

THE FOUR LAST THINGS

A Discursive Article

# What Death Does Not Finish

On the Particular and the General Judgment

*Volume Two — Judgment*

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# 1 The Same Man Sentenced Twice

A Catholic who has been catechized at all knows two things about judgment, and has usually never noticed that they pull against each other. The first is that when a man dies, that is that. His case is closed at the instant of death; nothing after it can improve or worsen his standing; he goes at once where he is going. The second is that at the end of the world every human being who ever lived will be raised in his own body and will stand before Christ to be judged, publicly, together with everyone else. Both are taught. Neither is offered as a picture or a way of speaking. And if the first is true in the sense in which it is meant, the second looks like a formality: a court reconvened to reread a verdict it entered centuries earlier, before an audience that cannot alter it, on a defendant whose sentence has already been carried out.

The difficulty is not a modern discovery, and it is not the invention of skeptics. It was put with complete clarity inside the tradition, by a theologian arguing in the tradition's own voice, as the first objection to be answered:

It would seem that after the Judgment that takes place in the present time, there does not remain another General Judgment. For a judgment serves no purpose after the final allotment of rewards and punishments. But rewards and punishments are allotted in this present time . . . Therefore it is useless to look forward to a final Judgment.<sup>1</sup>

That is the objection at full strength, and it is worth pausing on how little it needs. It does not require any doubt about the resurrection, or about Christ's judiciary power, or about the reality of hell or heaven. It grants everything the tradition asserts about the last day and simply asks what work is left for the last day to do. The wicked are already in torment; the just already see God; a purified soul has already been purified. What is there to try?

There is an obvious way to relieve the pressure, and the tradition rejected it. One could say that the first judgment is provisional—a preliminary assignment pending the real hearing—so that the last day is the only judgment properly so called and everything before it is remand. Some in the Christian centuries did think something in this neighbourhood: that souls sleep, or wait in reserved places without reward or punishment, until the resurrection. Aquinas names the opinion and calls it false, and the argument he uses to dispose of it is not a parable but Paul's "we are confident and have a good will to be absent rather from the body, and to be present with the Lord"—which he reads, with the context, as no longer walking by faith but by sight, and therefore as the vision of God, and therefore as eternal life already possessed by the separated soul.<sup>2</sup> A generation after Aquinas the question stopped being a matter of theological argument at all, in circumstances examined in the next section.

So the tension is not relieved by softening either term. Both judgments are real judgments, and the first is definitive. This article's question follows from that and cannot be evaded: *if the sentence passed at death is final, what is the general judgment for?* A second question rides on it and is easier to lose sight of: *what does the tradition actually claim to know about either judgment*, as against what it has drawn from the imagery of the judgment scenes, or inferred, or left frankly open? The subject attracts confident assertion in inverse proportion to the available evidence. Sermons, private revelations, devotional manuals, and a good deal of ordinary catechesis have furnished the two judgments with courtroom furniture, timetables, tariffs, and geography that no council has ever defined and that the one council to legislate on the matter positively told bishops to keep out of popular preaching.

The method here follows from the question. Section 2 sets out what has actually been defined, in the exact words of the acts that defined it, and separates that from what has merely been named and from what has been left open. Sections 3 and 4 go to the judgment scenes in Scripture and read them at their own loci—Matthew 25 above all, but also the Matthaean sayings around it, the Johannine material with its two hours, the Pauline language of manifestation, and the opened books of the Apocalypse—distinguishing at each point what is parable, what is a parabolic element inside a non-parabolic prediction, and what is plain assertion. Section 5 takes up the resurrection of the body, because the general judgment cannot be understood as a second hearing of the same case until one has seen that its subject is not the same: the general judgment has a precondition, and the precondition changes who is standing there. Section 6 answers the governing question, mainly out of Aquinas, and along the way has to establish which text of Aquinas is being read—a question with a surprising answer that most treatments of this subject get wrong. Section 7 places purgatory correctly with respect to the first judgment and sets the conciliar definitions against the accretions. Section 8 bounds what "judgment according to works" can mean and states what may not be said at all.

Two boundaries govern the whole. This is a study of judgment, not of the other three last things: death, hell, and heaven are the subjects of the companion volumes in this series and are touched here only where the argument about

judgment genuinely requires them.<sup>3</sup> And the article makes no judgment about any person, living or dead. That restraint is not modesty; it is required by the doctrine under examination, for reasons given in Section 8.

## 2 What Has Actually Been Defined

Before asking why there are two judgments it is worth establishing, from the acts themselves, that there are two—and exactly what about each of them the Church has bound herself to. The relevant texts are few, short, and unusually precise. They are also, read in sequence, more interesting than their reputation: three of them assert the immediacy of a man’s destiny at death and, in the same sentence, retain the general judgment. The tradition did not stumble into the tension this article is about. It wrote the tension into its definitions on purpose.

### 2.1 One slot on the list, two events in the acts

Part of the difficulty is manufactured by the vehicle that carries the doctrine to most people. “The four last things” is a scheme of meditation. Its scriptural warrant is one verse of Ecclesiasticus—“In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin”—which counsels remembrance of one’s own end and enumerates nothing.<sup>4</sup> The enumeration built on it—death, judgment, hell, heaven—occurs in none of the acts quoted in this section, and no act that promulgates it has come to this article’s notice.<sup>5</sup>

That is not a complaint about the list, which is a good scheme and the frame of this series. It is a warning about what the list cannot show. It has one slot where the acts have two events, and a reader who has met the doctrine through the enumeration arrives at the definitions expecting a single judgment and finds a structure the enumeration has no room to represent. The puzzle of the opening section is therefore sharpened by a devotional ordering that was never built to carry it. Reading the acts in their own sequence dissolves the expectation. It does not dissolve the difficulty.

### 2.2 The creed of Lateran IV

The Fourth Lateran Council opened in 1215 with the constitution *Firmiter*, a creed rather than a canon. Its christological paragraph runs to the end of the world without pausing:

*venturus in fine saeculi, iudicaturus vivos et mortuos, et redditurus singulis secundum opera sua, tam reprobis quam electis: qui omnes cum suis propriis resurgent corporibus, quae nunc gestant, ut recipiant secundum opera sua, sive bona fuerint sive mala, illi cum diabolo poenam perpetuam, et isti cum Christo gloriam sempiternam*—about to come at the end of the age, to judge the living and the dead and to render to each according to his works, to reprobate and elect alike: who shall all rise with their own bodies, which they now bear, that they may receive according to their works, whether good or evil, the former with the devil everlasting punishment, the latter with Christ everlasting glory.<sup>6</sup>

Four things are asserted and one is not. Asserted: a coming at the end of the age; a judgment of living and dead; a rendering to each according to his works; and a general resurrection in each man’s *own* body—*quae nunc gestant*, the one he is carrying about at present. Not asserted, anywhere in the sentence: anything whatever about what happens to a man between his death and that day. *Firmiter* is a creed about the last day. It leaves the interval alone.

### 2.3 Lyons II, and the sentence that keeps both

The interval is exactly what the Second Council of Lyons addressed in 1274, in the profession of faith proposed to the Greeks. The relevant paragraphs are three, and they are worth taking as a single movement. Those who die truly penitent in charity before they have satisfied for what they did and left undone are purified after death by purgatorial punishments, and the suffrages of the living—the sacrifices of Masses, prayers, alms, and other offices of piety—avail to relieve them. The souls of those who after baptism contracted no stain of sin at all, and those who contracted it and were purified, whether in the body or out of it, are received into heaven *mox*, straightway. The souls of those who die in mortal sin or in original sin alone descend *mox* into hell, to be punished with unequal punishments. And then, without a paragraph break in sense:

*Eadem sacrosancta Ecclesia Romana firmiter credit et firmiter asseverat, quod nihilominus in die iudicii omnes homines ante tribunal Christi cum suis corporibus comparebunt, reddituri de propriis factis rationem*—The same holy Roman Church firmly believes and firmly asserts that *nonetheless* on the day of judgment all men will appear with their bodies before the tribunal of Christ, to render an account of their own deeds.<sup>7</sup>

*Nihilominus.* Nonetheless. The council has just said that the dead go at once where they are going, and it immediately adds that this does not cancel the day of judgment. Whoever drafted that paragraph felt the pressure this article is about and refused to release it in either direction.

## 2.4 Benedictus Deus

The most exact of the four texts was occasioned by an embarrassment. In sermons and discussions John XXII had raised the question whether purified souls separated from their bodies see the divine essence with the vision Paul calls facial before they resume their bodies. On 3 December 1334 he issued *Ne super his*, declaring what his intention had been and confessing that “the purified souls separated from their bodies are in heaven, the kingdom of heaven, and paradise, and gathered with Christ in the fellowship of the angels, and see God and the divine essence face to face clearly, by the common law, so far as the state and condition of a separated soul allows.”<sup>8</sup> His successor Benedict XII closed the question on 29 January 1336. *Benedictus Deus* is worth having in full at the point that matters, because its precision is the whole of its value.

The constitution defines that the souls of all the saints who departed before Christ’s passion, and of the apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins, and other faithful departed after receiving Christ’s baptism, *in quibus nihil purgabile fuit*—in whom there was nothing to be purged when they died, nor will be when they die in future—or in whom, if there was something to be purged, *cum post mortem suam fuerint purgatae*, when they have been purged after their death; and the souls of children reborn in the same baptism who die before the use of free will:

*mox post mortem suam et purgationem praefatam in illis, qui purgatione huius modi indigebant, etiam ante resumptionem suorum corporum et iudicium generale ... fuerunt, sunt et erunt in caelo ... ac ... viderunt et vident divinam essentiam visione intuitiva et etiam faciali, nulla mediante creatura in ratione obiecti visi se habente, sed divina essentia immediate se nude, clare et aperte eis ostendente*<sup>9</sup>

In English: straightway after their death and the aforesaid purification in those who needed such purification, even *before* the resumption of their bodies and the general judgment, they have been, are, and will be in heaven, and have seen and see the divine essence with an intuitive and even facial vision, no creature intervening as the object seen, but the divine essence showing itself to them immediately, nakedly, clearly, and openly. Souls that die in actual mortal sin descend *mox post mortem suam* to hell.

And then, again, the same connective. Benedict adds: *et quod nihilominus in die iudicii omnes homines ‘ante tribunal Christi’ cum suis corporibus comparebunt, reddituri de factis propriis rationem, ‘ut referat unusquisque propria corporis, prout gessit, sive bonum sive malum’*—and that nonetheless on the day of judgment all men will appear with their bodies before the tribunal of Christ, to render an account of their own deeds, “that every one may receive the proper things of the body, according as he hath done, whether it be good or evil.”<sup>10</sup> The document that most sharply defines the immediacy of the particular destiny is also the document that most explicitly quotes a general-judgment text of Paul on the far side of it. That is not an oversight. It is the shape of the doctrine.

The Council of Florence repeated the same structure for the Greeks in *Laetentur caeli* (1439), with one addition worth noting: the souls received into heaven “see clearly God himself, three and one, as he is, yet one more perfectly than another according to the diversity of merits.”<sup>11</sup>

## 2.5 What is defined, what is named, and what is open

Set the four texts side by side and the boundaries come out clean.

*Defined:* that a man’s eternal destiny is fixed and effective immediately after death—*mox post mortem*—with purification interposed for those who need it; that the blessed see the divine essence itself, unmediated, before the

resurrection; that those who die in mortal sin descend at once to hell; that at the end of the age all men will rise in their own bodies; and that on the day of judgment all will appear before Christ's tribunal to render an account.

*Named, but not defined:* the phrase “particular judgment.” It does not occur in any of these acts. What the acts define is the *immediacy of the retribution*, not the existence of a distinctly narrated tribunal at the moment of death. The name is the theologians', and the Catechism has adopted it: “Each man receives his eternal retribution in his immortal soul at the very moment of his death, in a particular judgment that refers his life to Christ.”<sup>12</sup> That is a legitimate and now standard usage, and this article uses it throughout. But a reader should know that the weight sits on *at the very moment of his death*, and that the tribunal imagery around it—an interview, a docket, an advocate, a reading of the record—is theological and devotional elaboration, not defined content.

*Open:* almost everything about the manner of either judgment. Whether the last judgment is conducted vocally or without speech; how long it lasts; where it occurs; the order of its events; what the “books” are; whether the account rendered is heard by all or known by all without being heard—none of this is defined, and the medieval authors who discussed it said so. Above all the *when* is not merely undefined but positively withheld, on the Lord's own word: “But of that day and hour no one knoweth: no, not the angels of heaven, but the Father alone.”<sup>13</sup>

One more text belongs in this list, because it is the most recent and because it states the structural claim of this article as doctrine rather than as inference. In 1979 the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith addressed the bishops on what happens between the death of the Christian and the general resurrection, and set out seven points. The fifth: “In accordance with the Scriptures, the Church looks for ‘the glorious manifestation of our Lord, Jesus Christ,’ believing it to be *distinct and deferred* with respect to the situation of people immediately after death.”<sup>14</sup> Distinct and deferred: two judgments, not one judgment described twice.

### 3 The Scene in Matthew

Everything popular Christianity knows about the last judgment comes from forty-six verses at the end of Matthew 25, and most of what it knows is a compression of them. The sheep and the goats, the right hand and the left, the six works, the two sentences: these have furnished tympana, mystery plays, examinations of conscience, and a good deal of preaching for sixteen centuries. Before any of that can be used, the passage has to be read where it stands.

#### 3.1 Where the scene stands

Matthew 25 is the second half of a single discourse that begins at 24:1 with the disciples pointing out the temple buildings. The discourse runs through the desolation, the tribulation, the false christs, the coming of the Son of man “in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty,” the gathering of the elect by angels, the fig tree, and the famous refusal of a date. Then, without a break, three units follow in sequence, and the sequence matters because their formal markers differ.

The first is the ten virgins, and it announces itself: “Then shall the kingdom of heaven be like to ten virgins, who taking their lamps went out to meet the bridegroom and the bride.”<sup>15</sup> The second is the talents, and it too announces itself, with the comparison formula carried over from the first: “For even as a man going into a far country called his servants and delivered to them his goods.” Both are parables in the strict and formal sense: a comparison is asserted between the kingdom and a narrated situation, and the narrated situation is fiction.

The third unit does not do this. It begins:

And when the Son of man shall come in his majesty, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit upon the seat of his majesty: And all nations shall be gathered together before him: and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats.<sup>16</sup>

There is no “the kingdom of heaven is like.” There is a future indicative: *when* he shall come, *then* shall he sit. What follows is narrated as something that will happen. Inside it there is exactly one comparison, and it is a simile with a stated point of resemblance: he will separate them *as* a shepherd separates sheep from goats—not *the kingdom is like* a shepherd, but *the separating will be like* that separating. A parabolic element has been set inside a non-parabolic prediction.

This distinction is not pedantry, and it is not a device for making the passage more literal than it is. It cuts both ways. It means that the separation, the universality of the assembly, the criterion, and the two outcomes are asserted, not illustrated. It also means that the shepherd, the sheep, the goats, the right hand, and the left are the illustration—and an illustration is not a photograph.

## 3.2 What the passage asserts

Six assertions can be taken from the text without any interpretive machinery.

First, the judge is the Son of man, coming in his own majesty, with the angels. The seat is his. Second, the assembly is universal: *all nations shall be gathered together before him*. Third, there is a separation, and it is a separation of persons, not of deeds—“he shall separate *them* one from another.” Fourth, the criterion given, and the only criterion given here, is a set of six ordinary acts done or not done to the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the prisoner. Fifth, the criterion is transposed: what was done to those persons was done to the king. “Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me.” Sixth, the outcomes are permanent and symmetrically stated: “And these shall go into everlasting punishment: but the just, into life everlasting.”

Two features of the scene are easy to skip and carry weight. Both parties are surprised. The just ask when they saw him hungry; the condemned ask the same question in the same words. Neither group is represented as having known that it was serving or refusing Christ. And the possession of the kingdom is described as “prepared for you from the foundation of the world,” while the fire is “prepared for the devil and his angels”—the two are not described in parallel terms, and the asymmetry is in the text, not read into it.

## 3.3 Whether the courtroom is a courtroom

The scene contains dialogue: a sentence pronounced, a question asked in reply, an answer given, and a second sentence. Is that dialogue a transcript?

The tradition’s answer, at its most rigorously literal, is no—and it is worth seeing how the answer was reached, because it was not reached by softening the doctrine. Discussing whether the judgment will be conducted by word of mouth, the medieval treatment that has come down under Aquinas’s name concludes that the whole of it, “whether as regards the inquiry, or as regards the accusation of the wicked and the approval of the good or again as regards the sentence on both, will take place mentally.” The reason is arithmetic, and it is borrowed from Augustine: if the deeds of every individual were related aloud, the time required would be inconceivable, just as Augustine had said of the book of Apocalypse 20 that “if we suppose the book . . . to be a material book, who will be able to conceive its size and length?” The conclusion is stated in exactly the terms this section needs: “probably we should understand that the details set forth in Matthew 25 will be fulfilled not by word of mouth but mentally.”<sup>17</sup>

Note what this does and does not concede. It does not make Matthew 25 a metaphor for a private psychological event. The separation is still a separation; the sentence is still a sentence; the outcomes are still the two outcomes. What it denies is only that the mechanism is oral procedure conducted in time. A thirteenth-century schoolman, working with a doctrine of the last judgment far more concrete than most modern readers hold, concluded on grounds of sheer scale that the dialogue in Matthew 25 is not a transcript. That is the tradition’s own warning against reading the imagery as reportage, delivered from inside.

The same treatment is equally frank about place. Asked whether the judgment will occur in the valley of Josaphat—the traditional site, from Joel—the reply begins: “We cannot know with any great certainty the manner in which this judgment will take place, nor how men will gather together to the place of judgment.” It then offers, as probable, that Christ will descend near the Mount of Olives, since he ascended from there.<sup>18</sup> A probable opinion about a matter the author has just said cannot be known with certainty is exactly what it looks like, and it is instructive that the geography of the last judgment—which has generated a great deal of confident popular detail—is on the tradition’s own showing the weakest thing in the file.

## 3.4 Two questions the text does not settle

Two disputes arise directly from the wording and cannot be closed from it.

The first is *omnes gentes*, “all nations.” The phrase can be read as the whole human race, in which case the scene is the universal judgment simply; or as the Gentiles, the nations as distinguished from Israel or from the Church, in which case the scene is narrower than it is usually taken to be. The text supplies no gloss. This article reads it as universal, for two reasons that are stated as reasons and not as proofs: the assembly is placed at the coming of the Son of man in his majesty, which the same discourse has already described as a cosmic event; and the tradition, when it cites the passage, cites it for the general judgment.<sup>19</sup>

The second is “one of these my least brethren.” Whether the least brethren are the needy simply, or Christ’s disciples, or Christ’s members in the sense that includes both, changes the scope of the criterion considerably. Here at least one ancient reading is available at first hand, because the Catechism preserves it. Expounding the last judgment, it quotes Augustine putting the words into the king’s mouth: “I placed my poor little ones on earth for you. I as their head was seated in heaven at the right hand of my Father—but on earth my members were suffering, my members on earth were in need. If you gave anything to my members, what you gave would reach their Head.”<sup>20</sup> That is the members-of-Christ reading, and it is old. It is not the only one, and this study does not adjudicate the question; what it records is that the identification in verse 40 is an identification, not a decoding of a symbol, and that whom exactly it covers is a real question rather than an obvious one.

### 3.5 The control case: what Matthew does when he means parable

There is a useful check available inside the same gospel. In chapter 13 the disciples ask outright: “Expound to us the parable of the cockle of the field.” The reply is an item-by-item key: “He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man. And the field is the world. And the good seed are the children of the kingdom. And the cockle are the children of the wicked one. And the enemy that sowed them, is the devil. But the harvest is the end of the world. And the reapers are the angels.” Only after the key is complete does the application follow: “Even as cockle therefore is gathered up, and burnt with fire: so shall it be at the end of the world. The Son of man shall send his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all scandals, and them that work iniquity.”

The dragnet a few verses later works the same way. It opens with the comparison formula—“Again the kingdom of heaven is like to a net cast into the sea”—and closes with the application marked as such: “So shall it be at the end of the world. The angels shall go out, and shall separate the wicked from among the just.”

Two things follow. First, when this gospel means parable it says parable, and when it decodes a parable it decodes it term by term. Neither marker is present at 25:31. Second—and this is more important for the doctrine than the form-critical point—these two parables, which *are* parables, teach the same thing as the non-parabolic scene: a separation of persons, performed by angels at the Son of man’s command, at the end of the world, with a fixed and terrible outcome. The general judgment does not rest on Matthew 25 alone. It is the settled teaching of a whole cluster of Matthaean material, some of it explicitly parabolic and some not, and it is not weakened by conceding that the sheep and the goats are a simile.

### 3.6 The judgment sayings around the scene

The rest of Matthew fills in what the scene leaves out, and each saying adds a real determination.

The rendering is according to works, and it is the Son of man who renders: “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels: and then will he render to every man according to his works.”<sup>21</sup>

The scope of the account extends past deeds to speech, and beyond deliberate speech: “But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” This is the first indication in the Matthaean material that the day of judgment concerns not merely the summary of a life but its texture.

The sentence is not proportional to a single scale, and degrees are asserted: “it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for you,” and again of Sodom against Capharnaum. Whatever the last judgment is, it is not the sorting of humanity into two undifferentiated masses; the same day admits of “more tolerable” and less.

And the criterion is not profession, nor even effective ministry in Christ’s name: “Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven . . . Many

will say to me in that day: Lord, Lord, have not we prophesied in thy name, and cast out devils in thy name, and done many miracles in thy name? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity.” The words are unnervingly close to those of the foolish virgins—“Lord, Lord, open to us”—and receive the same answer in substance: *I know you not*.

Taken together the Matthaean material yields a judgment that is universal, personal, performed by Christ, according to works, admitting of degrees, indifferent to profession, unpredictable in its timing, and final. What it does not yield is a procedure. Every attempt to supply one—and there have been many—is going beyond the evidence, and the tradition’s own most careful reader of these texts said so.

## 4 The Other Witnesses

Matthew’s is the fullest scene but not the only one, and the others are not repetitions of it. John, Paul, and the Apocalypse each contribute something the Matthaean material does not have, and two of the three contribute exactly the element this article needs: a judgment that is already in force before the last day.

### 4.1 John, and the hour that comes twice

The fifth chapter of John contains the tightest statement of the double structure anywhere in Scripture, and it makes the point twice over in the space of eight verses.

The chapter first assigns judgment to the Son without remainder: “For neither does the Father judge any man: but hath given all judgment to the Son.”<sup>22</sup> Then it does something that is easy to read past. It announces an hour, and the hour is present:

Amen, amen, I say unto you that he who heareth my word and believeth him that sent me hath life everlasting: and cometh not into judgment, but is passed from death to life. Amen, amen, I say unto you, that the hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.

*The hour cometh, and now is.* Then, five verses later, it announces the hour again, and this time the hour is not now:

Wonder not at this: for the hour cometh wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life: but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment.

The doubling is deliberate—the second is introduced by an instruction not to be surprised—and the difference between them is stated exactly. The first hour is now, and its dead are the spiritually dead who hear and live. The second hour is not now, and its dead are in the graves, and what they come forth to is a resurrection of two kinds. This gospel does not choose between a realized judgment and a final one. It holds them apart by their subjects: the living who are dead, and the dead who are in tombs.

The same gospel supplies the other half of the doctrine, in the sharpest form the New Testament gives it: judgment as self-disclosure rather than sentence. “He that believeth in him is not judged. But he that doth not believe is already judged: because he believeth not in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the judgment: Because the light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than the light: for their works were evil.” The judgment *is* the coming of the light and what men do about it. And the criterion is again disclosure: “For every one that doth evil hateth the light and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reprov’d. But he that doth truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest.”

Yet John does not let this dissolve the last day either. The clearest statement is the one Aquinas will use as the decisive authority for the general judgment: “He that despiseth me and receiveth not my words hath one that judgeth him. The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.”<sup>23</sup> The word already spoken judges—but it judges *in the last day*. That is the whole tension in one sentence, from the evangelist who has done more than any other to make judgment present.

## 4.2 Paul: manifestation, not investigation

Paul's contribution is a verb. Twice he describes the judgment as an event of *making manifest*, and in both places the emphasis falls on what becomes visible rather than on what becomes known to the judge.

The first is the classic warning against premature verdicts: "But to me it is a very small thing to be judged by you or by man's day. But neither do I judge my own self. For I am not conscious to myself of anything. Yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore, judge not before the time: until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts. And then shall every man have praise from God." Two things in that passage are worth marking. Paul's clear conscience does not acquit him—"I am not conscious to myself of anything. Yet am I not hereby justified"—which is as economical a statement as exists of why self-assessment is not judgment. And the reason given for suspending human verdicts is not charity but chronology: *judge not before the time*. The judgment that will make the counsels of hearts manifest has not yet occurred.

The second is the sentence quoted by *Benedictus Deus*: "For we must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the proper things of the body, according as he hath done, whether it be good or evil." It stands at the end of a paragraph whose earlier verses are the strongest New Testament evidence for the immediate destiny of the soul: "while we are in the body we are absent from the Lord . . . But we are confident and have a good will to be absent rather from the body and to be present with the Lord."<sup>24</sup> One paragraph, both judgments. To be absent from the body is already to be present with the Lord; and all of us must all the same be manifested before the judgment seat. Paul has the same *nihilominus* the councils would have, without the word.

The rest of the Pauline material fills in around this. Romans places the judgment on a day and gives it a criterion identical with Matthew's: God "will render to every man according to his works," "in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." In between, Romans supplies the mechanism the courtroom imagery only pictures: the Gentiles who have not the law "shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness to them: and their thoughts between themselves accusing or also defending one another." The witness, the accuser, and the defence are all internal. That verse is the seed of everything the tradition would later say about conscience as the book from which a man is judged.

Romans also states the universality plainly—"we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ . . . Therefore every one of us shall render account to God for himself"—and Philippians states the immediacy just as plainly: "having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, a thing by far the better." The desire is not for the resurrection; it is for what dissolution brings at once. Both are Paul, and there is no sign that he felt them to be in competition.

Finally, 1 Corinthians 15 supplies a word that will matter in the next section: order. "But every one in his own order: the firstfruits, Christ: then they that are of Christ, who have believed in his coming. Afterwards the end." Christ first, then his own at his coming, then the end. Whatever the general judgment is, Paul places it in a sequence with a fixed structure, and the sequence has the resurrection in it.

## 4.3 The books, and what a book is

The Apocalypse gives the general judgment its most-copied image:

And I saw a great white throne and one sitting upon it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away: and there was no place found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing in the presence of the throne. And the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it: and death and hell gave up their dead that were in them. And they were judged, every one according to their works.

Augustine read this chapter closely, and the reading he arrived at governed the Latin tradition afterwards. He noticed a chronology problem first—heaven and earth flee from the face of the one on the throne, but John saw him seated *before* the dead were judged, so the fleeing is reported out of order—and then turned to the books. The plural books he took for the sacred books, old and new, "that out of them it might be shown what commandments God had enjoined." Then the singular book, the book of the life of each man; and here he refused the material reading, on grounds of scale:

If this book be materially considered, who can reckon its size or length, or the time it would take to read a book in which the whole life of every man is recorded? Shall there be present as many angels as men, and shall each man hear his life recited by the angel assigned to him? In that case there will be not one book containing all the lives, but a separate book for every life. But our passage requires us to think of one only . . . We must therefore understand it of a certain divine power, by which it shall be brought about that every one shall recall to memory all his own works, whether good or evil, and shall mentally survey them with a marvellous rapidity, so that this knowledge will either accuse or excuse conscience, and thus all and each shall be simultaneously judged. And this divine power is called a book, because in it we shall as it were read all that it causes us to remember.<sup>25</sup>

That is a substantial exegetical result, and the Latin tradition never went behind it. The book of life is not an object; it is the divine act by which every man is made to remember everything at once. When the schoolmen later say that each man's conscience will be as a book on which judgment is pronounced, and that the divine power will especially conduce to this, they are transcribing Augustine.<sup>26</sup>

Two further details of the Apocalypse's scene bear on this article's argument. The sea, death, and hell give up their dead: whatever the state of the dead has been, they are produced bodily for this judgment. And an earlier verse gives the reason a man's case is not closed with his life even when his soul's case is: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord . . . that they may rest from their labours. For their works follow them." Works that follow are works that arrive after. The image is of a man walking ahead of a train of consequences that is still catching up.

#### 4.4 The texts of immediacy, and one that is not one

Four passages carry the weight of the immediate destiny, and it is worth separating the strong from the weak, because the popular ordering of them is roughly the reverse of the tradition's.

The strongest are the two Pauline ones already quoted: to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, and to be dissolved is to be with Christ. They are direct first-person assertions about what death brings, in letters, in Paul's own voice. When Aquinas has to refute the opinion that souls wait unrewarded until the last day, it is 2 Corinthians 5:8 that he uses, and he reasons from it that to be present with the Lord is to walk by sight, and to walk by sight is to see God, and to see God is eternal life.

Two narrative texts are commonly given first place and cannot carry it alone. The rich man and Lazarus is introduced without a comparison formula but is manifestly a narrative of the kind this gospel calls parables, and its details—the finger, the drop of water, the conversation across the chasm—are not offered as topography. What it does assert, and assert unmistakably, is that a reversal is in force immediately upon death and that it cannot be crossed: "between us and you, there is fixed a great chaos: so that they who would pass from hence to you cannot, nor from thence come hither." And the word to the thief—"Amen I say to thee: This day thou shalt be with me in paradise"—is a promise made to one man in extremity, not a doctrinal formulation, though the tradition has always read *this day* as attaching to the promise rather than to the saying of it.<sup>27</sup>

And then there is Hebrews 9:27, the verse most often produced as the proof of the particular judgment: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment." It is worth being exact about what this says. It says that death happens once and that judgment follows it. It does not say *how soon*; it does not distinguish two judgments; and the clause that follows it is about Christ's single offering and second appearing, not about the interval. Aquinas quotes it, and the use he makes of it is instructive: he cites it not for the immediacy of the sentence but for the *finality of the life being judged*—the point that a man can change from good to evil or evil to good while he lives, and that therefore no perfect judgment of him is possible before his life closes. The verse is doing work in his argument for the *general* judgment.<sup>28</sup> That is not an argument against reading Hebrews 9:27 for the particular judgment, and the Catechism cites it there. It is an argument against treating one clause as though it settled by itself a structure that took the Church thirteen centuries to state.

The pattern across all the witnesses is consistent. Scripture asserts an immediate lot after death; it asserts a universal judgment at the resurrection; and it never explains their relation. That job was left to the theologians, and the next two sections take it up—but not before establishing what the general judgment's subject actually is, because on that everything else turns.

## 5 The Body That Has to Come Back

The redundancy objection has an unexamined premise. It assumes that the two judgments have the same defendant. If they do, then the second is a rehearing, and rehearing a case whose verdict is already in force and already executed really is empty ceremony. But they do not have the same defendant, and the reason they do not is the one part of the last day that no one has ever proposed to allegorize.

### 5.1 The resurrection is the precondition, not an accompaniment

The Catechism's treatment of the last judgment opens with a sequence, not a scene: "The resurrection of all the dead, 'of both the just and the unjust,' will precede the Last Judgment."<sup>29</sup> The resurrection is not scenery for the judgment and not a consequence of it. It comes first, and the judgment presupposes it.

Scripture puts the two together in exactly this order. John's second hour is a resurrection before it is a judgment: all that are in the graves hear the voice, and *then* they come forth, some to the resurrection of life and some to the resurrection of judgment. Paul's sequence in 1 Corinthians 15 is a sequence of risings—Christ the firstfruits, then they that are of Christ at his coming, then the end. The Apocalypse has the sea and death and hell give up their dead *before* the books are read. And Lateran IV, defining the last day, defines it as a rising: all shall rise *cum suis propriis corporibus, quae nunc gestant*, that they may receive according to their works. The Catechism quotes that clause in its own English—"all of them will rise again with their own bodies which they now bear"—and sets beside it Paul's promise that Christ "will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body."<sup>30</sup>

The two adjectives in the definition are doing work: the bodies are *their own*, and they are the ones they *now bear*. Whatever transformation the risen body undergoes—and Paul's language of a spiritual body, and the Catechism's frank "this 'how' exceeds our imagination and understanding," both insist that it undergoes one—the identity of the risen man with the man who died is not negotiable. The resurrection is not the production of a new subject.

### 5.2 Who stands at each judgment

Now put the two judgments side by side and ask what is present at each.

At death, what receives its sentence is a soul. The Catechism says so with unusual precision: "Each man receives his eternal retribution in his *immortal soul* at the very moment of his death." *Benedictus Deus* says the same—it defines what happens to *animae*, souls, and it specifies that this occurs *ante resurrectionem suorum corporum*. The particular judgment is real and its effect is real, and its subject is one part of a man.

At the last day, what stands is a man—soul and the body he now bears, reunited. That is not the same defendant in the sense that matters for the objection. It is the same person, of course; it is not the same standing.

Aquinas draws exactly this consequence, and states it as the reply to the sharpest form of the objection. Grant that merit and demerit belong to the body only as the soul's instrument, and that reward or punishment is therefore due to the body only through the soul; does not that make a bodily judgment superfluous? His answer:

Although the reward or punishment of the body depends upon the reward or punishment of the soul, nevertheless, since the soul is changeable only accidentally, on account of the body, once it is separated from the body it enters into an unchangeable condition, and receives its judgment. But the body remains subject to change down to the close of time: and therefore it must receive its reward or punishment then, in the last Judgment.<sup>31</sup>

That is the pivot of the whole question and it deserves to be stated in plainer words. A soul, once separated, cannot change; therefore it can be judged perfectly at once, and is. A body can change, and goes on changing—it is buried or left unburied, honoured or desecrated, and finally falls to dust—until time itself stops. A subject that is still changing cannot be judged perfectly. Therefore the part of a man that is still in motion is judged when its motion ends, which is when everything's motion ends.

### 5.3 What the general judgment adds

If the general judgment does something rather than merely announcing something, what does it add? The tradition's answer, and it is a common theological answer rather than a defined one, is: an increase.

Even now, as regards the particular sentence on each individual, the judgment does not at once take full effect since even the good will receive an increase of reward after the judgment, both from the added glory of the body and from the completion of the number of the saints. The wicked also will receive an increase of torment from the added punishment of the body and from the completion of the number of damned to be punished.<sup>32</sup>

Two increases are named, and they are of different kinds. The first is the glory or punishment of the body, which is straightforward: an embodied person can be glorified in a way a separated soul cannot. The second is stranger and more interesting: the *completion of the number*. The blessed are not complete while the roll is unfinished; each is happier for the others' happiness, and the happiness of all is not yet assembled. The remark about the damned is the same principle inverted and is stated with a bleakness the English does not soften: "the more numerous those with whom they will burn, the more will they themselves burn."

Whether one finds that persuasive, it is a genuine answer to the redundancy objection and not an evasion of it. It concedes that the essential reward is already given and locates the addition elsewhere. That concession is the strongest card the objector has, and Section 6 will hand it to him at full strength.

### 5.4 The interval, and what may not be filled in

Between a man's death and the resurrection there is an interval. What can be said about it is much less than what is usually said.

The medieval treatment devotes a question to the "receptacles" of souls and reasons about them with considerable care and considerable hedging: incorporeal things are not in place "after a manner known and familiar to us," but only "after a manner befitting spiritual substances, a manner that cannot be fully manifest to us." The souls that have a perfect share of the Godhead are in heaven and those deprived of it in a contrary place; and the movement is immediate, "unless it be held back by some debt, for which its flight must needs be delayed until the soul is first of all cleansed."<sup>33</sup> The apparatus of limbos and abodes that occupies the rest of that question is school theology, some of it about questions the Church has since declined to settle, and none of it is used here.

What the Church has said in the modern period about this interval is short and mostly negative. The 1979 letter affirms that "a spiritual element survives and subsists after death, an element endowed with consciousness and will, so that the 'human self' subsists," and that the Church calls this element the soul and sees no valid reason to reject the word. It affirms that the resurrection refers to *the whole person*. It affirms that the Lord's glorious manifestation is "distinct and deferred with respect to the situation of people immediately after death." And it excludes "every way of thinking or speaking that would render meaningless or unintelligible her prayers, her funeral rites and the religious acts offered for the dead"—which is a doctrinal argument from the liturgy, and a strong one: a Church that prays for the dead is committed to there being dead to pray for, in a condition in which prayer can reach them.<sup>34</sup>

One point in the letter is easy to skim past and settles something. The sixth point excludes any explanation of man's destiny after death "that would deprive the Assumption of the Virgin Mary of its unique meaning, namely the fact that the bodily glorification of the Virgin is an *anticipation* of the glorification that is the destiny of all the other elect." If bodily glorification before the general resurrection is a unique privilege in one case, then in every other case it is genuinely deferred. The Assumption, which might look like an eschatological curiosity, is in fact a control on the whole doctrine: it is what makes the interval real.

And the letter is as firm as Trent would be about imagination:

When dealing with man's situation after death, one must especially beware of arbitrary imaginative representations: excess of this kind is a major cause of the difficulties that Christian faith often encounters. Respect must however be given to the images employed in the Scriptures. Their profound meaning must be discerned, while avoiding the risk of over-attenuating them, since this often empties of substance the

realities designated by the images. Neither Scripture nor theology provides sufficient light for a proper picture of life after death.<sup>35</sup>

Both halves of that are needed. The images may not be inflated into information, and they may not be deflated into feelings. What remains, when both errors are refused, is a doctrine with a small number of firm joints and a great deal of declared darkness between them. The next section takes the firmest joint—that the second judgment is not a second trial—and shows why.

## 6 Why the Second Judgment Is Not a Second Trial

The question can now be put in its proper form. Not: why judge a man twice? But: given that the soul's case is closed at death and the man's body is still in the world, what is left over, and is what is left over enough to require a judgment?

### 6.1 Aquinas's own answer

The Summa treats the question once, in Aquinas's own hand, at the end of the treatise on the Incarnation, under Christ's judiciary power. The article is short. Its argument has two moves, and the second is the one worth having.

The first move is a principle about judgment as such: "Judgment cannot be passed perfectly upon any changeable subject before its consummation: just as judgment cannot be given perfectly regarding the quality of any action before its completion in itself and in its results: because many actions appear to be profitable, which in their effects prove to be hurtful."<sup>36</sup> An act is not fully assessable until it has finished happening, and an act does not finish happening when the agent stops moving. It finishes when its effects do. Applied to a whole life, the principle first gives the ordinary conclusion—no man can be judged before he dies, since he may still change—and Hebrews 9:27 is quoted for it.

The second move is the one that answers the objection. Aquinas grants that a man's temporal life ends with his death *in itself*, and then says that it nevertheless "continues dependent in a measure on what comes after it in the future." He lists five ways, and the list is worth having entire, because its texture is what makes the argument convincing rather than merely formal:

In one way, as it still lives on in men's memories, in which sometimes, contrary to the truth, good or evil reputations linger on. In another way in a man's children, who are so to speak something of their parent . . . And yet many good men have wicked sons, and conversely. Thirdly, as to the result of his actions: just as from the deceit of Arius and other false leaders unbelief continues to flourish down to the close of the world; and even until then faith will continue to derive its progress from the preaching of the apostles. In a fourth way, as to the body, which is sometimes buried with honor and sometimes left unburied, and finally falls to dust utterly. In a fifth way, as to the things upon which a man's heart is set, such as temporal concerns, for example, some of which quickly lapse, while others endure longer.<sup>37</sup>

Then the conclusion: "Now all these things are submitted to the verdict of the Divine Judgment; and consequently, a perfect and public Judgment cannot be made of all these things during the course of this present time. Wherefore, there must be a final Judgment at the last day, in which everything concerning every man in every respect shall be perfectly and publicly judged."

Notice how much of the list is not about the man's interior state at all, and notice that Aquinas knows this. Two of the five members carry an explicit warning that the continuation may be a distortion: reputations linger on *contrary to the truth*, and good men have wicked sons. He is not claiming that a man's posthumous reputation is a further merit or demerit of his. He says so in the reply: "although in regard to such things a man neither merits nor demerits, still in a measure they accompany his reward or punishment."<sup>38</sup>

That concession is honest and it is expensive. It is the crack through which the objector will come back, and the synthesis block at the end of this section lets him.

The third member of the list, though, is not open to the same complaint, and it is the strongest thing in the article. From the deception of Arius, unbelief goes on flourishing to the end of the world; from the preaching of the apostles,

faith goes on making its way. These are not accidents that befall a dead man's memory. They are the continuing operation of what he actually did. Arius is not being blamed in the fifth century for something the fifth century did; the fifth century is doing something that Arius set going. A man's action, on Aquinas's own principle, is not fully assessable until its effects are complete, and the effects of a teacher, a legislator, a founder, or a betrayer are not complete when he is buried. On this member—and, this article would argue, on this member alone—the case for a second judgment is airtight, because what remains to be judged is genuinely the man's act and not merely his afterglow.

## 6.2 Which text of Aquinas is being read

Almost every treatment of the last judgment that cites Aquinas cites not the article just examined but questions 87 to 90 of the *Supplementum Tertiae Partis*, which are longer, more detailed, and answer questions the Summa proper never reaches. Those questions have been used above, and they will be used again below, so it is worth establishing what they are. The answer is not what most citations assume, and the evidence for it is a page of the critical edition that anyone can read.

The Tertia Pars breaks off unfinished, in the treatise on penance, at question 90. What follows in every printed Summa is the Supplement: ninety-nine further questions and two appendices. It is not a work of Aquinas's composition. The Leonine editors say so in their preface to it, and they say it as the reason for publishing it at all:

*Supplementum scilicet cum medio saeculo XIV. ex aliquo codice Commentarii in Quartum Librum Sententiarum transcriptum sit, alter scripturae Commentarii testis habendum est; ita ut ab ea saltem aetate S. Thomae textus per Commentarium et Supplementum tanquam gemino testimonio ad nos pervenerit.*<sup>39</sup>

Since the Supplement was transcribed about the middle of the fourteenth century from some codex of the Commentary on the Fourth Book of the Sentences, it is to be held a second witness to the text of that Commentary; so that from at least that period St Thomas's text has come down to us through the Commentary and the Supplement as through a twin testimony. The same page identifies precisely where the transcription begins—at book IV, distinction 14, question 1, article 3, quaestiuncula 2, whose opening became Supplement question 16, article 1—and refers to its maker throughout only as *Compiler Supplementi*, the compiler. It names no one.<sup>40</sup>

This is verifiable rather than merely reported, because the two texts can be laid side by side. Supplement question 88, article 1, on whether there will be a general judgment, opens: *sicut operatio pertinet ad rerum principium, quo producuntur in esse, ita iudicium pertinet ad terminum, quo res ad suum finem perducitur*. Aquinas's Scriptum at book IV, distinction 47, question 1, article 1, quaestiuncula 1 opens: *sicut operatio pertinet ad rerum principium quo producuntur in esse, ita iudicium pertinet ad terminum, quo res ad suum finem perducuntur*. The paragraphs run on together for their whole length, diverging only in the way copies diverge—*perducitur* for *perducuntur*, *in esse perduxit* for *in esse producit*, *operationi gubernationis* for *operi gubernationis*, a chapter number of Genesis given differently.<sup>41</sup>

Three consequences follow, and they are practical rather than pedantic.

First, when a modern author writes “St Thomas holds that the general judgment is necessary because...” and footnotes the Supplement, the doctrine is indeed Aquinas's, but the text is from his earliest large systematic work, written at Paris in the 1250s, roughly two decades before the Summa. Citing it as though it were the mature Summa flattens twenty years.

Second, where the Summa proper does treat the same question—at III, q. 59, a. 5—it is shorter, organized differently, and argues from the changeability of the subject rather than from the twofold divine operation. The two treatments are compatible and the Summa's own cross-reference apparatus lists them as parallels. But they are two treatments, and a reader who wants Aquinas's settled mind on the general judgment should read the one he wrote for the Summa.

Third, and most concretely: a term everybody uses turns out not to be in the Latin. The reply that distinguishes the two judgments reads, in the Leonine text: *Unde et duplex ei iudicium debetur. Unum singulare, quod de eo fiet post mortem, quando recipiet iuxta ea quae in corpore gessit*—a twofold judgment is owed to him: one *singular*, which will be made of him after death, when he shall receive according to what he did in the body. The English Dominican translation renders this “One, the particular judgment, is that to which he will be subjected after death.”<sup>42</sup>

The point is not that the translators blundered. *Iudicium singulare*, a judgment of a man taken singly, is what *particular judgment* came to mean, and the rendering is defensible. The point is that a reader who meets “the particular judgment” in an English Aquinas and concludes that he is reading a technical term with a settled history behind it is reading back into the thirteenth century a fixity the vocabulary did not yet have. The phrase this article uses throughout, and that the Catechism uses, has a real history; it does not have a conciliar warrant, and it does not have a Latin original in the place where readers most often meet it.

### 6.3 Governance and completion

With that established, the Supplement’s own argument can be used for what it is: Aquinas’s earlier and fuller treatment. It answers the question from a different direction, and the two directions together are stronger than either.

There are, it argues, two divine operations. One is the operation by which God first gave things their being, “by fashioning their nature and by establishing the distinctions which contribute to the perfection thereof”—the work from which God is said to have rested. The other is the operation by which he governs what he has made: “My Father worketh until now; and I work.” Two operations, therefore two judgments, “but in the reverse order.”

The judgment that answers to *governance* is the judgment of each man singly—and here is the decisive clause—“not only as adapted to himself, but also as adapted to the government of the universe. Hence one man’s reward is delayed for the good of others, and the punishment of one conduces to the profit of another.” The judgment that answers to *creation* is the general one, “in order that, to wit, just as then all things proceeded immediately from God, so at length the world will receive its ultimate complement, by each one receiving finally his own personal due.”<sup>43</sup>

That is a genuinely different argument from the one in the Summa, and it locates the difficulty exactly. Under providence, a man is not treated purely on his own account. He is a part, and parts are handled with reference to wholes: rewards are deferred, punishments are permitted, and the good are left mixed in with the wicked because each is of use to the other. So long as that arrangement lasts, no man’s treatment is a pure reading of his own desert, and no observer—including the man himself—can read God’s justice off the record. The general judgment is the point at which the arrangement is dissolved: “there will be a general separation of the good from the wicked, because there will be no further motive for the good to profit by the wicked, or the wicked by the good.” Each then receives *secundum seipsum*, according to himself alone.

And the same passage supplies the answer to the ancient objection from Nahum—God shall not judge the same thing twice. The reply is that the two judgments are not of the same thing: “Each man is both an individual person and a part of the whole human race: wherefore a twofold judgment is due to him.” The Summa states the same principle more crisply: “it is not unseemly for God to judge twice according to different respects.” There is no double jeopardy, because “He will not inflict two punishments for one sin, and the punishment which before the judgment was not inflicted completely will be completed at the last judgment.”<sup>44</sup>

### 6.4 The judgment that is a making-visible

There remains a strand that neither argument quite exhausts, and it is the oldest one. Augustine begins book XX of the *City of God* by conceding, at length and with obvious feeling, that God is judging all the time and that we cannot see it:

For we do not know by what judgment of God this good man is poor and that bad man rich; why he who, in our opinion, ought to suffer acutely for his abandoned life enjoys himself, while sorrow pursues him whose praiseworthy life leads us to suppose he should be happy; why the innocent man is dismissed from the bar not only unavenged, but even condemned . . . while his guilty adversary, on the other hand, is not only discharged with impunity, but even has his claims admitted.<sup>45</sup>

And that is why the last day is called the day of judgment, though it is not the only day on which God judges:

For that day is properly called the day of judgment, because in it there shall be no room left for the ignorant questioning why this wicked person is happy and that righteous man unhappy.<sup>46</sup>

The Supplement takes this over and states it as the formal purpose of the general judgment: “at this judgment the Divine justice will be made manifest in all things, whereas now it remains hidden, for as much as at times some persons are dealt with for the profit of others, otherwise than their manifest works would seem to require.” And it extends the manifestation to knowledge: at the last judgment “it behooves the Divine justice, which now is in many ways hidden, to appear evidently to all,” and therefore each will know not only his own case but everyone’s, “for as much as the sentence of one who condemns or rewards cannot be just, unless it be delivered according to merits and demerits,” and cannot *appear* just unless those merits are known to all who know the sentence.<sup>47</sup>

That last claim is a probable opinion and is labelled as one in its own text, but the principle underneath it is not merely probable, and it is Pauline before it is Augustinian: *judge not before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts*. The Catechism says it without hedging: “In the presence of Christ, who is Truth itself, the truth of each man’s relationship with God will be laid bare. The Last Judgment will reveal even to its furthest consequences the good each person has done or failed to do during his earthly life.”<sup>48</sup>

## 6.5 Project synthesis: verdict and vindication

### Project synthesis — what the second judgment is for

**Judgment.** The two judgments are not two verdicts on one case. They are one verdict and its completion, and they differ in subject, in scope, and in publicity. The particular judgment terminates a person’s own history: a soul that can no longer change is assessed and its state is fixed, at once and irrevocably. The general judgment terminates history’s involvement with that person: it judges what his acts became after he could no longer control them, restores to him the body without which he is not the whole of himself, and makes the whole assessment public in a world where nothing is left to be affected by concealment. The right analogy is not a retrial. It is the difference between a verdict and its vindication—between a judgment being true and a judgment being seen to be true, by everyone, with the whole record in.

**Reasons.** (1) The subjects genuinely differ. What receives the sentence at death is, in the Catechism’s own words, a man’s “immortal soul,” and *Benedictus Deus* is explicit that its blessedness begins *ante resurrectionem suorum corporum*. What stands at the last day is a risen man in the body he now bears. A judgment of a whole is not a repetition of a judgment of a part. (2) Aquinas’s principle—that no perfect judgment can be passed on a changeable subject before its consummation—is not a scholastic nicety but a general truth about assessment, and it applies with full force to the third member of his list of continuations. The effects of a man’s acts go on operating after his death. Arius really did keep on teaching. Those effects are not yet complete, and so, on the principle, not yet perfectly judgeable. (3) The scriptural language of the last day is overwhelmingly the language of *manifestation*: made manifest, brought to light, laid bare, revealed, made known on the housetops. That vocabulary describes a change in what is visible, not a change in what is true, and it fits a vindication and does not fit a retrial. (4) The magisterial texts themselves refuse to relieve the tension. Lyons II, *Benedictus Deus*, and Florence all assert immediate retribution and, in the same breath, retain the day of judgment, twice with the same connective, *nilominus*. A structure the Church has three times written into a definition in that form is not an accident awaiting resolution. (5) The 1979 letter states the structure as doctrine: the Lord’s glorious manifestation is “distinct and deferred with respect to the situation of people immediately after death.”

**Strongest counterargument.** That the additions are all accidental, and that a judgment of accidentals is not a judgment of the man. The objector concedes everything above and presses this: the essential reward is the vision of God, and the tradition insists the blessed already have it, entire, unmediated, before the resurrection. The essential punishment is its loss, and the damned already suffer it. What is left over is (a) the glory or pain of the body, (b) the completion of the number, and (c) publicity. But (a) follows automatically upon the resurrection and needs no judicial act to award it; (b) is a fact about the assembly, not about any member of it; and (c) is a change in the knowledge of observers, not in the standing of the judged. As for Aquinas’s five continuations, four of the five are extrinsic denominations—a reputation, a child, a corpse, an estate—and Aquinas concedes in terms that a man “neither merits nor demerits” by them. To judge them is to judge other people’s history in which a dead man happens to be named. Only the third member, the ongoing effect of his acts, is genuinely his; and even there the objector can say that the merit or demerit of setting a cause in motion was complete when it was set in motion, since a man’s guilt for a lie is not increased by the number of people who later happen to repeat it. Push all this together and the conclusion is uncomfortable: the general judgment is really the judgment of the

*human race*, a public accounting of history as a whole, and the individual's presence in it is honorific. That is not nothing—but it is not a second judgment *of him*, and the article's title claim would be overstated.

**Response, and where it stops.** The reply this article offers is that the objection quietly assumes that a person is exhausted by his interior state, and that everything else about him is decoration. The tradition does not assume that, which is exactly why it defines the resurrection of *this* body rather than the immortality of a soul; and a man whose body is unburied, whose name is a byword for something he did not do, and whose great work is being used for a purpose he would have hated is not, on any ordinary understanding, in the condition he is finally to be in. The objector answers that these are things done to him rather than by him, and the answer has force. This article's position is therefore narrower than the ambition of the section title: the general judgment is a judgment of the man in the sense that it completes the assessment of what he did and restores what he is, and it is *not* a judgment of him in the sense of reassessing his desert. Nothing is reassessed. That is why there is no double jeopardy, and it is also why the objection cannot be fully defeated: an assessment that changes nothing about the merits is, by construction, not a determination of them.

**What would change this judgment.** (1) A magisterial text—or a demonstrable pre-scholastic consensus read at its own loci—asserting that the general judgment changes the *essential* reward or punishment, and not only accidental glory. That would defeat the objection outright and make the second judgment a determination in the full sense; it would also put pressure on the definition of *Benedictus Deus*, and this article has found no such text. (2) Evidence that the increase from “the added glory of the body and the completion of the number of the saints” is not common theological teaching but only the position of the Sentences commentary and its transcribers. The claim is used here as a common opinion; if it turned out to be one school's, the middle of the argument would need rebuilding on the manifestation strand alone. (3) A serious patristic case, read at its own loci rather than through the scholastics, that the pre-Nicene or Nicene Fathers understood the interval and the last day in a way incompatible with the structure defined at Lyons and by Benedict XII. This article's patristic reading is essentially Augustine and is not a survey; a genuine survey could either confirm the structure much more strongly or complicate it, and either result would matter.

## 7 Purgatory on the Far Side of the Sentence

Purgatory is the part of this subject on which popular imagination has been most industrious, and it belongs in an article about judgment for one structural reason: it is often thought of as an interruption of the sentence, and it is the opposite. Getting its position right settles several questions that otherwise stay confused.

### 7.1 Where it stands in the order

Read the definitions in their own order and the position is unmistakable. *Benedictus Deus* defines the vision for souls “in whom there was nothing to be purged when they died . . . or in whom, if there was something to be purged, when they have been purged after their death”—*cum post mortem suam fuerint purgatae*. Purification is a clause *inside* the definition of the blessed. It is not an exception to it, and it is not a suspension of judgment pending outcome. Lyons II and Florence say the same in their own words: it is those who “die truly penitent in the charity of God,” before they have satisfied for what they did and left undone, whose souls are purified after death.<sup>49</sup>

The condition of entry is therefore already settled before purification begins: one must die in charity. Nobody is in purgatory whose case is open. The Catechism states the consequence without qualification: those who die in God's grace and friendship but still imperfectly purified “are indeed assured of their eternal salvation.”<sup>50</sup> Purgatory is not a third destination, not an appeal, not a period of probation, and not a place from which anyone is ever lost. It stands wholly on the far side of the particular judgment, as the working out of a sentence already passed in a man's favour.

That is also why it cannot be used to soften the doctrine of judgment. If purgatory were an interval of continued jeopardy it would function as a second chance, and a second chance would make the sentence at death provisional—exactly the reading Section 2 showed the definitions to exclude. The tradition purchased the mercy of purgatory precisely by making it a mercy shown to the saved.

## 7.2 What has been defined

Strip the subject to what the Church has bound herself to and the list is short.

From Lyons II and Florence: that the souls of those who die truly penitent in charity, before they have made satisfaction, are purified after death by purgatorial punishments; and that the suffrages of the living—*Missarum scilicet sacrificia, orationes et eleemosynas et alia pietatis officia*, the sacrifices of Masses, prayers, alms, and other offices of piety—avail to relieve them.

From Trent, session VI, canon 30, an anathema that is worth quoting exactly, because its shape is instructive:

If anyone saith that after the grace of Justification has been received, to every penitent sinner the guilt is remitted, and the debt of eternal punishment is blotted out in such wise, that there remains not any debt of temporal punishment to be discharged either in this world or in the next in Purgatory, before the entrance to the kingdom of heaven can be opened (to him); let him be anathema.<sup>51</sup>

The proposition anathematized is a proposition about *justification*: that the remission of guilt and of eternal punishment leaves no temporal debt. Purgatory enters as a subordinate clause naming one of the two places where such a debt may be discharged. The canon defines that a temporal debt can remain; it defines nothing at all about what purgatory is like.

From Trent, session XXV, the decree that gives the doctrine its name and its rule:

Whereas the Catholic Church, instructed by the Holy Ghost, has, from the sacred writings, and the ancient tradition of the Fathers, taught, in sacred Councils, and very recently in this oecumenical Synod, that there is a Purgatory, and that the souls there detained are helped by the suffrages of the faithful, but principally by the acceptable sacrifice of the altar; the holy Synod enjoins on bishops that they diligently endeavour that the sound doctrine concerning Purgatory, transmitted by the holy Fathers and sacred Councils, be believed, maintained, taught, and everywhere proclaimed by the faithful of Christ.<sup>52</sup>

That is the whole of the positive definition: *purgatorium esse*, that there is a purgatory; and that the souls detained there are helped by the suffrages of the faithful, above all by the Mass. Everything else in the decree is disciplinary.

## 7.3 What Trent went out of its way not to define

The rest of the decree is the most striking thing about it, and it is almost never quoted. Having required that the sound doctrine be preached everywhere, the council immediately restricts what may be preached:

But let the more difficult and subtle questions, and which tend not to edification, and from which for the most part there is no increase of piety, be excluded from popular discourses before the uneducated multitude. In like manner, such things as are uncertain, or which labour under an appearance of error, let them not allow to be made public and treated of. While those things which tend to a certain kind of curiosity or superstition, or which savour of filthy lucre, let them prohibit as scandals and stumbling-blocks of the faithful.<sup>53</sup>

Three prohibitions, and they are not the same prohibition three times. The first excludes from popular preaching what is *difficult and subtle*—not false, but beyond edification. The second forbids publishing what is *uncertain* or has an appearance of falsity. The third prohibits as scandals what feeds *curiosity, superstition, or money*.

Set that against the surviving popular picture of purgatory and the effect is bracing. A fire that burns; a place beneath the earth; a duration measurable in years; a tariff by which a given prayer or work discharges a given quantity; the souls' knowledge of their state; the severity of the pains relative to earthly pain—none of these is defined by any of the acts quoted in this section, and every one of them belongs to one or another of the three excluded classes. The council that is popularly credited with inventing the elaborate doctrine of purgatory in fact defined two sentences of it and spent the rest of its decree telling bishops to keep the elaboration out of the pulpit.

It is worth adding what the decree did *not* do, since the omission is also evidence. It did not condemn the school opinions. Difficult and subtle questions are excluded from popular discourses before the uneducated multitude—which is a restriction on the audience, not a censure of the theology. Trent left the schools free and closed the pulpit.

## 7.4 The school's probable opinions, and their own hedges

What, then, were the difficult and subtle questions? They are readily inspected, because the fullest medieval treatment is printed in every Summa, in the two appendices to the Supplement. Its own epistemic markers are the most useful thing about it.

On place: “Nothing is clearly stated in Scripture about the situation of Purgatory, nor is it possible to offer convincing arguments on this question. It is probable, however, and more in keeping with the statements of holy men and the revelations made to many, that there is a twofold place of Purgatory. One, according to the common law; and thus the place of Purgatory is situated below and in proximity to hell, so that it is the same fire which torments the damned in hell and cleanses the just in Purgatory.”<sup>54</sup>

On severity: “In Purgatory there will be a twofold pain; one will be the pain of loss, namely the delay of the divine vision, and the pain of sense, namely punishment by corporeal fire. With regard to both the least pain of Purgatory surpasses the greatest pain of this life.” The argument for it is a real argument—the desire for the Sovereign Good is at its most intense once the weight of the body is gone, and absence is more painful the more the thing is desired—and its authority is a sermon attributed to Augustine. But the same article states an assumption it is not there to prove: “That the soul suffers pain from the bodily fire is at present taken for granted.”<sup>55</sup>

Take that sentence seriously and the structure of the whole treatment becomes visible. The conclusion everyone remembers—that the least pain of purgatory exceeds the greatest pain of earth—rests on an assumption about corporeal fire acting on separated souls which the author explicitly declines to argue at that point, and on a sermon. It is a considered school opinion. It is not, and its author does not present it as, a defined truth.

The modern Catechism is a useful control here, because it carries almost none of this forward. It speaks of “final purification” and says the Church “by reference to certain texts of Scripture, speaks of a cleansing fire”—reporting the tradition’s usage rather than asserting a physical fire—and it characterizes purgatory as “entirely different from the punishment of the damned.”<sup>56</sup> The Catechism is not correcting the schoolmen. It is declining to preach what Trent told bishops not to preach.

## 7.5 The fire of 1 Corinthians 3, and Augustine’s reading of it

One passage deserves separate treatment, because it is the text most often produced as the scriptural proof of purgatory and because its most important patristic reader did not read it that way.

Paul writes of building on the one foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble: “Every man’s work shall be manifest. For the day of the Lord shall declare it, because it shall be revealed in fire. And the fire shall try every man’s work, of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide, which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work burn, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.”

Augustine devotes a chapter of the *City of God* to it, and his reading is that the fire is the fire of *tribulation in this life*. The foundation is Christ genuinely preferred to everything; the wood, hay, and stubble are the lawful but earthly loves built on him; and the fire that tries them is bereavement and “all those calamities which consume these joys.” The man is saved through the foundation, and suffers loss because “what he loved he shall not retain.” Augustine then argues that this fire cannot be the everlasting fire of Matthew 25, since no one is saved from that one, and everyone on the left hand goes into it.<sup>57</sup>

He does not stop there, and what he says next is the model of how this material should be handled. Having given his own reading, he considers the alternative—that in the interval between death and the last judgment the dead are exposed to a fire that consumes such worldliness as is venial—and replies:

if it be said that such worldliness, being venial, shall be consumed in the fire of tribulation either here only, or here and hereafter both, or here that it may not be hereafter,—this I do not contradict, because possibly it is true.<sup>58</sup>

That is Augustine on a post-mortem purgative fire. The Latin of the Vienna critical edition is as blunt as Dods makes it: *non redarguo, quia forsitan uerum est*—I do not refute it, because perhaps it is true.<sup>59</sup> Not a denial. Not an endorsement. A recorded openness.

Two things follow, and both are corrections to widely repeated claims. First, the standard proof text is weaker than it is usually presented to be: the greatest of the Latin Fathers, writing on this very chapter of Paul in the work in which he treats the last things at greatest length, refers it primarily to tribulation in this life. Second—and this is the more important correction—nothing in the doctrine depends on that text. The Catechism, quoting the tradition’s “cleansing fire,” rests its own argument for purgatory not on 1 Corinthians 3 but on *the practice of prayer for the dead*: “This teaching is also based on the practice of prayer for the dead, already mentioned in Sacred Scripture,” and it quotes 2 Machabees 12:46, “It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins.”<sup>60</sup>

## 7.6 Suffrages, and why the practice is the argument

That is not a weak foundation; it is the strongest one available, and the tradition has always known it. The Church prays for the dead. She has always prayed for the dead. The prayer is unintelligible unless there are dead whom prayer can reach and who are neither beyond help nor beyond need. Lyons II and Florence define the availing of suffrages in the same breath as the purification; Trent’s decree spends its longest paragraph not on the doctrine but on making sure that the Masses, prayers, alms, and works of piety owed for the dead are actually performed—“not in a perfunctory manner, but diligently and accurately, by the priests and ministers of the church, and others who are bound to render this (service).” And the 1979 letter makes the argument formally, ruling out “every way of thinking or speaking that would render meaningless or unintelligible her prayers, her funeral rites and the religious acts offered for the dead,” on the ground that these are, in their substance, *loci theologici*.<sup>61</sup>

A doctrine grounded in what the Church does is harder to overstate than one grounded in a contested verse, because the practice bounds the claim. Prayer for the dead establishes that there are dead who can be helped. It establishes nothing whatever about fire, place, duration, or degree—and it is precisely those four that Trent removed from the pulpit.

## 8 According to His Works, and What May Not Be Said

Two matters remain, and both are places where the doctrine of judgment is regularly pushed past its evidence—once in the direction of anxiety and once in the direction of presumption.

### 8.1 The criterion, and what it is not a claim about

One phrase runs through every witness examined in this article. Matthew: “then will he render to every man according to his works.” Romans: “Who will render to every man according to his works.” The Apocalypse, twice in three verses: “the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books, according to their works,” and “they were judged, every one according to their works.” Paul at Corinth: “that every one may receive the proper things of the body, according as he hath done, whether it be good or evil.” Lateran IV: *redditurus singulis secundum opera sua*. *Benedictus Deus* quotes the Corinthian clause in the very sentence in which it retains the general judgment. And Matthew’s judgment scene supplies six works and no other criterion at all.

The uniformity is not decorative. Whatever else the last day is, it is an assessment of what a man did.

It is also, and this needs saying in the same breath, not a statement about what causes a man to be saved. The distinction is not a modern nervousness; it is where Trent placed the emphasis in the same session that anathematized the denial of temporal punishment. Canon 32 anathematizes anyone who says that the good works of a justified man are the gift of God *in such a way* that they are not also his own good merits—and then, in the same sentence, describes those works as the ones “which he performs through the grace of God and the merit of Jesus Christ, whose living member he is.”<sup>62</sup> The merit is real and it is the man’s; the whole of its power is grace and the merit of Christ, of whom he is a living member. And the very next canon exists to prevent the doctrine from being read as an

encroachment: anyone who says that by this doctrine of justification “the glory of God, or the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ are in any way derogated from” is anathema.<sup>63</sup>

This article does not develop the doctrine of justification; that treatise is not its subject and cannot be compressed without distorting it. What belongs here is only the boundary. “According to works” is a statement about the *measure* of the judgment, not about the *source* of the standing being measured. The six works of Matthew 25 are not a schedule of purchases. They are the shape a life takes when charity is in it, which is why the just in the scene do not recognize their own record: charity does not keep accounts of itself, and a man who could produce the ledger would be exhibiting something other than charity.<sup>64</sup>

## 8.2 The time, which is not merely undefined but withheld

On the date the tradition is not merely silent but instructed. “But of that day and hour no one knoweth: no, not the angels of heaven, but the Father alone.” The Catechism repeats it in its own voice: “The Last Judgment will come when Christ returns in glory. Only the Father knows the day and the hour; only he determines the moment of its coming.”<sup>65</sup>

The medieval treatment asks the question formally, and its answer turns out to be the same argument that carried Section 6. God communicates to creatures both causal power and knowledge, but reserves to himself both the operations in which no creature co-operates and the knowledge of them. The end of the world is exactly such an operation: “the world will come to an end by no created cause, even as it derived its existence immediately from God. Wherefore the knowledge of the end of the world is fittingly reserved to God”—and the text offers as the Lord’s own statement of the reason, “It is not for you to know the times or moments which the Father hath put in His own power.”<sup>66</sup> That is why every attempt to date the last judgment is not merely mistaken but a trespass on something reserved; and it fails in a further way worth noticing: since the particular judgment is at death and no one knows the hour of that either, a correct date for the end of the world would be of no use to anybody. The two ignorances are the same ignorance in two forms, and the response to both is the one the eschatological discourse itself prescribes: “Watch ye therefore, because you know not the day nor the hour.”

## 8.3 No judgment about any person

The last restriction is the hardest to keep and the most important.

Paul states it as a rule of Christian conduct and gives the reason: “Therefore, judge not before the time: until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.” The prohibition is not on discernment but on *verdicts*, and the ground is chronological rather than sentimental: the evidence is not in, and will not be in until the Lord comes. Paul adds the most uncomfortable clause in the passage, and it cuts against self-acquittal as much as against the condemnation of others: “For I am not conscious to myself of anything. Yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.”

The Catechism states the rule in its own terms, in the middle of its treatment of mortal sin, where it is least convenient and most needed: “although we can judge that an act is in itself a grave offense, we must entrust judgment of persons to the justice and mercy of God.”<sup>67</sup> Acts have a moral species that can be known; persons have an interior history that cannot. And the doctrine examined in this article is the reason: the judgment that reveals the counsels of hearts has not happened yet, and it is reserved to one judge who is not any of us.

This bears directly on how the material in the preceding sections may be used. The scene in Matthew 25 is a description of a judgment Christ will make; it is not a diagnostic for use on one’s neighbours or one’s relatives or oneself. The definitions of Lyons, Benedict XII, and Florence tell us the shape of what happens at death; they do not tell us what happened at any particular death. Purgatory is a doctrine about a state, not a report on the whereabouts of anyone. And the fact that the Church names the blessed while making no corresponding declaration in the other direction is not a rhetorical courtesy: it is what the doctrine of judgment actually licenses, since sanctity can be established from the visible evidence of a life and its effects, while damnation would require exactly the interior verdict that has been reserved.<sup>68</sup>

## 8.4 The end of the matter

Set the whole file down and the doctrine that emerges is smaller than its reputation and harder than its caricature.

It is smaller because the defined content fits on a page: an immediate and irrevocable retribution at death, purification interposed where needed, the vision of God before the resurrection, a general resurrection of all in their own bodies, and an appearance of all before Christ's tribunal on a day nobody knows. Everything else in the received picture—the mechanics of the two hearings, the geography, the fire's physics, the duration, the courtroom procedure—is theology of varying quality, some of it excellent, none of it defined, and much of it fenced off from popular preaching by the one council that legislated on the subject and by the most recent Roman instruction on it.

It is harder because the two things that *are* defined are the two that a modern reader would most like to soften. The first sentence is passed at death and it is final; there is no purgatorial second chance, because purgatory is for the saved. And the second judgment is public. The scriptural vocabulary for it is unrelenting on this point: made manifest, brought to light, laid bare, revealed, published in the light, preached on the housetops. Whatever consolation the doctrine offers—and Augustine thought the consolation immense, since it is the end of the ignorant questioning why the wicked prosper—it is not the consolation of privacy.

And that, finally, is why the second judgment is not redundant. A man's own case closes when he dies. What he did does not close when he dies; it goes on working in a world he has left, in memories that get him wrong, in children who are not like him, in consequences he never saw, in a body that is still being done things to. Only when history stops is there anything like the whole of him to look at. The tradition put the two judgments where it did because it believed both of two things that are hard to believe together: that a man is answerable now, without extension or appeal; and that a man is more than the instant of his answering. The last day is not a rehearing. It is the moment at which the sentence already passed on a person becomes the truth visible about a life—the whole of it, including the part that outlived him.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* III, q. 59, a. 5, objection 1, in the translation of the Fathers of the English Dominican Province; read at the New Advent presentation of that translation, 25 July 2026, and registered as an exact artifact of that dated web state. The Latin of the same objection, read the same day at the Corpus Thomisticum presentation of the Leonine text, runs: “Post ultimam enim retributionem praemiorum et poenarum, frustra adhiberetur iudicium.” The objection continues by citing Luke 23:43 and Luke 16:22, which are examined at their own places below. Both witnesses are dated electronic states of texts whose printed editions were not collated for this article, except where a Leonine page image is separately identified.

<sup>2</sup>*Summa theologiae* III, q. 59, a. 5, reply to objection 1: “Some men have held the opinion that the souls of the saints shall not be rewarded in heaven, nor the souls of the lost punished in hell, until the Judgment-day. That this is false appears from the testimony of the Apostle (2 Corinthians 5:8) . . . Hence it is manifest that the souls separated from bodies are in eternal life.” English and Latin witnesses as above. The wording of 2 Corinthians 5:8 is quoted from the Douay–Rheims below at its own place.

<sup>3</sup>The four volumes of *The Four Last Things* are independent works on the four traditional subjects and are being written concurrently. Cross-reference in this volume is by subject rather than by page or section, since the companion volumes’ pagination is not available to it and could not be verified if it were.

<sup>4</sup>Ecclesiasticus 7:40, Douay–Rheims from the tracked Challoner text registered in this repository’s source library, read 25 July 2026. The verse is the source of the Latin *novissima* behind the English “last things”; it is a counsel, and the noun in it is one’s own end, not a list of four. The character of the fourfold enumeration is treated at length in the companion volume of this series on death, which reaches the same conclusion from its own evidence.

<sup>5</sup>Bounded, and to be read as bounded. The observation is about the acts actually read for this article: Lateran IV’s *Firmiter*, the Lyons profession, *Ne super his*, *Benedictus Deus*, *Laetentur caeli*, and the two Tridentine texts used in Section 7. No search over a magisterial corpus was run and none is claimed. What is asserted is only that these acts define what they define without reference to any fourfold scheme.

<sup>6</sup>Lateran IV (1215), constitution 1 *Firmiter credimus*, at Denzinger–Schönmetzger 801, read 25 July 2026 in the Latin Enchiridion presented at patristica.net and registered as an exact artifact of that dated web state. The English here is a working gloss of the Latin, not a received translation. The Enchiridion is a compilation and a finding aid to its underlying documents; no printed Denzinger edition and no conciliar manuscript was collated for this article. The Catechism quotes the clause about rising with one’s own body at paragraph 999, in its own English.

<sup>7</sup>Second Council of Lyons (1274), profession of faith of Michael Palaeologus, at DS 856–859; witness and ceiling as in the preceding note. The English is a working gloss. The Latin at DS 859 refers to Romans 14:10f. The article’s stress on *nilominus* is its own reading of the connective and is labelled as project synthesis in the terminal appendix; that the word stands there is a fact of the text.

<sup>8</sup>John XXII, *Ne super his*, 3 December 1334, at DS 990–991; witness and ceiling as above. English a working gloss of the Latin *Fatemur siquidem et credimus, quod animae purgatae separatae a corporibus sunt in caelo . . . et vident Deum de communi lege ac divinam essentiam facie ad faciem clare, in quantum status et condicio compatitur animae separatae*. The Catechism cites this document beside *Benedictus Deus* at paragraph 1022, footnote 593. This article makes no claim about the character of John XXII’s earlier statements, which it did not read; the declaration is used only to date and locate the controversy that the next document closed.

<sup>9</sup>Benedict XII, *Benedictus Deus*, 29 January 1336, at DS 1000; witness and ceiling as above. The English of the central clause is given in the wording of the Catechism, which quotes it at paragraph 1023: souls of the blessed “have seen and do see the divine essence with an intuitive vision, and even face to face, without the mediation of any creature.” The remaining renderings in this article’s prose are working glosses of the Latin. The registered work record for this constitution already held its identity at catalog level; this article adds no artifact of a printed Denzinger volume and collated none.

<sup>10</sup>*Benedictus Deus*, at DS 1002; witness and ceiling as above. The internal quotation is 2 Corinthians 5:10, given here in the Douay–Rheims wording checked in the tracked Challoner text registered in this repository (see the note at that verse below). The Latin embeds the Vulgate clause; the constitution’s own Latin as delivered by the witness reads *ut referat unusquisque propria corporis, prout gessit, sive bonum sive malum*.

<sup>11</sup>Council of Florence, bull of union with the Greeks *Laetentur caeli*, 6 July 1439, at DS 1304–1306; witness and ceiling as above. Latin of the addition: *in caelum mox recipi et intueri clare ipsum Deum trinum et unum, sicuti est, pro meritum tamen diversitate alium alio perfectius*. English a working gloss. The Catechism cites DS 1304–1306 at paragraph 1022, footnote 592, and DS 1304 at paragraph 1031, footnote 604.

<sup>12</sup>*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1022, official English, read 25 July 2026 at the Holy See’s archived IntraText presentation and registered as an exact artifact of that page. Its footnotes cite Lyons II DS 857–858 and Florence DS 1304–1306 and Trent DS 1820 for the purificatory route, *Benedictus Deus* DS 1000–1001 and *Ne super his* DS 990 for the immediate route, and *Benedictus Deus* DS 1002 for immediate damnation. The paragraph closes with the sentence of John of the Cross, “At the

evening of life, we shall be judged on our love.” The observation that “particular judgment” is a theological name for a defined immediacy rather than a separately defined event is this article’s, labelled as project synthesis in the terminal appendix; the absence of the phrase from the four acts quoted above is a checkable fact about their wording as delivered by the registered witness.

<sup>13</sup>Matthew 24:36, Douay–Rheims, from the tracked Challoner text of Project Gutenberg eBook 1581 registered in this repository’s source library, read 25 July 2026. This is one of two verses quoted in this article that the registered divergence table marks as differing from the settled American edition of 1899, which most printed Douay–Rheims Bibles and the common web presentations reproduce; the American reading is “But of that day and hour no one knoweth, not the angels of heaven, but the Father alone.” The difference is punctuation and the emphatic “no,” and it does not bear on any claim made here. The other divergent verse is John 5:22, noted at its own place.

<sup>14</sup>Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, letter *Recentiores episcoporum Synodi* on certain questions concerning eschatology, 17 May 1979, point 5; Holy See English web text read 25 July 2026 and registered as an exact artifact of that dated state. The internal quotation is from *Dei Verbum* 4. Emphasis added. The letter is an authoritative but non-definitive act of the Roman Curia, approved by John Paul II and signed by Cardinal Franjo Seper and Archbishop Jerome Hamer; it is not a conciliar or papal definition, and its weight is stated accordingly wherever it is used here. The Latin published in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 71 (1979) governs wording-critical claims and was not consulted; every quotation from this document in this article is identified as the Holy See English.

<sup>15</sup>Matthew 25:1, Douay–Rheims from the tracked Challoner text registered in this repository’s source library, verified against the registered per-book verse artifact for Matthew on 25 July 2026. All Matthaean quotations in this section are from the same artifact and were checked the same day. Chapter and verse numbers are the Douay–Rheims’s own, which follow the Clementine Vulgate. Where the tracked Challoner text prints a typographic apostrophe, it is typeset here as an ordinary apostrophe; no wording is altered.

<sup>16</sup>Matthew 25:31–32. The formal observation that follows—that this unit lacks the comparison formula carried by the two preceding units and is cast as future indicative prediction, with a single internal simile—is this article’s own reading of the text as it stands in the registered witness, labelled as project synthesis in the terminal appendix. The article did not survey the modern exegetical literature on the form of Matthew 25:31–46, and the reading is offered as a reading, not as a report of scholarly consensus. Readers should note that the Greek is not examined here at all: this study works from the Latin tradition’s English, and a form-critical argument that turned on Greek particles would require evidence this article does not have.

<sup>17</sup>*Supplementum Tertiae Partis* q. 88, a. 2, corpus, English Dominican translation read 25 July 2026 at the New Advent presentation, registered as an exact artifact of that dated page. The Latin, read the same day in the Leonine printing of 1906 at the registered page image of printed p. 205, reads *Unde probabile est quod illa quae dicuntur Matth. xxv, non vocaliter, sed mentaliter intelligenda sunt esse perficienda*. The status of this text—a fourteenth-century transcription from Aquinas’s commentary on the Sentences, not a work of Aquinas’s own composition—is established in Section 6 below and should be borne in mind wherever it is cited here. Note also the epistemic marker in the Latin and the English alike: *probabile*, “probably.” The author is not claiming certainty and says at the head of the article that “it is not possible to come to any certain conclusion about the truth of this question.”

<sup>18</sup>*Supplementum* q. 88, a. 4, corpus, witness as above. The article rubric in the Leonine printing is *Utrum iudicium faciendum sit in valle Iosaphat, aut in loco circumstante*, and the question-list at the head of q. 88 gives it as *utrum fiet in valle Iosaphat*; both were read in the Internet Archive’s uncorrected machine transcription of the Leonine volume, which is registered as a remote artifact and used here only as a finding aid, since no page image of that leaf was inspected. The reply neither affirms nor denies the traditional identification and reasons instead from the ascension. This is a probable opinion about a matter the same author has just said cannot be known with certainty, and it is reported here as such.

<sup>19</sup>The Catechism quotes Matthew 25:31, 32, 46 at paragraph 1038 in its treatment of the Last Judgment, immediately after asserting that the resurrection of all the dead will precede it; official English read 25 July 2026 at the registered archived page. *Supplementum* q. 88, a. 1, objection 2 likewise cites Matthew 25:34–41 as “the sentence of the Divine judgment on man.” Neither is an exegetical argument about *omnes gentes*, and neither is offered here as one. The reading adopted in the text is this article’s own and is labelled as project synthesis; the exegetical literature on the phrase was not surveyed, and a reader who finds the narrower reading better supported will not find it refuted here.

<sup>20</sup>Augustine, *Sermo* 18, 4 (PL 38, 130–131), quoted at *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1039, official English, read 25 July 2026 at the registered archived page. The sermon itself was not read at its own locus for this article; the quotation is used at the ceiling of a checked citation within an official document, and the reading it embodies—that the least brethren are Christ’s members—is reported, not adjudicated. The article does not decide between the available readings of the phrase.

<sup>21</sup>Matthew 16:27. Compare Romans 2:6, Apocalypse 20:12–13, and Lateran IV’s *redditurus singulis secundum opera sua*, quoted in Section 2. The bounds of “according to works” are treated in Section 8.

<sup>22</sup>John 5:22, Douay–Rheims from the tracked Challoner text registered in this repository’s source library, checked 25 July 2026. This is the second of two verses quoted in this article that the registered divergence table marks as differing from the settled American edition of 1899; the American reading is “For neither doth the Father judge any man, but hath given all

judgment to the Son.” The variation is “does”/“doth” and a comma; nothing turns on it. The Catechism quotes the clause at paragraph 679 in its own English, “all judgement to the Son.”

<sup>23</sup> John 12:48. This is the *sed contra* of *Summa theologiae* III, q. 59, a. 5, where Aquinas gives it as “The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge you in the last day,” with the New Advent presentation supplying the bracketed note that the Vulgate reads “him.” The Douay–Rheims reading in the tracked Challoner text is “him,” as quoted here. The variation between “you” and “him” in the Dominican translation of the Summa reflects the form of the citation in the Summa’s own text, not a difference in the Douay–Rheims; it is recorded because a reader comparing the two witnesses will meet it. The Catechism cites John 12:49 at paragraph 1039, footnote 624.

<sup>24</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:6, 8, 10, Douay–Rheims, checked 25 July 2026. Verse 8 is the text on which Aquinas rests his rejection of the opinion that souls are unrewarded before the judgment day (*Summa theologiae* III, q. 59, a. 5, ad 1), and verse 10 is quoted in the Latin of *Benedictus Deus* at DS 1002 and referred to at *Supplementum* q. 88, a. 1, ad 1. That one Pauline paragraph supplies both the immediacy of the particular destiny and the universality of the last manifestation is a fact about the text; the use this article makes of the coincidence is its own and is labelled as project synthesis.

<sup>25</sup> Augustine, *De civitate Dei* XX.14, in Marcus Dods’s 1871 English, read 25 July 2026 in this repository’s tracked transcription of that printing at artifact lines 14884–14951, where the complete chapter was inspected; the passage record for this locus was created with this revision and pins the artifact’s exact hash. Augustine’s “accuse or excuse conscience” is his own echo of Romans 2:15. The internal quotations of Apocalypse 20 in this chapter are Dods’s rendering of Augustine’s Latin, not the Douay–Rheims, and are not conflated with it here.

<sup>26</sup> *Supplementum* q. 87, a. 1, corpus and ad 1, and a. 3, corpus, English Dominican translation read 25 July 2026 at the registered New Advent page. Article 1 opens from Romans 2:15–16, says that “each man’s conscience will be as a book containing his deeds on which judgment will be pronounced,” quotes Apocalypse 20:12, and attributes to Augustine both the identification of the first books with the saints of the two Testaments and the “divine energy” that recalls a man’s deeds; article 3 quotes Augustine’s “wondrous rapidity” and refuses the material book on Augustine’s own arithmetic. The dependence is explicit in the text, not inferred here.

<sup>27</sup> Luke 16:19–31 and 23:43, Douay–Rheims, checked 25 July 2026. The Catechism cites both at paragraph 1021, footnote 591, together with Matthew 16:26, 2 Corinthians 5:8, Philippians 1:23, Hebrews 9:27, and 12:23. Aquinas cites Luke 23:43 and Luke 16:22 in the *first objection* at *Summa theologiae* III, q. 59, a. 5—that is, as material for the case *against* a second judgment—and rests his own affirmative case elsewhere; *Supplementum* q. 69, a. 2 uses Luke 16:22 in the *sed contra* for the descent of some souls to hell immediately after death. On the punctuation of Luke 23:43: the Greek is unpunctuated, and where “this day” attaches is therefore a question that punctuation decides rather than reports. The Vulgate and the Douay–Rheims punctuate it as quoted, and Aquinas quotes it in that form (*hodie mecum eris in Paradiso*). This article follows the received Latin punctuation and does not undertake to settle the Greek question, which it did not examine.

<sup>28</sup> *Summa theologiae* III, q. 59, a. 5, corpus: “perfect judgment cannot be passed upon any man before the close of his life, since he can be changed in many respects from good to evil, or conversely, or from good to better, or from evil to worse. Hence the Apostle says (Hebrews 9:27): ‘It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the Judgment.’” Witness as in Section 1. The reading of the verse offered here—that it establishes the fixity of the life judged rather than the timing of the sentence—is this article’s own and is labelled as project synthesis; it is offered as a reading of what the verse says, and any reader may test it against the verse.

<sup>29</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1038, official English, read 25 July 2026 at the registered archived page; the internal quotation is Acts 24:15, and the paragraph continues with John 5:28–29 and Matthew 25:31–32, 46. The word “precede” is the Catechism’s own.

<sup>30</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 999, official English, read 25 July 2026 at the registered archived page; the paragraph quotes Luke 24:39, Lateran IV (DS 801), Philippians 3:21, and 1 Corinthians 15:35–53. Paragraph 997 gives the anthropology the argument of this section uses: “In death, the separation of the soul from the body, the human body decays and the soul goes to meet God, while awaiting its reunion with its glorified body.” Paragraph 1001 answers the question “When?” with “Definitively ‘at the last day,’ ‘at the end of the world.’”

<sup>31</sup> *Summa theologiae* III, q. 59, a. 5, ad 3, English Dominican translation, witness as in Section 1. Latin at the registered Corpus Thomisticum page: *Sed corpus remanet mutabilitati subiectum usque ad finem temporis. Et ideo oportet quod tunc recipiat suum praemium vel poenam in finali iudicio*. The argument turns on Aquinas’s general principle, stated in the corpus of the same article, that perfect judgment cannot be passed on a changeable subject before its consummation.

<sup>32</sup> *Supplementum* q. 88, a. 1, ad 2, English Dominican translation read 25 July 2026 at the registered New Advent page. The corresponding Latin in Aquinas’s own *Scriptum super Sententiis* IV, d. 47, q. 1, a. 1, qc. 1, ad 2, read the same day at the registered Corpus Thomisticum page, runs: *quia etiam boni amplius post iudicium praemiabuntur, tum ex gloria corporis adjuncta, tum ex numero sanctorum completo*. This is common theological teaching and not a defined proposition; nothing in Lateran IV, Lyons II, *Benedictus Deus*, Florence, or Trent defines an increase of the essential reward or punishment at the general judgment, and the tradition holds the essential reward—the vision of God—to be already possessed. The increase asserted here is accidental. That distinction is load-bearing and is examined again in the synthesis block in Section 6.5.

<sup>33</sup>*Supplementum* q. 69, a. 1, ad 1 and corpus, and a. 2, corpus, English Dominican translation read 25 July 2026 at the registered New Advent page. The image in a. 2 is of gravity: as a body is carried at once to its place by its weight unless obstructed, so the soul, “the bonds of the flesh being broken,” receives at once its reward or punishment unless obstructed. Article 2’s *sed contra* uses 2 Corinthians 5:1, Philippians 1:23 with Gregory’s gloss, and Luke 16:22, and the corpus closes by calling the contrary opinion heretical on the authority of Gregory’s *Dialogues* and the *De ecclesiasticis dogmatibus*. The status of this text is established in Section 6.

<sup>34</sup>Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Recentiores episcoporum Synodi*, 17 May 1979, points 2, 3, 4, and 5, Holy See English, read 25 July 2026 at the registered page. Point 4 adds that these prayers, rites, and acts “are, in their substance, *loci theologici*.” The letter describes the situation it addresses as one in which “the question is put of what happens between the death of the Christian and the general resurrection” and in which discussions “about the existence of the soul and the meaning of life after death” had disturbed the faithful; it does not name any theologian, and neither does this article, which read no author’s proposal at first hand and therefore attributes none.

<sup>35</sup>Same letter, Holy See English, read 25 July 2026. The pastoral section adds the instruction that catechists must be “careful not to allow childish or arbitrary images to be considered truths of faith.” The double caution—against inflating the images and against emptying them—is the letter’s own and is the standard this article has tried to observe.

<sup>36</sup>*Summa theologiae* III, q. 59, a. 5, corpus, English Dominican translation, witness as in Section 1. Latin at the registered Corpus Thomisticum page: *iudicium de aliqua re mutabili perfecte dari non potest ante eius consummationem . . . quia multae actiones videntur esse utiles, quae ex effectibus demonstrantur nocivae*.

<sup>37</sup>Same article and witness. Latin: *Uno quidem modo, secundum quod adhuc vivit in memoriis hominum, in quibus quandoque contra veritatem remanet bonae famae vel malae . . . Tertio modo, quantum ad effectum suorum operum, sicut ex deceptione Arii et aliorum seductorum pullulat infidelitas usque ad finem mundi; et usque tunc proficit fides ex praedicatione apostolorum*. The scriptural tag in the second member is Ecclesiasticus 30:4, which the New Advent presentation cites under the name Sirach. The choice of Arius as the example is Aquinas’s.

<sup>38</sup>*Summa theologiae* III, q. 59, a. 5, ad 1, same witness. Latin: *Licet enim homo secundum haec non mereatur neque demereatur, tamen pertinent ad aliquod eius praemium vel poenam*. The concession that these five continuations are not sources of merit is Aquinas’s own and is the hinge of the strongest objection to his position, stated at full strength in the synthesis block below.

<sup>39</sup>*Praefatio in Supplementum Tertiae Partis Summae theologiae Sancti Thomae Aquinatis*, in *Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Opera omnia*, tomus duodecimus (Rome: Typographia Polyglotta S. C. de Propaganda Fide, 1906), first page of the preface. Read 25 July 2026 at the Internet Archive page image of leaf 412 of item *operaomniaiussui12thom*, registered with this revision as an exact remote artifact with its hash. The English following in the text is a working gloss of the Latin, not a received translation.

<sup>40</sup>Same page. The Leonine editors add, in the same preface, that if the compiler or the scribe of his exemplar wrote from a codex not then recent, “the duplication of the tradition would be extended into the thirteenth century”—a conditional, offered as a possibility, not an assertion about the compiler’s date. The commonly repeated attribution of the Supplement to Aquinas’s socius Reginald of Piperno, who died about 1290, appears in reference works and in the editor’s note prefixed to the New Advent presentation of the Summa; it cannot be reconciled with the Leonine dating of the transcription without evidence this article does not have, and the two attributions are reported here rather than harmonized. What is not in dispute, on either account, is that the Supplement is a compilation from the commentary on the Sentences and not a text Aquinas composed for the Summa. It is also worth recording that the Corpus Thomisticum, which transcribes the Summa itself, does not transcribe the Supplement: its index heads that section “Fr. Rainaldus Romanus, Supplementum” and links to a facsimile of the Leonine volume instead. Read 25 July 2026.

<sup>41</sup>*Supplementum* q. 88, a. 1, corpus, in the Leonine text read 25 July 2026 in the Internet Archive’s uncorrected machine transcription of the Leonine volume, registered as a remote artifact and used here as a finding aid, with the tail of the same corpus and its three replies read at the registered page image of printed p. 205; and Aquinas, *Scriptum super Sententiis* IV, d. 47, q. 1, a. 1, qc. 1, corpus, paragraph [22137] at the registered Corpus Thomisticum page, read the same day. The four variants listed are the ones this article observed between the two witnesses at this locus; the comparison was made between one electronic transcription and one machine transcription of a printed page and is not a collation, and no claim is made that these are the only variants or that either witness is exact at every word.

<sup>42</sup>*Supplementum* q. 88, a. 1, ad 1: Latin read 25 July 2026 at the registered page image of printed p. 205 of the Leonine volume, where the words *Unum singulare, quod de eo fiet post mortem* stand in the left column with the marginal reference to 2 Corinthians 5:10; English at the registered New Advent page, read the same day. Aquinas’s own *Scriptum* at IV, d. 47, q. 1, a. 1, qc. 1, ad 1 likewise reads *Unum singulare, quod de eo fiet post mortem* (paragraph [22138] at the registered Corpus Thomisticum page). The adjective *particularis* does occur in the immediately following reply, but of the *sentence*—*quoad particularem sententiam uniuscuiusque*, “as regards the particular sentence on each individual”—not of the judgment. This article did not collate a printed copy of the 1920 English Dominican translation; the English wording reported here is that of the dated web presentation registered as an artifact, and a printed copy might differ.

<sup>43</sup>*Supplementum* q. 88, a. 1, corpus, English Dominican translation at the registered New Advent page, read 25 July 2026; the corresponding Latin of the *Scriptum* at the registered Corpus Thomisticum page, paragraph [22137], reads *unde necesse est*

ut sit aliquod iudicium universale correspondens ex adverso primae rerum productioni in esse, ut videlicet sicut tunc omnia processerunt immediate a Deo, ita tunc ultima completio mundo detur, unoquoque accipiente finaliter quod ei debetur secundum seipsum. The scriptural tags are Genesis 2:2, John 5:17, and Hebrews 11:13–40.

<sup>44</sup> *Supplementum* q. 88, a. 1, ad 1, and *Summa theologiae* III, q. 59, a. 5, ad 2 (*Deus non iudicabit bis in idipsum, idest secundum idem. Sed secundum diversa non est inconueniens Deum bis iudicare*); witnesses as above. The objection is drawn in both places from Nahum 1:9 “according to another version,” which both texts identify as the Septuagint.

<sup>45</sup> Augustine, *De civitate Dei* XX.2, Dods 1871, read 25 July 2026 in this repository’s tracked transcription of that printing; the chapter begins at artifact line 13941. The passage record registered with this revision covers chapter 1 (artifact lines 13879–13938); chapter 2 was read in the same artifact but is not separately registered. This 1871 witness is distinct from the later NPNF working English used by some publication audits.

<sup>46</sup> Augustine, *De civitate Dei* XX.1, Dods 1871, read 25 July 2026 at the registered passage bounds (artifact lines 13879–13938), whose checked transcription this quotation matches exactly. The same chapter warns that “day” is customarily used in Scripture for “time,” so that the length of the last judgment is not known—a caution Augustine applies to his own subject before he begins it.

<sup>47</sup> *Supplementum* q. 88, a. 1, corpus, and q. 87, a. 2, corpus, English Dominican translation at the registered New Advent pages, read 25 July 2026. Article 2 explicitly labels its conclusion as “the more probable and more common opinion” and records that Peter Lombard held the contrary, that sins blotted out by repentance will not be made known to others at the judgment. That a school opinion on so vivid a point was contested by the Master of the Sentences himself is worth knowing before anyone preaches it.

<sup>48</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1039, official English, read 25 July 2026 at the registered archived page. Paragraph 1040 adds that at the Last Judgment “we shall know the ultimate meaning of the whole work of creation and of the entire economy of salvation and understand the marvellous ways by which his Providence led everything towards its final end.” The phrase “even to its furthest consequences” is the Catechism’s, and is the same point Aquinas made with Arius and the apostles.

<sup>49</sup> *Benedictus Deus* at DS 1000; Lyons II at DS 856 (*Quod si vere paenitentes in caritate decesserint, antequam dignis paenitentiae fructibus de commissis satisfecerint et omissis: eorum animas poenis purgatoris seu catharteris . . . post mortem purgari*); Florence, *Laetentur caeli*, at DS 1304, which repeats the Lyons formula almost verbatim with *in Dei caritate* for *in caritate*. All read 25 July 2026 in the registered Latin Enchiridion web state, with the ceiling recorded in Section 2. English renderings are working glosses.

<sup>50</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1030, official English, read 25 July 2026 at the registered archived page. Paragraph 1031 adds that the Church gives the name Purgatory to “this final purification of the elect.”

<sup>51</sup> Council of Trent, session VI (13 January 1547), canon 30 on justification, in J. Waterworth’s English (London 1848), read 25 July 2026 at the Internet Archive page image of printed p. 48 of the digitized Burns and Oates reprint, registered with this revision as an exact remote artifact. Waterworth’s own footnotes gloss the Latin terms: *culpa* for “guilt,” *reatus aeternae poenae* as “condemnation to eternal punishment,” *reatus poenae temporalis* as “condemnation to a temporal punishment.” The Latin, read the same day at the registered page image of printed p. 38 of the Tauchnitz stereotype reprint of the Roman edition (Leipzig 1887), reads: *Si quis post acceptam iustificationis gratiam cuilibet peccatori poenitenti ita culpam remitti, et reatum aeternae poenae deleri dixerit, ut nullus remaneat reatus poenae temporalis exsolvendae vel in hoc saeculo, vel in futuro in purgatorio, antequam ad regna coelorum aditus patere possit: anathema sit.* The canon is DS 1580. Both page images were inspected directly, not read from OCR.

<sup>52</sup> Council of Trent, session XXV (3–4 December 1563), *Decree concerning Purgatory*, Waterworth’s English, read 25 July 2026 at the registered page images of printed pp. 232–233 of the digitized Burns and Oates reprint. The Latin, read the same day at the registered page image of printed p. 173 of the Tauchnitz reprint, reads *purgatorium esse, animasque ibi detentas fidelium suffragiis, potissimum vero acceptabili altaris sacrificio iuvare*; Waterworth glosses *iuvare* in a footnote as “relieved.” The printed marginal notes refer to session VI canon 30 and session XXII chapters 2 and 3. The decree is DS 1820. The Denzinger text as delivered by the registered web witness reads *nulla fit pietatis accessio* where the Tauchnitz printing reads *nulla sit pietatis accessio*; the variant is recorded and does not affect any claim made here.

<sup>53</sup> Same decree and witnesses. The Latin: *Apud rudem vero plebem difficiliores ac subtiliores quaestiones, quaeque ad aedificationem non faciunt, et ex quibus plerumque nulla sit pietatis accessio, a popularibus concionibus secludantur. Incerta item vel quae specie falsi laborant evulgari ac tractari non permittant. Ea vero, quae ad curiositatem quandam aut superstitionem spectant, vel turpe lucrum sapiunt, tanquam scandala et fidelium offendicula prohibeant.* Waterworth’s footnotes gloss *rudem* as “uneducated” and *specie falsi laborant* as the phrase rendered “labour under an appearance of error.”

<sup>54</sup> *Supplementum Tertiae Partis*, Appendix II, q. 1, a. 2, corpus, English Dominican translation read 25 July 2026 at the registered New Advent page. The same article records and rejects two further opinions: that souls are punished where they sinned (rejected because a man may sin in several places), and that they are punished above us (rejected because they are punished for what is lowest in them). The article’s *sed contra* quotes the gold-and-straw image—“even as in the same fire gold glistens and straw smokes”—attributing it to Gregory, with the New Advent presentation noting that the quotation is in fact

from Augustine, *De civitate Dei* i, 8. The status of the Supplement and its appendices as a fourteenth-century transcription is established in Section 6.

<sup>55</sup>*Supplementum*, Appendix I, q. 2, a. 1, corpus, English Dominican translation read 25 July 2026 at the registered New Advent page; the *sed contra* cites “Augustine . . . in a sermon (xli De Sanctis).” The remark about the corporeal fire being taken for granted is in the corpus and refers forward to Supplement q. 70, a. 3. Article 2 of the same question concludes that the punishment is voluntary only in the qualified sense in which a man submits to an unavoidable evil for the sake of a good, and rejects as false the opinion that the souls do not know they are being cleansed and think themselves damned. Article 6 asks whether one person is delivered sooner than another. These are the “more difficult and subtle questions” in the flesh.

<sup>56</sup>*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1031, official English, read 25 July 2026 at the registered archived page; it quotes Gregory the Great, *Dialogues* 4, 39, for the purifying fire and cites 1 Corinthians 3:15 and 1 Peter 1:7 as the scriptural texts. The observation that the Catechism’s “entirely different from the punishment of the damned” does not carry forward the medieval Appendix’s “it is the same fire which torments the damned in hell and cleanses the just in Purgatory” is this article’s, labelled as project synthesis in the terminal appendix. The two statements can be reconciled—the Catechism is characterizing the purification and the Appendix the physical instrument—but the reader should notice how much of the older picture the Catechism simply does not repeat, and that it repeats none of the geography.

<sup>57</sup>Augustine, *De civitate Dei* XXI.26, Dods 1871, read 25 July 2026 in this repository’s tracked transcription of that printing; the complete chapter was inspected at artifact lines 18318–18475 and registered as a passage with this revision. The chapter opens as a reply to those who argue that Catholic Christians on the foundation of Christ will be delivered from the fire whatever life they build, and answers first with James 2:14 before turning to 1 Corinthians 3:15.

<sup>58</sup>Same chapter and witness; the quotation matches the checked transcription registered with the passage. The full protasis begins at artifact line 18430 with “But if it be said that in the interval of time between the death of this body and that last day of judgment and retribution which shall follow the resurrection . . .”

<sup>59</sup>Augustine, *De civitate Dei* XXI.26, in Emanuel Hoffmann’s text, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 40.2 (Vienna, 1900), read 25 July 2026 in this repository’s tracked TEI artifact of that edition at physical lines 24365–24380, where the sentence stands. The edition prints *u* for consonantal *v* throughout, so *uerum* here is *verum*; the spelling is reproduced rather than normalized. The preceding protasis in the Latin makes the temporal frame explicit: *Post istius sane corporis mortem, donec ad illum ueniat, qui post resurrectionem corporum futurus est damnationis et remunerationis ultimus dies*—after the death of this body, until that last day of damnation and reward is reached which is to come after the resurrection of bodies. The English in the body of this article is Dods’s; the gloss here is a working gloss of the Latin. Triptych has not collated the TEI encoding against page images.

<sup>60</sup>*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1032, official English, read 25 July 2026 at the registered archived page, which renders the Machabees verse in its own English; the Douay–Rheims wording given here is from the tracked Challoner text, checked the same day. The medieval treatment reasons the same way: the *sed contra* of *Supplementum*, Appendix II, q. 1, a. 1 is 2 Machabees 12:46, argued through the practice—there is no need to pray for those in heaven and no profit in praying for those in hell, so there must be some who can be loosed—and the corpus concludes from the justice of God that “those who deny Purgatory speak against the justice of God.”

<sup>61</sup>Trent, session XXV, *Decree concerning Purgatory*, Waterworth’s English at the registered page image of printed p. 233; the same paragraph requires that whatever is due for the dead “from the endowments of testators or in other way, be discharged.” The concern with endowments and with *turpe lucrum* in the preceding sentence belongs to the same decree and to the same session’s reform of abuses. Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Recentiores episcoporum Synodi*, point 4, Holy See English, read 25 July 2026 at the registered page.

<sup>62</sup>Council of Trent, session VI, canon 32, Waterworth’s English, read 25 July 2026 at the registered page images of printed pp. 48–49 of the digitized Burns and Oates reprint; the canon runs across the page break and both leaves were inspected. The Latin at the registered page image of printed p. 38 of the Tauchnitz reprint reads *aut ipsum iustificatum bonis operibus, quae ab eo per Dei gratiam et Iesu Christi meritum, cuius vivum membrum est, fiunt, non vere mereri augmentum gratiae, vitam aeternam . . .*. The canon’s conclusion, “if so be, however, that he depart in grace,” is on the second leaf.

<sup>63</sup>Council of Trent, session VI, canon 33, Waterworth’s English, read at the registered page image of printed p. 49. The full text of the canon appears entire on that leaf.

<sup>64</sup>The reading of the two surprised questions in Matthew 25:37–39 and 25:44 offered in this sentence is this article’s own and is labelled as project synthesis in the terminal appendix. That both groups ask the same question in nearly the same words is a fact of the text; what it signifies is not stated in the text.

<sup>65</sup>*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1040, official English, read 25 July 2026 at the registered archived page. Matthew 24:36 from the tracked Challoner Douay–Rheims, with the American-edition variant recorded at its first occurrence in Section 2.

<sup>66</sup>*Supplementum* q. 88, a. 3, corpus, English Dominican translation read 25 July 2026 at the registered New Advent page; the article rubric *Utrum tempus futuri iudicii sit ignotum* and its parallel-place citations were read at the registered Leonine page image of printed p. 205. The scriptural tag is Acts 1:7. Note that this is the same premise as q. 88, a. 1: the general judgment corresponds to the operation by which all things proceeded immediately from God, and immediacy to God is what makes

both the event and its date God's alone. The reply to objection 4 adds the pastoral reason, that the uncertainty conduces to watchfulness in two ways, the second being that a man must be careful not only of himself but of his family, city, kingdom, or the whole Church, whose duration is not measured by his own. Reply 2 is a sustained refusal, on Augustine's authority, to read the gospel signs as a calendar: "it is impossible to decide after how long a time it will take place, nor fix the month, year, century, or thousand years."

<sup>67</sup>*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1861, official English, read 25 July 2026 at the registered archived page. The sentence stands at the end of the paragraph on mortal sin as "a radical possibility of human freedom." The distinction it draws—between judging an act and judging a person—is the operative one for everything in this subsection.

<sup>68</sup>The observation in this sentence about the asymmetry between the Church's naming of the blessed and her silence about the damned is this article's own and is labelled as project synthesis in the terminal appendix. This article did not examine the canonical procedures of canonization and makes no claim about their juridical form or their doctrinal note; the point made here is only that the doctrine of judgment set out in the preceding sections licenses the asymmetry, not that the asymmetry is itself a defined teaching. Readers should note that the Church's teaching on hell, and on what may and may not be said about who is there, is the subject of the companion volume in this series and is not developed here.

## A Synopsis of Claims by Weight

The article classifies its consequential claims by the weight of the authority behind them: definitive teaching; authoritative but non-definitive teaching; Scripture and its patristic reading; common or probable school theology; and project synthesis. The table gathers that classification in one place so that a reader can see at a glance which sentences carry the Church’s authority, which carry a school’s, and which carry only this essay’s. Nothing here adds to the argument; where the table and the body differ, the body and its notes govern. The fourth column names what the cited witness leaves open, not what the article doubts.

| Claim                                                                                                                      | Weight                                 | Governing witness                                                                                       | What remains unsettled                                                                   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| All shall rise at the end of the age in their own bodies, the ones they now bear                                           | Definitive                             | Lateran IV (1215), <i>Firmiter</i> , DS 801; restated CCC 999                                           | The manner of the transformation; the “how” is called beyond understanding.              |
| On the day of judgment all will appear before Christ’s tribunal to render an account                                       | Definitive                             | Lateran IV, DS 801; Lyons II, DS 859; <i>Benedictus Deus</i> , DS 1002                                  | Nothing of the procedure, order, duration, place, or mode is defined.                    |
| A man’s lot is fixed and effective <i>mox post mortem</i> , purification interposed where needed                           | Definitive                             | Lyons II (1274), DS 856–858; <i>Benedictus Deus</i> (1336), DS 1000–1002; Florence (1439), DS 1304–1306 | Whether anything narratable as a tribunal occurs then; the manner of the sentence.       |
| The blessed see the divine essence itself, unmediated, before the resumption of their bodies                               | Definitive                             | <i>Benedictus Deus</i> , DS 1000                                                                        | Used only within that boundary; the vision is the fourth volume’s subject.               |
| Those dying in actual mortal sin descend at once                                                                           | Definitive                             | <i>Benedictus Deus</i> , DS 1002                                                                        | The third volume’s subject; nothing further is asserted here.                            |
| A temporal debt may remain when guilt and eternal punishment are remitted                                                  | Definitive                             | Trent, session VI (1547), canon 30, DS 1580                                                             | The canon is about justification and defines nothing about what purgatory is like.       |
| There is a purgatory, and the souls detained there are helped by suffrages, above all the Mass                             | Definitive                             | Trent, session XXV (1563), decree on purgatory, DS 1820                                                 | Fire, place, duration, degree—all four ordered out of the pulpit by the same decree.     |
| The justified truly merit by works done through grace, with no derogation from Christ’s merits                             | Definitive                             | Trent, session VI, canons 32–33                                                                         | The treatise on justification is bounded in Section 8, not developed.                    |
| The name “particular judgment”                                                                                             | Substance defined; name theological    | Immediacy at DS 990–991, DS 1000–1002; term adopted at CCC 1022                                         | The phrase is in none of those acts; the Leonine Latin reads <i>iudicium singulare</i> . |
| The Lord’s glorious manifestation is distinct and deferred with respect to the situation of people immediately after death | Authoritative non-definitive           | CDF, <i>Recentiores episcoporum Synodi</i> (1979), point 5                                              | The letter recalls rather than defines; the AAS Latin was not consulted.                 |
| The Church’s prayers and rites for the dead are in substance <i>loci theologici</i>                                        | Authoritative non-definitive           | Same letter, point 4                                                                                    | Its force as an argument is this article’s own use of it.                                |
| Retribution is received in the immortal soul at the very moment of death                                                   | Authoritative teaching                 | CCC 1022                                                                                                | The weight sits on the immediacy; no procedure is described.                             |
| The resurrection of all the dead precedes the Last Judgment                                                                | Authoritative teaching                 | CCC 1038, with Acts 24:15                                                                               | The mode of the interval; no account is given of it.                                     |
| Acts may be judged; persons must be entrusted to God                                                                       | Authoritative teaching, with Scripture | CCC 1861; 1 Corinthians 4:3–5                                                                           | Nothing; the rule is unqualified, and its ground is that the evidence is not in.         |

| Claim                                                                                                                | Weight                                                 | Governing witness                                                                         | What remains unsettled                                                                                   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Only the Father knows the day and the hour                                                                           | Scripture, received in teaching                        | Matthew 24:36; CCC 1040                                                                   | The time is reserved, not merely undefined—a stronger claim than silence.                                |
| Judgment is according to works, in every witness and in the definitions                                              | Scripture, and defined in the same words               | Matthew 16:27; Romans 2:6; Apocalypse 20:12–13; Lateran IV, DS 801                        | That this measures rather than causes the standing measured is argued, not defined.                      |
| The last day is a manifestation: brought to light, made manifest, laid bare                                          | Scripture                                              | 1 Corinthians 4:5; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Luke 12:2–3                                        | What the manifestation consists in, and to whom, is not stated.                                          |
| The least brethren are Christ’s members                                                                              | Patristic witness, reported not adjudicated            | Augustine, <i>Sermo</i> 18, 4, as quoted at CCC 1039                                      | The sermon was not read at its own locus; the article decides between no readings.                       |
| The book of life is a divine power by which each recalls his whole life at once                                      | Patristic exegesis, received by the schools            | Augustine, <i>De civitate Dei</i> XX.14; <i>Supplementum</i> q. 87 aa. 1, 3               | Augustine’s solution to a problem of scale; no act defines it.                                           |
| 1 Corinthians 3:15 refers primarily to the fire of tribulation in this life                                          | Patristic reading, with the author’s recorded openness | Augustine, <i>De civitate Dei</i> XXI.26                                                  | He adds of a post-mortem purgative fire: <i>non redarguo, quia forsitan verum est.</i>                   |
| The separated soul is unchangeable and judged at once; the body changes to the close of time                         | Common theology, Thomistic                             | <i>ST</i> III, q. 59, a. 5, ad 3                                                          | Not defined at any level; it is the pivot of the answer and carries a school’s weight.                   |
| A life continues after death in five ways, only the third of them the man’s own act                                  | Common theology, Thomistic, restricted here            | <i>ST</i> III, q. 59, a. 5, corpus and ad 1                                               | Aquinas concedes a man “neither merits nor demerits” by these—the counterargument’s hinge.               |
| The general judgment adds an increase: bodily glory, and the completed number                                        | Common theology, not defined                           | <i>Supplementum</i> q. 88, a. 1, ad 2; <i>Scriptum</i> IV, d. 47, q. 1, a. 1, qc. 1, ad 2 | No act defines any increase; the essential reward is already possessed, so this is accidental.           |
| The judgment will be conducted mentally, not by word of mouth                                                        | Probable school opinion, so marked in its own text     | <i>Supplementum</i> q. 88, a. 2 ( <i>probabile est</i> )                                  | Its author says no certain conclusion about the question is possible.                                    |
| The place of the judgment                                                                                            | Probable school opinion, expressly uncertain           | <i>Supplementum</i> q. 88, a. 4                                                           | “We cannot know with any great certainty”—the weakest thing in the file.                                 |
| Purgatory is below and adjoining hell, and its fire is the same fire                                                 | School opinion, hedged in its own text                 | <i>Supplementum</i> , Appendix II, q. 1, a. 2                                             | “Nothing is clearly stated in Scripture”; the Catechism repeats none of it.                              |
| The least pain of purgatory exceeds the greatest pain of this life                                                   | School opinion on an undefended assumption             | <i>Supplementum</i> , Appendix I, q. 2, a. 1                                              | Corporeal fire acting on a soul is there “taken for granted”; the authority is a sermon.                 |
| The <i>Supplementum</i> is a fourteenth-century compilation from the <i>Scriptum</i> , not Aquinas’s own composition | Editorial finding from a printed critical preface      | Leonine <i>Opera omnia</i> XII (1906), <i>Praefatio in Supplementum</i>                   | The compiler is unnamed; the Reginald attribution conflicts with the Leonine dating and is not resolved. |
| The fourfold enumeration has one slot where the acts have two events                                                 | Project synthesis                                      | This article, from Ecclesiasticus 7:40 and the acts of Section 2                          | Bounded: no corpus was searched; it covers only the acts read.                                           |
| Matthew 25:31–46 is a future-indicative prediction containing one simile, not a parable                              | Project synthesis                                      | This article, from the text, with Matthew 13:36–43, 47–50 as control                      | The Greek was not examined; the exegetical literature was not surveyed.                                  |

| Claim                                                                                                                     | Weight            | Governing witness                                     | What remains unsettled                                                             |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hebrews 9:27 fixes the finality of the life judged, not the timing of the sentence                                        | Project synthesis | This article, from <i>ST</i> III, q. 59, a. 5, corpus | A reading of the verse; CCC 1021's use of it for the immediate lot is not refuted. |
| The two judgments are one verdict and its completion—verdict and vindication                                              | Project synthesis | This article; stated and limited at Section 6.5       | The counterargument stands there at full strength with three defeating findings.   |
| The Church names the blessed and makes no declaration in the other direction because the doctrine licenses only the first | Project synthesis | This article, from the material of Section 8          | The canonical procedures of canonization were not examined.                        |

## B Scope, Method, and Qualifications

### B.1 Reader, question, and claim boundary

The intended reader is a serious general reader who can follow careful distinctions and is not presumed to know scholastic vocabulary, Latin, or the conventions of magisterial citation. Every technical term is glossed where it first does work.

The governing question is the relation between the particular and the general judgment: if the sentence passed at death is definitive, what is the general judgment for, and what may be claimed about either without going past the evidence. The governing claim, stated in the synthesis block in Section 6.5 and qualified there, is that the two are not two verdicts on one case but one verdict and its completion—differing in subject, in scope, and in publicity—and that the assessment of a man's desert is not reopened.

Theology governs the argument throughout. No canonical claim is made, no jurisdiction or body of law is in view, and no as-of date attaches to any discipline. The one disciplinary text quoted at length, Trent's decree on purgatory, is quoted for what it defines and for what it excludes from popular preaching, not as currently enforceable law.

### B.2 Series position

This is the second of four independent Claude studies under the title *The Four Last Things*: death, judgment, hell, heaven. The four were written concurrently and share no text. Where this volume must refer to another it does so by subject, never by page or section, because the companion volumes' pagination was not available to it. Death is presupposed here and not treated: what happens to a man at the moment of dying, and how Christians prepare for it, belong to the first volume. Hell is presupposed as the state into which the condemned sentence issues, and nothing is said here about its nature, its population, or what may be claimed about any person's presence in it. Heaven is presupposed as the state the blessed enter, and the vision of God is used only within the boundary *Benedictus Deus* draws around it. Readers who want those subjects should go to their own volumes.

### B.3 Included and excluded material

Included: the defined content of Lateran IV, Lyons II, *Ne super his*, *Benedictus Deus*, Florence, and Trent on the lot of the dead and on purgatory; the Catechism's treatment of the particular judgment, the resurrection, purgatory, and the Last Judgment; the 1979 letter of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on eschatology; the judgment scenes and sayings of Matthew, Luke, John, Paul, Hebrews, and the Apocalypse in the Douay–Rheims; Augustine's treatment of the last judgment in *De civitate Dei* XX and of purgative fire in XXI; Aquinas's own treatment at *Summa theologiae* III, q. 59; the Supplement's questions 69, 87, and 88 and its two appendices, with the provenance of that text established; and the corresponding place of Aquinas's *Scriptum super Sententiis*, book IV, distinction 47.

Excluded: the treatise on justification, merit, grace, and predestination, which is bounded in Section 8 and not developed; Christology and soteriology, presupposed throughout; the nature of hell and of heaven, reserved to their own volumes; the intermediate state’s philosophical problems (the mode of a separated soul’s existence, whether temporal succession applies to it, personal identity across the interval); limbo and the fate of the unbaptized; the theology of indulgences and the whole question of how a suffrage is applied; private revelations about purgatory or the judgment, of which none is used or cited; the modern exegetical literature on the form and sources of Matthew 25:31–46, which was not surveyed; the Greek text of the New Testament, which was not examined at all; apocalyptic chronology, millennialism, and the identification of eschatological signs; and any judgment about the destiny of any named person.

## B.4 Evidence classes used

**Defined teaching:** propositions asserted in the acts quoted in Section 2 and in Trent’s canons, identified by document and Denzinger number at each appearance.

**Authoritative non-definitive teaching:** the Catechism’s formulations, and the 1979 letter of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, whose status as an approved but non-definitive curial act is recorded where it is used.

**Scripture:** quoted only from the Douay–Rheims, in the tracked Challoner text of Project Gutenberg eBook 1581 registered in this repository’s source library, with chapter and verse in the Vulgate numbering that text follows. Two quoted verses—Matthew 24:36 and John 5:22—stand in this repository’s registered divergence table as differing from the settled American edition of 1899 that most printed Douay–Rheims Bibles reproduce; both divergences are recorded at their first appearance and neither affects an argument. No translation was composed for this article, and no other English version is quoted anywhere in it. Where the tracked text prints a typographic apostrophe it is typeset as an ordinary apostrophe.

**Patristic witness:** Augustine only, and only from *De civitate Dei*. The English is Marcus Dods’s 1871 printing in this repository’s tracked transcription; three passages (XX.1, XX.14, XXI.26) were registered with this revision at exact artifact line bounds, and the complete chapters were read. One Latin check was made in the tracked TEI text of Hoffmann’s CSEL 40.2. This is not a patristic survey and is not offered as one; the strength and the limits of that restriction are stated in the third overturning condition of the synthesis block.

**School theology:** Aquinas’s own text at *Summa theologiae* III, q. 59, distinguished throughout from the *Supplementum Tertiae Partis*, whose status as a fourteenth-century transcription from Aquinas’s commentary on the Sentences is established in Section 6 from the Leonine editors’ own preface. Where the Supplement is used, that status is noted. Propositions taken from it are common or probable theological teaching, not defined doctrine, and several of them mark their own uncertainty in their own text; those markers are reproduced rather than suppressed.

**Project synthesis:** original to this article and labelled locally at each appearance as well as here. Namely: the observation that the fourfold enumeration has one slot where the acts have two events, and the use made of that; the observation that Lyons II, *Benedictus Deus*, and Florence all retain the general judgment in the same sentence in which they define immediate retribution, and the weight placed on *nihilominus*; the formal reading of Matthew 25:31–46 as a non-parabolic prediction containing one simile, together with the use of Matthew 13 as a control case; the reading of Hebrews 9:27 as establishing the fixity of the life judged rather than the timing of the sentence; the adoption of the universal reading of *omnes gentes*; the observation that “particular judgment” is a theological name for a defined immediacy rather than a separately defined event; the reading of the two surprised questions in Matthew 25 as incompatible with a ledger; the observation about the Catechism’s non-repetition of the medieval Appendix’s geography and identification of purgatorial with infernal fire; the verdict-and-vindication account of the two judgments in the synthesis block, with its stated concession; and the observation about the asymmetry between the Church’s naming of the blessed and her silence about the damned. None of these is attributed to any source, and none should be repeated as the teaching of the Church.

## B.5 Method and its limits

Every claim in this article rests on a source the authoring agent reached and read on 25 July 2026, with one recorded exception: the search that located Ecclesiasticus 7:40 in the tracked scriptural text was run on 26 July 2026 and its receipt is registered. Where a quotation is given, the wording was checked at the identified witness that day. Where a

page image of a printed edition was inspected, that is stated; where only an electronic transcription or a machine transcription of a scan was available, that is stated too, and the weaker witness is never presented as the stronger.

Specific ceilings, all of which are recorded again in `research/source-audit.md`:

- **Denzinger.** All conciliar and papal Latin except Trent was read in one dated web transcription of the Latin Enchiridion. That compilation is a finding aid to its underlying documents. No printed Denzinger edition was collated, and no conciliar manuscript or original register was consulted for any of Lateran IV, Lyons II, *Ne super his, Benedictus Deus*, or Florence. A reader who needs the exact promulgated wording of any of those acts should go behind this article to a critical text.
- **Trent.** Both the English of Waterworth’s 1848 translation and the Latin of the 1887 Tauchnitz stereotype reprint of the Roman edition were read at page images of the digitized copies, inspected directly rather than from optical character recognition. One orthographic variant between the Tauchnitz printing and the Denzinger text is recorded where it occurs. The Roman edition of 1834 that the Tauchnitz reprints was not itself consulted.
- **Aquinas.** The English throughout is the Fathers of the English Dominican Province’s, read in a dated web presentation; no printed copy of that translation was collated, and the English wording reported for *Supplementum* q. 88, a. 1, ad 1 is that presentation’s. The Latin of *Summa theologiae* III, q. 59 and of *Scriptum* IV, d. 47 was read in dated web transcriptions that identify the Leonine text but were not collated against it. The Latin of the Supplement was read partly at a Leonine page image (printed p. 205) and partly in the Internet Archive’s uncorrected machine transcription of the Leonine volume, which is registered and used only as a finding aid; the comparison between the Supplement and the *Scriptum* in Section 6 was made between two such witnesses and is not a collation.
- **The Supplement’s authorship.** Two incompatible accounts are on record and this article resolves neither. The Leonine preface dates the transcription to the middle of the fourteenth century and names only *Compiler Supplementi*; a widely repeated attribution assigns it to Aquinas’s socius Reginald of Piperno, who died about 1290. Both are reported. What is common to both, and all the argument requires, is that the Supplement is a compilation from the commentary on the Sentences and not a text Aquinas composed for the Summa.
- **The Catechism.** Quoted from the Holy See’s archived English IntraText presentation, whose delivery state was acquired and hashed on 25 July 2026. That presentation lowercases some sentence-initial articles and renders some typographic dashes as spaced hyphens; quotations here begin mid-sentence or restore standard casing only where the quoted words are unaffected. No printed edition was collated.
- **The 1979 letter.** Quoted from the Holy See’s English web text. The Latin published in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 71 (1979) governs wording-critical claims and was not consulted.
- **Greek.** Not examined. Nothing in this article turns on a Greek word, and the form-critical observations in Section 3 are made about the Latin tradition’s English and are labelled as this article’s reading.

The article makes no negative-search claim about any corpus. Where it says that a phrase does not occur in the four acts of Section 2, that is a statement about the wording of those acts as delivered by the registered witness, checked by reading them, not the result of a mechanical search over a bounded corpus.

## B.6 Rights

The Douay–Rheims in Challoner’s revision, Waterworth’s 1848 English of Trent, the 1887 Tauchnitz Latin of Trent, Dods’s 1871 English of the *City of God*, Hoffmann’s 1899–1900 CSEL Latin, the 1906 Leonine volume, and the English Dominican translation of the Summa are all public domain; the Latin acts of 1215, 1274, 1334, 1336, 1439, 1547, and 1563 are public domain by age. The Catechism and the 1979 letter are quoted briefly, with attribution, from official Holy See texts that remain outside this project’s outbound licence; the exact bytes acquired from that host and from the two commercial transcription sites are recorded but not redistributed. The Denzinger compilation’s numbering and apparatus are the editorial work of its successive editors. None of this material is relicensed by this publication, whose own prose and organization fall under the repository’s project-content terms.

## B.7 Review state

Completed: claim-driven research with same-day verification of every quoted witness; direct inspection of six printed page images (Trent English pp. 48, 49, 232, 233; Trent Latin pp. 38, 173) and two Leonine page images (the preface to the Supplement, and Supplement p. 205); registration of the new work, edition, artifact, and passage records listed in `research/source-bindings.toml`, with the human record in `research/scope.md` and `research/source-audit.md`; source-library validation; epistemic-order review, with received teaching labelled at every appearance and school opinion never presented as defined, audited in one place by the synopsis of claims by weight; boundary review against the other three volumes of the series; rights review; internal argumentative and quotation review; a multipass build with clean fatal-error, undefined-reference, and layout scans; the generation-metadata gate; the web-edition eligibility gate; and page-by-page raster review of the built PDF.

Outstanding: independent scriptural, patristic, Thomistic, dogmatic, theological, and ecclesiastical review. No imprimatur, nihil obstat, ecclesiastical approval, or completion of independent review is claimed, and internal checking is not independent review. The provenance finding in Section 6 in particular deserves the attention of someone who can read the Leonine apparatus properly and who has access to the manuscript scholarship this article did not consult.

Nothing here is pastoral counsel. A reader troubled about his own state or another's should take the matter to a confessor, not to a study document.

## C References

### Scripture

- Ecclesiasticus 7:40. 2 Machabees 12:43–46. Matthew 5:25–26; 7:21–23; 11:22–24; 12:36–37; 13:36–43, 47–50; 16:27; 24:29–36; 25:1–46. Luke 12:2–5; 16:19–31; 23:42–43. John 3:17–21; 5:22–30; 11:24–26; 12:47–50. Acts 17:30–31. Romans 2:5–16; 14:10–12. 1 Corinthians 3:11–17; 4:3–5; 15:20–28, 51–55. 2 Corinthians 5:1–10. Philippians 1:21–24. 1 Thessalonians 4:13–17. 2 Timothy 4:1, 6–8. Hebrews 9:27–28. Apocalypse 14:13; 20:11–15.
- All quoted from the public-domain Douay–Rheims translation in Bishop Challoner's revision, in the tracked per-book verse text of Project Gutenberg eBook 1581 registered in this repository's reusable source library; wording checked 2026-07-25, except Ecclesiasticus 7:40, located and checked 2026-07-26. Chapter and verse follow the Douay–Rheims's own numbering, which follows the Clementine Vulgate. The registered divergence table for that text marks Matthew 24:36 and John 5:22 as differing from the settled American edition of 1899; both divergences are stated where the verses are quoted. No translation was composed for this article and no other English version is quoted in it.

### Patristic witness

- Augustine of Hippo, *De civitate Dei* XX.1 (why the last day is properly the day of judgment; “day” used for “time”), XX.2 (the hiddenness of God's present judgments), XX.14 (the books of Apocalypse 20; the book of life as a divine power recalling every man's works), XXI.13 (against those who make all punishment after death purgatorial), XXI.26 (1 Corinthians 3 read of the fire of tribulation in this life; the concession about a purgative fire in the interval). English: trans. Marcus Dods, *The City of God*, vol. II, in *The Works of Aurelius Augustine, A New Translation* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1871); public domain; wording checked 2026-07-25 in this repository's tracked transcription of the 1871 printing, with passages registered for XX.1 (artifact lines 13879–13938), XX.14 (14884–14951), and XXI.26 (18318–18475).
- Augustine of Hippo, *De civitate Dei* XXI.26, Latin (*non redarguo, quia forsitan uerum est*); ed. Emanuel Hoffmann, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 40.2 (Vienna, 1900); public domain; checked 2026-07-25 in this repository's tracked TEI text of that edition. The edition prints *u* for consonantal *v*.
- Augustine, *Sermo* 18, 4 (PL 38, 130–131), on the least brethren as Christ's members, cited only as quoted at *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1039; the sermon was not read at its own locus.

### Thomistic framework

- Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* III, q. 59, aa. 1–6, especially a. 5 with its three replies (whether a general judgment remains after the judgment that takes place in the present time; the five ways a finished life continues; the unchangeable state of the separated soul; the changeable body). English from the public-domain translation of the Fathers of the English Dominican Province at New Advent; Latin at Corpus Thomisticum; both checked 2026-07-25 and registered as exact artifacts of those dated web states.
- Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum* IV, d. 47, q. 1, a. 1, qc. 1, corpus and replies 1–3 (the twofold divine operation and the twofold judgment; *unum singulare, quod de eo fiet post mortem*; the increase of reward after the judgment). Latin at Corpus Thomisticum, checked 2026-07-25 and registered as an exact artifact of that dated web state.
- *Supplementum Tertiae Partis Summae theologiae* q. 69, aa. 1–2 (the places that receive souls; immediate conveyance unless held by a debt); q. 87, aa. 1–3 (each man's conscience as the book; the manifestation of merits to all; the rapidity of the survey); q. 88, aa. 1–4 (the general judgment; the mental conduct of the debate; the reserved time; the place); Appendix I, q. 2, aa. 1–6 (the pains of purgatory); Appendix II, q. 1, aa. 1–2 (whether there is a purgatory; where it is). The Supplement is not a work of Aquinas's composition: the Leonine editors state that it was transcribed about the middle of the fourteenth century from a codex of the commentary on the fourth book of the Sentences and is to be held a second witness to that commentary. English at New Advent (with the pages for qq. 69 and 87 and the two appendices); Latin at the Internet Archive page images of *Sancti Thomae*

*Aquinatis Opera omnia*, tomus duodecimus (Rome: Typographia Polyglotta, 1906), leaf 412 (the *Praefatio in Supplementum*) and leaf 664 (printed p. 205, q. 88 aa. 1–3), with the volume’s uncorrected machine transcription used only as a finding aid; all checked 2026-07-25 and registered.

## Defined and authoritative Catholic teaching

- Fourth Lateran Council (1215), constitution 1 *Firmiter credimus*, at DS 801 (the coming at the end of the age; rising *cum suis propriis corporibus, quae nunc gestant*). Second Council of Lyons (1274), profession of faith of Michael Palaeologus, at DS 856–859 (purgatorial punishments and suffrages; *mox* to heaven and to hell; *nihilominus in die iudicii*). John XXII, *Ne super his* (3 December 1334), at DS 990–991. Benedict XII, *Benedictus Deus* (29 January 1336), at DS 1000–1002 (the intuitive and facial vision before the resumption of bodies and the general judgment; immediate descent for those dying in actual mortal sin; the retained day of judgment, quoting 2 Corinthians 5:10). Council of Florence, *Laetentur caeli* (6 July 1439), at DS 1304–1306. Latin of all five read 2026-07-25 in the dated web presentation of the Latin *Enchiridion symbolorum* at patristica.net, registered as an exact artifact of that state. The Enchiridion is a compilation and a finding aid to its underlying documents; no printed Denzinger edition and no conciliar manuscript was collated. English renderings in this article are working glosses except where the Catechism’s own English is quoted.
- Council of Trent, session VI (13 January 1547), canons 30, 32, and 33 on justification; session XXV (3–4 December 1563), *Decree concerning Purgatory*. English: trans. J. Waterworth, *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent* (London 1848), in an undated Burns and Oates reprint; page images of printed pp. 48, 49, 232, and 233 inspected 2026-07-25 and registered. Latin: *Canones et decreta sacrosancti oecumenici Concilii Tridentini*, editio stereotypa undecima (Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1887), reprinting the Roman edition of 1834; page images of printed pp. 38 and 173 inspected 2026-07-25 and registered. The canons are DS 1580 and the decree DS 1820.
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 678–679 (Christ’s judgment of the living and the dead), 997–1001 (the resurrection of the body), 1021–1022 (the particular judgment), 1030–1032 (the final purification), 1038–1041 (the Last Judgment), 1861 (judgment of persons entrusted to God). Official Vatican English, archived IntraText presentation, pages checked 2026-07-25 at vatican.va (1021–1022) and the adjacent pages for the other paragraphs, all registered as exact artifacts of that delivery state.
- Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Recentiores episcoporum Synodi*, letter on certain questions concerning eschatology, 17 May 1979, points 1–7 and the pastoral section. Holy See English text at vatican.va, checked 2026-07-25 and registered. An approved but non-definitive curial act; the Latin of *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 71 (1979) was not consulted.

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