heaven, and that we will be related to them as we should be. And inanimate creatures as well, probably: the heavens and the earth will be renewed, and if it is proper to human fleshly locatedness to have a place among other bodily creatures, inanimate as well as animate, then they will be there too.

And last, about heaven's lineaments. Heaven must be a place of a sort, a locus in which there is flesh. That much we know. And if, as the speculative parts of the tradition are close to unanimous in affirming, space and time are inseparable one from another and constitute the fabric of the created order's relation to the LORD who is not himself spatio-temporal, and have, along with all the rest of the created order, been damaged by the fall, then the renovation of the heavens and the earth will involve the renovation of space-time. That is a large and difficult topic; all I'll say about it now is that the metronomically measurable fabric of space-time to which we're accustomed here below will, in heaven, have become what it always was, which is folded around and enfolded by Jesus Christ, who is its center and heart and meaning. If you'd like to help me move talk like that out of a figurative key and into a formal-abstract one, perhaps we can do that in discussion. For now, for the time being, that's enough: heaven, perhaps, can wait, but the end of this talk cannot. I thank you for your time and attention, and I look forward to some discussion.