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**THE ROLE OF RELIGION AS A BASIC HUMAN GOOD
IN THE MORAL THEORY OF GERMAIN GRISEZ**

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of the requirements for the degree of PhD in Theology

by

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Germain Grisez

1.1.1 Grisez's life and works

Germain Grisez, a married Catholic layman and philosopher-theologian, is currently the Flynn Professor of Christian Ethics in Mount St. Mary's University, Emmitsburg, Maryland, USA. He was born 30th Sept 1929 in Cleveland.¹ Whilst a student in Cleveland's John Carroll University, Grisez became very enthusiastic about the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, on whose work he did his bachelor thesis. From 1950-51, he was a nonresident postgraduate student at the Dominican College of St. Thomas Aquinas, River Forest, Illinois, receiving both a Master of Arts and a Pontifical Licentiate in Philosophy, *summa cum laude*. He married Jeannette Selby in June 1951. At the University of Chicago, he selected as his dissertation topic "Basic Oppositions in Logical Theory." At this point it was metaphysics in which he was most interested. His first published work was "References to Beauty in St. Thomas," *Modern Schoolman*, 29 (1951): 43-44. In 1957, he began an assistant professorship in ethical theory in

¹ This short outline of Grisez's life is based on R. Shaw, "Pioneering the Renewal in Moral Theology" in R.P. George, ed. *Natural Law and Moral Inquiry: Ethics, Metaphysics, and Politics in the Work of Germain Grisez* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1998), 241-271. It also draws on information found in the bibliographies appended to two articles: G. Grisez, G. J. Boyle, and J. Finnis, "Practical Principles, Moral Truth, and Ultimate Ends," *American Journal of Jurisprudence*, 32 (1987): 99-151, at 148-151, and G. Grisez, "A Contemporary Natural Law Ethics," *Moral Philosophy: Historical and Contemporary Essays*, ed. William C. Starr and Richard C. Taylor (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1989), 125-43, at 139-143. I am indebted to Professor Grisez for sending me a comprehensive bibliography of his works.

Georgetown University. From then onwards, it was ethics in which he specialized. In 1963-64, Grisez took a sabbatical, received tenure, was promoted to associate professor, and was awarded a Lilly postdoctoral fellowship. It was at this time that he began to develop his moral theory in earnest.

His first major work was an exegesis of a very important article in *Summa Theologiae* about the foundations of the natural law, according to St Thomas. This was “The First Principle of Practical Reason: A Commentary on the *Summa Theologiae*, 1-2, Question 94, Article 2,” in *Natural Law Forum*, 10 (1965),² in which Grisez analysed Aquinas’s theory of practical reasoning and criticised Neo-Scholastic Thomism.

In the context of the birth-control debate of the early 1960s, Grisez began to develop his own ethical theory, one focused on “basic human goods” and free choice, inspired by and influenced by the natural law theory of Aquinas, though not simply a modern presentation of it. In January, 1965, Grisez’s *Contraception and the Natural Law* was published. This marks the beginning of Grisez’s development of his philosophical natural law theory in detail and as his own. In this book, Grisez offers a new philosophical defense of the Church’s rejection of contraception. Following the release of *Humanae Vitae* in 1968, Grisez took leave of absence from Georgetown to act as principal

² All bibliographical details for publications of Grisez’s mentioned in this section are found in the Bibliography below. Many of the works are analysed in detail in the following chapters. The present work begins its analysis of Grisez’s writings with *Contraception and the Natural Law* and not his article on Aquinas to emphasise the point that Grisez does not see his work as exegesis of Aquinas, nor as mainly a reaction to neo-scholasticism, but as his (Grisez’s) own constructive theory. Grisez’s main points in the article are found also in his first book (1965), as indicated and analysed below in s. 2.1 (i.e. section 2, part 1). A detailed list of the present work’s contents can be found in Appendix Five below.

theological advisor on matters pertaining to the birth control controversy in Washington, assisting Cardinal Patrick O'Boyle.

In "Man, the Natural End of", published in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (1967), Grisez outlined various approaches to the issue of what man's ultimate natural end is, including a critical section on Aquinas's views, and the beginnings of an outline of his own position on man's ultimate end. This was to be a constant and developing theme in his work.

In 1970 Grisez turned his attention to another controversial moral issue in a lengthy philosophical analysis: *Abortion: the Myths, the Realities, and the Arguments*. He moved to Campion College, part of the University of Regina, Saskatchewan and worked there from 1972-78. During this time, Grisez wrote many works, often co-authoring. One was a popular presentation of his natural law theory, written with Russell Shaw: *Beyond the New Morality: The Responsibilities of Freedom*, (first edition 1974, revised edition 1980, and third edition 1988). Another was his own presentation of a cosmological argument for God's existence and an analysis of the issues involved in religious language: *Beyond the New Theism: A Philosophy of Religion* (1975), which was reprinted with a new preface in 2005 as *God: A Philosophical Preface to Faith*. He also wrote, with Joseph Boyle and Olaf Tollefsen, a philosophical defense of free choice: *Free Choice: A Self-Referential Argument* (1976). Boyle, who was a graduate student of Grisez's at

Georgetown in late 60s and who has taught in St. Michael's College, University of Toronto since 1986, is one of Grisez's closest collaborators.³

Around this time, Grisez began to see the need for a renewed moral theology in light of Vatican II, a philosophically sound and well-worked out theology, one faithful to the Church's teaching. He co-wrote four chapters on morality in *The Teaching of Christ: A Catholic Catechism for Adults*, edited by R. Lawler, D.W. Wuerl, and T.C. Lawler (1976). He worked on this project with John Finnis, whom he had met in 1974. Finnis is now professor of jurisprudence at Oxford and of law at Notre Dame and another of Grisez's closest collaborators. One of Grisez's first major theological publications was "Contraception and the Infallibility of the Ordinary Magisterium," co-written with John C. Ford, S.J., for *Theological Studies*, 39 (1978), in which he presented an argument that the Church's teaching on contraception was infallibly taught by the ordinary magisterium of the Church. Grisez has been a strong defender of the magisterium and also a fierce opponent of dissenting, revisionist theologians. He has been especially critical of proportionalism: for example, in his "Against Consequentialism," *American Journal of Jurisprudence*, 23 (1978): 21-72.

In 1978, he was offered and accepted the Rev. Harry J. Flynn chair of Christian Ethics in Mount St. Mary's University in Maryland. An important part of Grisez's work, and one

³ The work of Grisez's collaborators, Joseph Boyle and John Finnis, is examined in chapter seven below. Their natural law theory, although it is sometimes called the Grisez-Finnis theory, should in fairness be called the Grisez-Finnis-Boyle theory. As this present work is focused on Grisez, who originally developed the theory and who alone has fully developed its theological aspect (which this work argues is an essential part of the moral theory), it is treated as Grisez's theory here. This also avoids the constant repetition of the rather cumbersome phrases "the Grisez-Finnis-Boyle moral theory", "as Grisez-Finnis-Boyle say", and so on. I am confident that everything spoken of in this work as Grisez's theory is or was held fully by him.

which he welcomed, was lecturing in the seminary there. Although Grisez now was beginning to focus more and more on theology, he continued to write philosophical ethics. For example, the following year, a book analyzing another important moral issue (once again, to do with life) was published: *Life and Death with Liberty and Justice: A Contribution to the Euthanasia Debate*, co-written with Joseph Boyle (1979).

Grisez's main work has been his four volume moral theology project, which he calls *The Way of the Lord Jesus*. Its first volume, *Christian Moral Principles*, appeared in 1983. Grisez worked on this first volume with several others: Boyle, Finnis, Basil Cole, John A. Geinzer, Jeannette Grisez (his wife), Robert G. Kennedy, Patrick Lee, William E. May, and Russell Shaw. This book presented a detailed account of Grisez's natural law theory and his fundamental moral theology. Grisez tends to regard all earlier accounts of his ethical theory as either too simple or flawed, and so it is *Christian Moral Principles* that marks the real beginning of his moral theory at its best.⁴

Grisez continued to write philosophical ethics and to develop his natural law theory. *Nuclear Deterrence, Morality and Realism*, co-written with Finnis and Boyle, appeared in 1987. So too did a very important presentation of Grisez's philosophical ethical theory, again co-written with Boyle and Finnis: "Practical Principles, Moral Truth, and Ultimate Ends" (1987). In this work, some of the criticisms of Grisez's work were addressed and

⁴ This is why a full chapter is devoted to this book below. In the bibliography below, the three volumes of *The Way of the Lord Jesus* are all listed as written by Grisez "with others". The full list of contributors is not given, both for simplicity's sake and to emphasise that these works are primarily works by Grisez.

various aspects clarified.⁵ Grisez himself wrote a short account of his moral theory the following year, “A Contemporary Natural Law Ethics”.

The first volume of *The Way of the Lord Jesus* was somewhat difficult and perhaps even forbidding in its length and academic rigour and ambition.⁶ In 1991, Grisez, along with Shaw, wrote a shorter and simpler presentation of its theory: *Fulfillment in Christ: A Summary of Christian Moral Principles*. Soon after, the second volume of the moral theology project was published, again with many collaborators helping: *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol. 2, *Living a Christian Life* (1993). This book, like its predecessor a very substantial work, developed some of the fundamental moral theology themes of the first volume, but mainly focused on specific moral issues on which the Church has taught. Grisez has always been very concerned to defend the Church and her teachings, especially with regard to the very controversial issues.⁷ When Pope John Paul II issued his encyclical on moral theology, *Veritatis Splendor*, in 1993, Grisez was one of those who supported it and defended it, for example in his “*Veritatis Splendor* in focus: 1: Revelation versus dissent,” *Tablet* (London), 16 October 1993.

Grisez was also concerned to show how his moral theory could address issues not specifically taught by the Church or issues of some complexity and difficulty. The third

⁵ Again, as this is so important a work in the development of Grisez’s theory, the best part of a chapter is devoted to it below. A short appendix to the chapter deals with the following work (from 1989).

⁶ Shaw reports a reviewer of the second volume of Grisez’s project saying of *Christian Moral Principles* that the person asked to review it for *New Blackfriars* was simply overwhelmed by it and so it was not reviewed there: see Shaw, “Pioneering the Renewal”, 245.

⁷ For example, a major article, co-written with Boyle and Finnis, and W.E. May, appeared in 1988: “‘Every Marital Act Ought to Be Open to New Life’: Toward a Clearer Understanding,” *Thomist* 52 (1988), 365-426.

volume of his moral theology project, which appeared in 1997 as *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol. 3, *Difficult Moral Questions*, did just that. The fourth volume has not yet appeared, but will address issues in relation to the priesthood and religious life.

Grisez has always written in dialogue or dialectic with other theologians and critics. One of the earliest and most substantial criticisms of his work was R. Hittinger, *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory* (1987) to which Grisez replied in the following year with “A Critique of Russell Hittinger’s Book, *A Critique of the New Natural Law*”. Another example of Grisez in dialogue with critics is found in the book edited by Robert P. George, *Natural Law and Moral Inquiry: Ethics, Metaphysics, and Politics in the Work of Germain Grisez* (1998). In it, Grisez and Boyle offer clarifications and defences of their theory: “Response to Our Critics and Our Collaborators”.

In the present decade, Grisez has continued to develop his moral theory in three important articles: “Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment” (2001), “The Doctrine of God and the Ultimate Meaning of Human Life” (2006), and “The True Ultimate End of Human Beings: The Kingdom, Not God Alone” (2008). He has also written a book in popular style with Shaw, which presents one of his central themes: *Personal Vocation: God Calls Everyone by Name* (2003). Grisez’s wife, Jeanette, died in 2005. Grisez married again the following year. He continues to write philosophy and theology, in particular working on the fourth and final volume of *The Way of the Lord Jesus*.

1.1.2 Critical treatments of Grisez's work

Grisez's work has received critical attention.⁸ The earliest major criticism was by Hittinger in 1987, as mentioned above. Another substantial negative criticism, similar to Hittinger's, was presented in Fulvio Di Blasi, *God and the Natural Law: A Rereading of Thomas Aquinas* (2006). A mainly favourable judgment was found in Rufus Black: *Christian Moral Realism: Natural Law, Narrative, Virtue, and the Gospel* (2000). And one with mixed opinions was N. Biggar and R. Black (eds.), *The Revival of Natural Law: Philosophical, Theological and Ethical Responses to the Finnis-Grisez School* (2000). These books deal at length with Grisez's theory from outsiders' perspectives.⁹

Grisez's work has also received attention from his collaborators. Finnis's and Boyle's works are treated below (in chapter seven), but here we must mention William E. May, whose *An Introduction to Moral Theology* in each of its editions (1991 and 2003) has summarised and defended Grisez's theory in detail. Also to be mentioned is Robert P. George, who has applied Grisez's theory to public policy issues and defended Grisez's theory against its critics: see his *Making Men Moral* (1993) and *In Defense of Natural Law* (1999). As already mentioned, George also edited a book devoted to Grisez's work, with contributions from several critics, both positive and negative: *Natural Law and Moral Inquiry: Ethics, Metaphysics, and Politics in the Work of Germain Grisez* (1998).

⁸ We do not look here at all aspects of the critical attention Grisez's work has received. Nor is this intended to be a fully comprehensive list of all works dealing with Grisez's theory in general.

⁹ Hittinger's, Di Blasi's and Black's criticisms are treated in detail in chapter eight below and aspects of the criticisms from Biggar and Black's anthology are mentioned in footnotes in various places in the text.

Grisez, Finnis, and Boyle have written frequently for *The American Journal of Jurisprudence*. This journal devoted most of one of its issues (no. 46, 2001) to Grisez's work, with contributions from nine scholars responding to Grisez's work in general and to his own substantial article in that issue in particular.¹⁰

Grisez's work has received only a little attention from revisionist or proportionalist theologians. One exception to this is the book-length discussion of Grisez's work in T. Salzman, *What Are They Saying About Catholic Ethical Method?* (2003).¹¹

Grisez's work has also been treated in parts of books, especially those concerned with natural law theory. One notable example is J. Goyette, M.S. Latkovic and R.S. Myers (eds.), *St. Thomas Aquinas and the Natural Law Tradition: Contemporary Perspectives* (2004).¹² One major modern Thomistic scholar, whose work is similar in many ways to Grisez's, is Martin Rhonheimer, who discusses Grisez's work briefly as part of the presentation of his own theory of natural law in his books *Natural Law and Practical*

¹⁰ This present work treats Di Blasi's article in this issue of *American Journal of Jurisprudence* in some detail in chapter eight below, and aspects of the other criticisms found therein in footnotes at various places in the text.

¹¹ Salzman has also treated Grisez's ethical method in several articles. However, his work, like that of other revisionist/proportionalist theologians, does not deal directly with religion or offer much in the way of criticisms relevant to our focus in this present work, and so we do not discuss it here.

¹² Interestingly, Fergus Kerr mentions briefly the work of Grisez and Finnis in his *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), but does not treat it in any detail, saying that it is "one more version of Thomism, much contested and regrettably much too large a subject to be discussed here" (228). Perhaps Kerr is another example of a scholar who is overwhelmed by the scope of Grisez's work and who therefore fails to give it all the attention it deserves.

Reason: a Thomistic View of Moral Autonomy (2000) and *The Perspective of the Acting Person: Essays in the Renewal of Thomistic Moral Philosophy* (2008).¹³

Finally, some surveys and discussions of moral theology since Vatican II have treated Grisez's work. One example, by a critic who is very dismissive of Grisez's approach and conclusions, is Charles Curran, *Catholic Moral Theology in the United States: A History* (2008).¹⁴ A more positive evaluation of Grisez's work is found in Paulinus Ikechuckwu Odozor, *Moral Theology in an Age of Renewal: A Study of the Catholic Tradition Since Vatican II* (2003).

1.2 Grisez's natural law theory

Grisez's philosophical ethics is a natural law theory. One helpful summary is given by one of Grisez's collaborators, Robert P. George:

¹³ W.E. May, *An Introduction to Moral Theology* 2nd ed. (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, 2003), 119-125 discusses Rhonheimer's work, with its similarities to and differences from Grisez's work.

¹⁴ The main section of Curran's book dealing with Grisez's moral theory is at 109-111. Curran offers only a paragraph of critical discussion of Grisez's approach. Like many proportionalists, Curran's main interest in Grisez is in his ecclesiology and his treatment of dissent and Church authority. Another example of proportionalist discussion of Grisez's work regarding his ecclesiology is B. Hoose, "Grisez's Ecclesiology, the Role of Moral Theologians, and the Scope for Responsible Dissent," in *The Revival of Natural Law: Philosophical, Theological and Ethical Responses to the Finnis-Grisez School*, eds. N. Biggar and R. Black (Aldershot/ Burlington USA/ Singapore/ Sydney: Ashgate, 2000), 184-200. Hoose also criticised Grisez's work, though somewhat superficially (relying too much, for example on *Beyond the New Morality*, which is not a fully scholarly work of Grisez's), in his *Proportionalism: The American Debate and its European Roots* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1987), 55-56, 87-89 and 111-116. At least Curran and Hoose acknowledge Grisez's work, unlike another revisionist theologian, Philip S. Keane, who totally ignores it in his survey of theology since Vatican II: see his chapter "Catholic Moral Theology from 1960 to 2040: Accomplishments and Challenges for the Future," in *Catholic Theology Facing the Future: Historical Perspectives*, ed. D.A. Lane, (New York/Mahweh: Paulist Press, 2003), 76-94. It is also ignored in a popular introduction to moral theology: R. Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith* (New York/Mahweh: Paulist Press, 1989).

Theories of natural law are *reflective critical accounts* of the constitutive aspects of the well-being and fulfillment of human persons and the communities they form. The propositions that pick out fundamental aspects of human flourishing are directive (that is, prescriptive) in our thinking about what to do and refrain from doing (our practical reason) – that is, they are, or provide, more than merely instrumental reasons for action and self-restraint. When these foundational principles of practical reason are taken together (that is, integrally), they entail norms that may exclude certain options and require others in situations of morally significant choosing. So natural law theories propose to identify principles of right action – moral principles...¹⁵

This is very concise. What it means will be developed and explained in the chapters to come. One initial point to emphasise is that the natural law is not the same thing as natural law theory.¹⁶ The natural law is what natural law theory is about. Natural law theory can be complex, whereas the natural law itself, especially with regard to its primary principles, is simple.¹⁷ This is why even children can grasp the basic principles of the natural law, and some at least of its specific norms, with relative ease, even though they have little or no theoretical knowledge. The natural law is not something that only experts can understand or grasp. Natural law theory makes use necessarily of theoretical insights in its investigations, explanations and justifications of the natural law, whereas the natural law itself, which is presupposed by the theoretical aspects of natural law theory, is primarily practical, not theoretical.

¹⁵ R.P George, "Natural Law," *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 52 (2007), 55-75, at 55-56, (emphasis added).

¹⁶ Another way to put this is that practical reason is not the same thing as ethics. Ethics is about practical reason, which it presupposes and develops both practically and theoretically. This point is overlooked by both Hittinger and Di Blasi, whose criticisms of Grisez are analysed in chapter eight below. Another (friendlier) critic, Benedict Ashley, suffers the same confusion: see B. Ashley, "What is the End of the Human Person? The Vision of God and Integral Human Fulfilment," *Moral Truth and Moral Tradition*, ed. L. Gormally (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1994), 68-96, at 72-74.

¹⁷ Trying to understand and justify simple realities or truths is often the most complex and difficult of tasks.

It might be helpful to offer a short but simpler outline now of what is meant by “the natural law”.¹⁸ The natural law guides us in how we are to choose and act. It shapes our practical reasoning. It is objective and can be known in principle by human practical reason whenever it works soundly, even when it is unaided by divine revelation or faith. This does not mean that natural law cannot, or need not, be informed and specified by divine revelation and faith – it certainly can be, and needs to be, as the following work makes clear. The classical biblical reference for natural law is Romans 2:14-15, in which St. Paul states that the gentiles have God’s law “written in their hearts”. The natural law is not an exclusively or originally biblical concept, but one with its roots in classical thought. However, it was the Church, with its belief in a Creator who is reasonable, wise and loving, that rediscovered and developed the notion of natural law in the Middle Ages.¹⁹

The natural law is, according to May’s summary of Grisez’s theory, “an ordered set of true propositions of practical reason.”²⁰ These propositions can be subdivided into three subsets, or three levels of the natural law, each building progressively on the previous one.

¹⁸ What follows draws on May, *Introduction*, 112-113, in the context of 93-140.

¹⁹ See J.R. Fears, “Natural Law: The Legacy of Greece and Rome,” *Common Truths: New Perspectives on Natural Law*, ed. B. McLean (Wilmington, Delaware: ISI books, 2000), 19-56, whose analytical survey includes reference to Herodotus, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Stoic philosophy and Marcus Aurelius, amongst others. Fears also draws attention to the text from Romans 2:14-15 and its importance in enabling the Church to accept and promote the idea of the natural law (45-46) and to St Thomas Aquinas’s philosophical and theological work, which helped the Church to become “the bearer of the great tradition of natural law” in the middle ages and into modern times (47-48). This latter point has been treated in detail in J. Porter, *Natural and Divine Law: Reclaiming the Tradition for Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000).

²⁰ May, *Introduction*, 112.

1.2.1 First level: The foundational level of the natural law

At this level we have the first principle of practical reason: “Good is to be done and pursued, and evil avoided.”²¹ This principle directs all our practical thinking to be truly practical and not impractical or pointless. The word “good” in this principle refers to anything that we can understand to be fulfilling for us as human beings and that can therefore provide us with a reason to choose and act. The first principle is a very general principle. So it needs to be, and can be, specified by further primary principles of practical reason directing us to pursue and instantiate various types of good.²²

Thus we have several primary principles of the natural law, which identify various kinds of human flourishing which are the goods to be pursued and realized by or in our actions. These basic forms of human flourishing, according to Grisez’s natural law theory, are as follows:

Life and health

Knowledge and aesthetic experience

Excellence in work or play

Marriage

Inner peace

²¹ This principle is first mentioned by St Thomas Aquinas in *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 94, a. 2. Grisez discussed in detail this important article, and the first principle, in his “The First Principle of Practical Reason: A Commentary on the *Summa Theologiae*, 1-2, Question 94, Article 2,” *Natural Law Forum*, 10 (1965): 168-201. May presents a very helpful account of Aquinas’s natural law theory in *Introduction*, 71-86. According to May’s account, Grisez’s and Aquinas’s theories of natural law overlap considerably.

²² To *instantiate* a good is to embody it or participate in it to some extent in or through one’s action. One instantiates the good of health, for example, when one achieves one’s purpose in taking medicine to make one healthy. A human good extends further than any one instantiation of it, so one can pursue a good in or through many diverse instantiations of that good. Goods attract the will in an open-ended way.

Inner consistency

Social harmony of various sorts

Religion.²³

The basic principles of the natural law direct us to pursue and instantiate through and in our actions these forms of flourishing. Religion, which is one of these basic goods, and is the object therefore of one of the basic or primary principles of the natural law, is the focus of the present work. The primary principle regarding religion is: “Religion is to be pursued and instantiated and its opposite is to be avoided.” This is one of eight such primary principles directing us to pursue and instantiate the diverse basic goods. These eight principles are considered to be truly basic, self-evident to anyone who grasps the meaning of their terms, not deduced or derived from any more prior principles or knowledge. The first principle of practical reasoning and its eight specifications (directing us to pursue and instantiate the eight basic goods) form the foundational or roots level of the natural law.

²³ These basic human goods are divided into reflexive goods (the final four listed here, which are instantiated *in* choices), and substantive (which are chosen but not instantiated precisely *in* our choices). This is explained in more detail in the following chapters. Marriage was included in Grisez’s list only in 1993. Two other natural law theorists who provide lists of basic goods, influenced by but not exactly the same as Grisez’s, are: Mark C. Murphy, *Natural Law and Practical Rationality* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001) and Alfonso Gómez-Lobo, *Morality and the Human Goods: An Introduction to Natural Law Ethics* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002). Murphy lists life, knowledge, aesthetic experience, excellence in play and work, excellence in agency, inner peace, friendship and community, religion, and happiness (see 100-135); Gómez-Lobo lists life, family, friendship, work and play, experience of beauty, knowledge, integrity, and, with reservations, religion (see 6-25). Sabina Alkire, “The Basic Dimensions of Flourishing: A Comparison of Accounts,” *The Revival of Natural Law*, 73-110, provides a synthesis of basic human goods based on a survey of recent accounts by philosophers (including Finnis), psychologists and anthropologists. She lists life, understanding, skilful performance and production, creative expression, friendship and affiliation, meaningful choice and identity, inner harmony, harmony with a greater-than-human source of meaning and value (i.e. religion), and harmony with the natural world (see *ibid.*, 99).

Everyone who considers what to do follows one or more of these primary principles, even people who make immoral choices. However, the first primary principle of practical reasoning and its specifications (in the principles directing us to pursue and instantiate the basic goods) are not fully or satisfactorily fulfilled by immoral acts, but only by morally good acts. Thus the foundational level of the natural law opens out, so to speak, towards the next level, the moral level, and shapes it integrally.²⁴

1.2.2 Second level: The specifically moral level of the natural law

The second subset of practical propositions making up the natural law specify how our actions are to be not just rational, in that they avoid pointlessness and aim for some type of fulfillment, but *fully* rational, in that they respect and love *integrally* all the goods of the foundational level of the natural law.²⁵ The first principle of morality, according to Grisez's theory until recently, was formulated as follows:

In voluntarily acting for human goods and avoiding what is opposed to them, one ought to choose and otherwise will those and only those possibilities whose willing is compatible with a will toward integral human fulfillment.²⁶

²⁴ The term "foundational" is not used by Grisez (or May), but is used here because it brings out better than the bare term "first set" the fact that the distinct *moral* dimension of the natural law is not a separate thing from the generally *practical* level of the natural law. Rather, the moral level or dimension rests on the generally practical level, whose foundational support and integral directiveness pervades the moral level (and the third level too, the specific moral norms level). Another metaphor that could be used is the "roots" level, which would communicate nicely the idea that the moral and moral norms levels are rooted always in the level of the first principle of practical reasoning and its specifications in the primary principles directing us to pursue and instantiate the basic human goods. Appendix One below provides a simple outline of this level.

²⁵ It must not be supposed that this emphasis on rationality entails that Grisez's theory ignores the importance of emotions for our motivation. According to his theory, emotional motivation, whether conscious or subconscious, is essential for all human choices and actions. The natural law at the moral level directs us to order our emotions towards true and lasting goods sought in a manner that respects the integral goodness of these goods. This point is ignored by G. Bexell, "Is Grisez's Moral Theology Rationalistic? Free Choice, the Human Condition, and Christian Ethics," *The Revival of Natural Law*, 131-147.

²⁶ This is a philosophical formulation. Grisez's moral theory acknowledges that the principle can be formulated in a religious way, such as: Love God and love your neighbour as yourself.

The central concept here is that of “integral human fulfillment”, which refers to an ideal of all human beings sharing fully, individually and communally, in all the basic human goods (such as life, knowledge, work, inner peace, community and friendship, and so on). Grisez’s recent modification of his theory replaces this concept with that of “integral communal fulfillment”.²⁷ The fulfillment referred to by this concept includes that of all persons we can hope to cooperate with or benefit by our actions – human beings, but also God and non-human persons (such as angels). This fulfillment can be intended in our choices as an ulterior motive. Although Grisez has not offered a new formulation of the first principle of morality as yet, we can guess that it will essentially consist of the this directive:

Intend integral communal fulfillment in all one’s choices, or at least intend always in a way that is harmonious with intending integral communal fulfillment.

What has not changed in Grisez’s theory is the idea that all the basic human goods are intrinsically good in diverse and irreducible ways and that the morally good person respects the goodness of each of the goods, and never chooses in a way that fails voluntarily to love all the goods integrally.²⁸ Integrality, or wholeness, is the central concept in Grisez’s understanding of moral good. One is morally good only when one chooses in a way that respects and loves the whole of goodness, as specified by the whole set of basic human goods for all people.

²⁷ See s. 6.3 below, which analyses Grisez, “The True Ultimate End of Human Beings: The Kingdom, Not God Alone,” *Theological Studies* 69, no. 1 (March 2008), 38-61.

²⁸ Morality concerns only what is in one’s control, what is voluntary in some way.

The first principle of morality is quite general and it too needs to be specified. Grisez does this in what he calls “the modes of responsibility”. These are moral principles that “exclude ways of choosing that ignore, slight, neglect, arbitrarily limit, or damage, destroy, or impede basic human goods”.²⁹ Disordered emotions can sway us away from our true, integral good or fulfillment; the modes direct us not to be swayed in this way. For example, we are not to be swayed by laziness or inertia from pursuing goods. This is what one of the modes of responsibility excludes. Another of these modes excludes acting on an unreasonable or arbitrary preference, whether for oneself or some other person. Another mode directs us never to act for revenge or out of hatred and intentionally cause harm. Another mode directs us never to do evil for the sake of good. And there are a few others, all directing us not to let our reason be fettered by unreasonable emotion: in other words, we are always to act according to right reason.³⁰

1.2.3 Third level: The level of specific moral norms

On the basis of the two previous levels it is possible to form correct moral norms to guide us with regard to specific choices and commitments.³¹ Grisez does not claim that people

²⁹ May, *Introduction*, 112.

³⁰ Grisez originally listed eight modes of responsibility in *Christian Moral Principles*, chapter eight. He seemed to change his mind about some of them, seeing them as possibly reducible to others, in *Difficult Moral Questions*, appendix one, and he adds one there, which has to do with acting unreasonably for mixed motives. Still, the basic ideas are unchanged: one is never to choose in a way that ignores, slights, neglects, arbitrarily limits, or damages, impedes or destroys any basic human good. Appendix Two below provides a summary of the modes of responsibility drawn from chapter eight of *Christian Moral Principles*.

³¹ It is also necessary to understand what kind of willing is involved in any particular potential action before one can apply the modes of responsibility to the action and work out a correct specific moral norm. This present work cannot go into any detail concerning Grisez’s action theory, but it should be acknowledged that it is a very important part of his moral theory. In particular, one needs to understand how accepting side-effects is distinct from willing means or ends. Grisez deals with this in chapter nine of his *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol. 1 of *Christian Moral Principles*, (Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1983). There is a very

do this in a way that explicitly uses the concepts or terms of his theory; nor does he claim that people work out specific moral norms in a fully articulated and self-conscious manner. The process can be almost totally instinctive for virtuous people. Still, Grisez holds that morality is not based on emotions or instincts or taste. It is cognitive and intellectual and based ultimately on reason. The most basic idea in natural law theory is that morally good acts are constituted as such by one's being fully reasonable.

Some specific moral norms are absolute, admitting of no exceptions, whilst some are non-absolute. This level is very important, of course, but it does not concern us directly in the present work, which is concerned with the more foundational matters (to do with level one in particular, but also level two).

1.3 Grisez's moral theology

Grisez's approach to ethics is not purely philosophical, however, but largely theological. By this is meant that his approach to ethics as a Christian theologian assumes the truth of divine revelation, which is accepted in faith. The natural law is seen by Grisez as including, in its foundation or roots, practical principles that direct us to know the truth and seek harmony with God. Divine revelation (which invites us into a covenant relationship with God) specifies the natural law, giving it content and shape suited to the actual condition of man and of the world in which he lives (i.e. a fallen and redeemed man and world). Thus, Grisez's theology flows from his natural law theory, which is

concise summary of other aspects of Grisez's action theory in R.P. George, *In Defence of Natural Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 29, n. 6.

somewhat general and lacking in content and motivational power without the theology. Grisez's theology also helps to support and illuminate his natural law theory.

It is difficult to summarise Grisez's moral theology as easily as his natural law theory, but it can be said here that the central concepts of his theology include the following.³² The natural law is supported by, included in, and specified by divine revelation. Christian faith is both a human act and a divine gift. Our good works are both God's gift and our own free choices. Jesus Christ is the norm of all morality – he perfectly embodied and expresses the natural law. Christian life is cooperation with Jesus our friend and Lord. The primary moral principle of Christian ethics is our choosing always in a way that contributes to the fulfillment of all creation in Christ that has already begun and will be perfected in the kingdom of God. This primary principle is specified by what Grisez calls "Christian modes of response",³³ which are embodied in the Beatitudes, and in Jesus Christ. These modes of Christian response transform the natural law modes of responsibility into specifically Christian ways of being moral. We each should seek always the kingdom of God in all our choices for the basic human goods of all the people we can reasonably help or benefit by our choices. One specifically Christian principle is that each of us ought to discern, accept and live by our personal vocations, or, in other words, each of us ought to live the life of love that God wills one to live, in light of one's

³² These somewhat bald statements are explained in more detail in chapter three below, which examines *Christian Moral Principles*, where Grisez first developed and presented his moral theology.

³³ The "Modes of Christian Response" are listed in Appendix Three below. Grisez's term "Response" emphasises the idea that Christian morality is essentially about responding wholeheartedly to what God has done, is doing, and will do in Christ. The modes of Christian response are a kind of transformation or transfiguration of the modes of responsibility that are found at the natural law level of Grisez's moral theory, in light of divine revelation and grace. Rufus Black has done excellent work recently on this aspect of Grisez's moral theory: see R. Black, *Christian Moral Realism: Natural Law, Narrative, Virtue, and the Gospel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

unique talents and opportunities. God calls man not only to integral fulfillment as human, but also to a more-than-human sharing by grace in his divine life, in the divine life of the Trinity. We cannot act directly to achieve this supernatural fulfillment, which is a pure gift of God, but our moral acts unite us with Jesus and mediate our sharing supernaturally in God's love. In summary, it could be said that Grisez's theology is encapsulated in the title of his four-volume moral theology project: Christian life is following *The Way of the Lord Jesus*.

1.4 The aims of this dissertation

Grisez's work was chosen for this present study because it is substantial and ambitious in scope and is worked out thoroughly in a sound and interesting manner. His is a highly systematic approach to moral theology, one that is rooted in a very rigorous philosophical understanding. Even his critics have acknowledged Grisez's philosophical acumen and the strikingly wide and deep scope of his work.³⁴

³⁴ See, for example, Benedict M. Ashley, on Grisez's 4-volume moral theology project: "[It] promises to be the most important work in the field (at least in English) to appear since Vatican II", "Review Discussion of *Christian Moral Principles*", *Thomist* 48 (1984), 450. Nigel Biggar and Rufus Black: "The scope and depth of the Grisez School's work is such that it has the potential to attract and reward attention across a wide front", *The Revival of Natural Law*, xiii. Fulvio Di Blasi: "Today the credibility of Finnis's natural law theory is undisputed, and an ever-increasing body of writings touches upon his thought, directly or indirectly", *God and The Natural Law, A Rereading of Thomas Aquinas* (South Bend, Indiana: St Augustine's Press, 2006), 8. Jean Porter: "considered on its own terms, this is a formidable and widely influential theory of the natural law", *Nature as Reason: A Thomistic Theory of the Natural Law* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, UK: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005), 39. Frank Hobbs: "Grisez has produced an outstanding work of Christian moral theology ... It is difficult to think of any recent work on the subject comparable in scope and rigor of argument ... He is an expert in logic, metaphysics, epistemology, ethical theory, and the history of Western philosophy. He is also very much at home with the tradition of analytic philosophizing ...", *Beyond Its Authority? The Magisterium and Matters of Natural Law* (Alexandria NSW, Australia: E.J. Dwyer, 1997), 110.

The specific focus on religion as a basic human good and its role in Grisez's moral theory was chosen for several reasons. It seemed to the present author that some other aspects of Grisez's moral theory tend to get attention, especially with regard to pressing current controversial issues to do with life and sexuality/marriage, but that religion has been neglected.³⁵ This present work hopes to remedy this situation. It hopes to remedy another problem too, namely, a narrow understanding of the natural law, which, perhaps misled by the word "natural", tends to think of it as an exclusively biology-based or biology-focused theory of morality.³⁶ Focusing on religion, and showing how the natural law has a foundational place and central role for religion, helps to promote a more accurate and rounded understanding of the natural law, and answers criticisms that it is based too narrowly on human biology and is concerned mainly with sexual or biological issues. It helps also to show that specifically religious concerns are included in the natural law, and that the natural law is a religious law, which most treatments of natural law tend to overlook.³⁷

³⁵ Two critics of Grisez's work have given attention to religion in his theory, namely R. Hittinger and F. Di Blasi. Their efforts are examined in chapter eight below. As will be seen there, their work is not adequate, especially in its understanding of the role of religion in Grisez's work. This present work is in part a reply to their criticisms. The main reason that proportionalists' criticisms of Grisez are not treated here directly is that they do not give much attention to the concept and role of religion, nor do they analyse the foundational level of Grisez's theory in any distinctive and developed manner, but tend rather to focus on the moral and specific norms levels of Grisez's theory, (particularly with regard to the issue of moral absolutes), as well as issues of ecclesiology (conscience and authority, and so on).

³⁶ See, for example, the treatments of natural law in the following: J. Baggini and P.S. Fosl, *The Ethics Toolkit: A Compendium of Ethical Concepts and Methods* (Malden, MA/Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), 36-38 and D.B. Ingram and J.A. Parks, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Understanding Ethics* (Indianapolis, IN: Alpha, 2002), 111- 120.

³⁷ See, for example, the treatments of natural law in Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith*, 220-249; P. Vardy and P. Grosch, *The Puzzle of Ethics*, rev. ed. (London: Fount, 1999), 36-48; and M. Timmons, *Moral Theory: An Introduction* (Lanham/Boulder/New York/Toronto/Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2002). Though much better than the treatments in the two books mentioned in the previous note, these treatments still overlook or treat inadequately the religious nature of the natural law.

As will be shown in this work, the good of religion is a very important part of Grisez's understanding of the natural law, and it is one that Grisez has developed his thinking on over recent decades. So studying it enables the most important recent developments in Grisez's theory to be appreciated and understood. Studying the role of religion also enables better understanding of how Grisez's natural law theory opens out towards his moral theology, and how these two parts of his moral theory are interrelated. This helps to avoid narrowing Grisez's moral theory to a purely or mainly philosophical approach. Further, studying religion helps to make clear the most basic concepts in Grisez's moral theory: principle, practical principle, primary practical principle, basic human good. It also, of course, aids better understanding of religion too, particularly insofar as religion is not just a theoretical area to be studied, but a practical good to be pursued and instantiated in and/or through human acts. One major conclusion of this thesis is that the natural law as understood by Grisez is religious and at least implicitly (though, at best, explicitly) theocentric, rather than secular, atheistic, or narrowly autonomous.

1.5 The Methodology of this dissertation

This work seeks to be as comprehensive as possible within reason. It seeks to ground all its interpretations, applications, and evaluations of Grisez's work directly and accurately in his works.³⁸ Whenever the present author departs from the direct thought of Grisez, to apply his work to religion, or to offer some evaluation or comment, this is made clear.

³⁸ To give him his due, Hittinger (1987) made one of the best efforts so far to treat a comprehensive range of Grisez's works in his analysis and criticism. Many critics deal with only a few of his works. (Almost no-one deals with *Difficult Moral Questions*, for example, though Rufus Black is an exception here.) However, Hittinger's reading and evaluation leave much to be desired, as will be shown in chapter eight below. Also,

It was decided to follow a chronological structure, analyzing each of the main works of Grisez in order, because his work is a work-in-progress. This present work aims to show how Grisez's moral theory has developed organically and creatively over decades. Though kept to a minimum, some repetition is unavoidable in order to show the consistent elements of Grisez's developing theory. This present work gradually unfolds Grisez's moral theory. Because Grisez has worked collaboratively from the 1970s, a chapter is included that looks at the cognate work of Grisez's collaborators, John Finnis and Joseph Boyle. Criticisms of Grisez's theory from outsiders are mentioned throughout the text and in discussed in detail in chapter eight.

1.6 An outline of this dissertation

Chapter two analyses six major philosophical works of Grisez's from the years before *Christian Moral Principles* (1983). It clarifies the beginnings of Grisez's original work and the main concepts relating to practical thinking. It shows briefly how what Grisez wrote in these early works applies to religion, and how they contain the seeds of his mature moral theory, including aspects of his theology. This chapter also outlines the metaphysical foundations of Grisez's theory with regard to religion by looking at *Beyond the New Theism* (1975) and its cosmological argument for God's existence. Another important part of this work is examined too: the ontological schema of the "four orders"

Grisez's theory has undergone significant development since 1987, and Hittinger has not up-dated his work, which remains therefore a very limited treatment of Grisez's moral theory. At the time of writing, no-one has published any response to Grisez's March 2008 development of his theory, which is analysed here (see s. 6.3 above).

of reality, which has shaped Grisez's understanding of the basic human goods and the relationship between practical thinking and theoretical knowledge.

Chapter three looks at Grisez's most important work: *Christian Moral Principles* (1983). His natural law theory is presented. Grisez also developed an original and detailed moral theology beginning with this book. This theology flows from his natural law theory and richly and religiously specifies it in light of divine revelation. Chapter three analyses the main elements of Grisez's moral theology, and explains how Grisez's philosophical ethics is related to his Christian ethics via religion, or, in other words, how the natural law is related to Christian faith and divine revelation (and vice versa).

Chapter four looks at the most substantial presentation to date of Grisez's natural law theory: "Practical Principles, Moral Truth, and Ultimate Ends" (1987), co-authored with John Finnis and Joseph Boyle. Here, we note the beginnings of a specific and developing focus on the good of religion and its role in the natural law. We note particularly how religion is an overarching, or architectonic, good. This was also seen in a short work by Grisez in 1989, "A Contemporary Natural-Law Ethics", which is looked at in an appendix to this chapter.

Chapter five examines the place of the good of religion in volumes two and three of *the Way of the Lord Jesus*. It makes clear that religion plays a significant role in Grisez's Christian ethics. It also explains why it can be difficult to notice this role. This difficulty is partly due to a lack of integration of elements of Grisez's natural law theory into his

moral theology; and it is due to the fact that elements of the natural law theory are specified theologically in the moral theology. This latter point is examined in this chapter mainly in terms of faith, hope, personal vocation, avoidance of sin, reverence for God and respect for the environment.

Chapter six looks at three articles by Grisez from the present decade. The first is a substantial summary of his natural law theory, which emphasises the role of religion in it. The second reiterates the role of religion and continues Grisez's criticisms of Aquinas, whom he considers to have failed to see the central role of religion in the natural law and in Christian ethics. However, in his most recent article, Grisez seems to row back from his emphasis on religion as the overarching commitment that can unify the moral life. This chapter finishes by discussing this most recent development, and whether Grisez has really moved away from his previous position on the importance of religion in the natural law and in the Christian moral life.

Chapter seven looks at the work of John Finnis and Joseph Boyle and what it has to say about the role of religion in the moral theory developed originally by Grisez, and since then jointly by Grisez and collaborators. A few central concepts are clarified: religion as assimilation to God, natural law as participation in the eternal law, religion as friendship with God and willing our common good, transparency of goods, supervenient goods, religion as a broad but distinct good, and religion as subjective and objective. The chapter also looks at the similarities and differences between Grisez's approach and that of Aquinas (as interpreted by Finnis).

Chapter eight presents and provides some answers to the most substantial criticisms made of Grisez's theory, especially in relation to the role of religion in it. Two Thomistic critics and a non-Thomistic critic are analysed in detail. One major issue looked at is whether Grisez's moral theory is atheistic and autonomous or whether it has a proper role for God and religion. We also look at the issue of whether Grisez is subjectivist or objectivist in his moral theory, particularly regarding his understanding of the good of religion.

The final chapter synthesises the main insights of this present work and outlines the role of religion in the moral theory of Germain Grisez. In light of this, it highlights some aspects of Grisez's theory that are in need of further development.

CHAPTER TWO

BEFORE *CHRISTIAN MORAL PRINCIPLES* [1964-]

The approach in the next five chapters is chronological, examining several of the major works of Grisez in order of publication and showing how they have dealt with the concept of religion as a basic good. This enables us to see how Grisez's understanding of the concept has developed along with his theory's development.

2.1 *Contraception and the Natural Law* [1964]¹

This book shows us the beginning of Grisez's development of his moral theory.² It has a number of interesting things to say about basic human goods in general, which are applied here to the basic human good of religion.

2.1.1 Practical thinking forms practical principles for its own starting points

Grisez's approach, based on his interpretation of Aquinas' work, emphasises the role of principles of practical reason in moral thinking:

These principles are neither theoretical truths, nor facts of nature, nor are they imperatives whose rational force depends on an assumption laid down by

¹ *Contraception and the Natural Law* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1964).

² It should be noted that Grisez's article "Man, Natural End of", which is to be analysed in the next section, was written before *Contraception and the Natural Law*, and so, in its section on Grisez's thinking, it gives us the beginnings of Grisez's theory. However, as *Contraception and the Natural Law* was published first, and as it deals more directly and in detail with moral theory, we begin our analysis of Grisez's work with it. (The order in which the works were written is given in G. Grisez, J. Finnis and J. Boyle, "Practical Principles, Moral Truth, and Ultimate Ends," *American Journal of Jurisprudence*, 32 (1987): 99-151, at 148.)

authority. Instead they are fundamental prescriptions – basic formulations in the mode is-to-be – which practical reason itself forms for its own starting point.³

Practical reason “shapes action from within” and the “least condition for human action is that it have some intelligible object toward which it can be directed.”⁴ Thus, the primary principle of all practical reasoning is that the good, meaning everything that man can practically understand as an intelligible object, is to be pursued and done (and it also includes the related principle, or corollary, that evil is to be avoided).⁵

2.1.2 God has a fundamental place in Grisez’s approach

“Good is to be done not because God wills it, but because one must do something good if he is to act intelligently at all.”⁶ One need not advert to commands of God to understand the primary principles of practical reason and their directiveness. However, God is not ignored or excluded:

Of course, metaphysics can show that the human mind has been created, and that its practical reason and the primary principles it necessarily forms are a participation in divine intelligence. God has made man able to govern his own life by his own intelligence just as God by His wisdom governs the universe as a whole.⁷

Philosophical reflection can lead to understanding practical reasoning as our humanly rational participation in God’s divinely rational governance of creation, which echoes

³ Ibid., 61, with reference to Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 91, a. 2.

⁴ *Contraception and the Natural Law*, 61-62.

⁵ Grisez’s most detailed examination of this first practical principle is to be found in one of his earliest articles: “The First Principle of Practical Reason: A Commentary on the *Summa Theologiae*, 1-2, Question 94, Article 2,” *Natural Law Forum*, 10 (1965): 168-201. Much of what is written in this present work in its analysis of practical principles in Grisez’s work, especially his early work, finds extra support and extension in this article.

⁶ Ibid., 62. Note omitted. This means that good is to be done *not only* because God wills it. Grisez is not a voluntarist.

⁷ Ibid., 62-63, including a reference to *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 91, a. 2.

Aquinas' classical definition of the natural law.⁸ Grisez emphasises that we do not have to make the principles of practical reasoning *practical* by reference to any *extrinsic* factor, such as God's will (understood as extrinsic).⁹ Nevertheless, natural law is seen here as a religious reality in its objective essence; even though one does not have to advert to God and his will to derive in practise the "fundamental prescriptions" of practical reasoning, God is still the governor of all, including the human intelligence and will that he makes actual and guides, even if this remains unnoticed by us.

2.1.3 Basic natural tendencies ground practical thinking

A practical possibility can interest a person, and so motivate action, only "to the extent that it falls within the scope of some inclination *already* present within oneself".¹⁰ The inclinations that human motivation presupposes form a relatively short set of categories, which are outlined in *Contraception and the Natural Law* in a list that is parallel to the list of basic goods presented later by Grisez and his collaborators. Grisez does not describe these "inclinations" as *goods*, but as natural tendencies that the basic principles of practical reasoning presuppose.¹¹ This list includes the

⁸ It is interesting that Grisez does not here refer to "faith" but to "metaphysics" – thus acknowledging that one can grasp a religious dimension to practical reason even without faith. Knowledge of religion is not confined to a faith perspective, but can be gained through philosophy. Grisez was to explore a philosophical approach to God and religion in *Beyond the New Theism: A Philosophy of Religion* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), later to be reissued, with a new preface, as *God? A Philosophical Preface to Faith* (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2005). The latter title suggests clearly a positive attitude to philosophy as an approach to preparing for faith. Grisez is not a fideist.

⁹ See also "The First Principle of Practical Reason", 192-193.

¹⁰ *Contraception and the Natural Law*, 63, emphasis added.

¹¹ See also "The First Principle of Practical Reason", 181: "Nature is not natural law; nature is the given from which man develops and from which arise tendencies ... These tendencies are not natural law; the tendencies indicate possible actions, and hence they provide reason with the point of departure it requires in order to propose ends. The precepts of reason which clothe the objects of inclinations in

following tendencies: “to preserve life ... to mate and to raise his children; ... to seek certain experiences which are enjoyed for their own sake ... to develop skills and to exercise them in play and the fine arts ... to explore and to question ... to seek out the company of other men and to try to gain their approval”.¹²

2.1.4 *The basic natural tendency towards religion*

This list also includes religion, which *Contraception and the Natural Law* refers to as: “the tendency to try to establish good relationships with unknown higher powers”.¹³

Although this is only a short phrase, it is worth careful consideration. It is the earliest reference in Grisez’s work to what will later be known as the basic good of religion. More accurately, it is the first reference to the fundamental human *tendency* that forms the basic content of experience that enables a person to have the insight that leads to one’s understanding of religion as a basic *good*.¹⁴ The powers that one is trying to establish good relationships¹⁵ with are described as “unknown”. This suggests that one’s awareness of the good of religion,¹⁶ at the most fundamental level of the natural law, is not based on any innate or acquired grasp of what or who God is

the intelligibility of ends-to-be-pursued-by-work – these precepts *are* the natural law.” (Emphasis in original.)

¹² *Contraception and the Natural Law*, 64.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Theoretical reflection (“anthropological investigation” and psychology, according to *Contraception and the Natural Law*), can assure us of the reality of the basic tendencies, but these tendencies “become the source of the primary principles of practical reason not by theoretical reflection but by practical insight”, *ibid.*, 64.

¹⁵ The language used by Grisez seems to allow polytheism as one kind of religious response.

¹⁶ Grisez does not consistently refer to this specific basic inclination, or to the intelligently grasped good it makes possible, as “religion” in *Contraception and the Natural Law*, but for the sake of simplicity, the term “religion” is used here (to refer to the intelligently grasped good that is pointed to by our religious inclination).

in any detail but on only a very minimal awareness, at least initially, that there are, or might be, higher powers and that it is, or it might be, possible to establish good relationships with them (or, perhaps, it or him or her). Such awareness, albeit rather limited and unspecific, grounds the practical insight that it would be worthwhile acting to pursue this goal, that is, to pursue the good of religion.

2.1.5 Practical intelligence grasps principles and interprets experience

Grisez insists that this religious tendency, along with other various tendencies, is a “psychic fact” that can lead to practical reasoning when “our understanding grasps in the inclinations the possibilities to which they point”.¹⁷ Thus, we intelligently, though “naturally and without reflection”, grasp the possibility of trying to establish good relationships with unknown higher powers as “a guide for our action”.¹⁸ It is worth mentioning that Grisez sees these guides-for-action as essentially affirmative. Morality begins with affirmative principles guiding us to seek what is good.¹⁹ Experience is used by practical intelligence “as a point of departure for forming its own fundamental insight. The principles are practical intelligence’s interpretation of experience.”²⁰ Nevertheless, these principles “go beyond experience” in that they “have the mode of ought-thinking even though they depend on the given content of experience”.²¹ It is worth noting this phrase concerning how basic human goods depend on “the given content of experience”, as it helps to answer criticisms made of

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁹ See *Contraception and the Natural Law*, 65. See also “The First Principle of Practical Reason”, 186.

²⁰ *Contraception and the Natural Law*, 65. Grisez does not apply the ideas in this paragraph directly to religion in *Contraception and the Natural Law*, but makes a short application to life (65), and, of course, throughout the whole book applies his theory to the issue of contraception.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 66.

Grisez's whole approach to natural law, namely that it is subjectivist and rationalistic, and therefore somehow isolated from the facts of experience.²² Clearly, Grisez's moral theory does not deny that one must have experience prior to one's grasp of the primary practical principles.

2.1.6 The basic goods are grasped as intelligible

Grisez notes that our intelligent grasp of the goodness of our natural inclinations, including religion, goes beyond experience in another way too: every good thus grasped "takes on an intelligible form and characteristics."²³ This means that we grasp by our intellect that these various goods are good: we *understand* them as good. Their goodness is not confined to what is found attractive by emotion or imagination. These things are grasped as good for oneself or others insofar as one is human (or they are human), not because of some individual, concrete circumstance. They are grasped as good by virtuous people and even by sinners too (to some extent). And so one can understand each basic *human* good as not only a good for oneself but also a good for all humans, because they are human like oneself.

2.1.7 There are substantive and reflexive basic goods

Grisez distinguishes between "substantive" goods and "reflexive" goods in *Contraception and the Natural Law*, but does not develop this in any detail, nor apply it to religion.²⁴ (Briefly, "reflexive" goods are found in choices themselves, in the

²² On the importance of experience in Grisez's moral theory, see also "The First Principle of Practical Reason", 176-181.

²³ *Contraception and the Natural Law*, 66.

²⁴ See *ibid.*, 67-68. Grisez develops his thought considerably on these matters in later works, in particular by specifying reflexive goods as essentially including choice in their goodness, as explained in more detail in ss. 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 below. Religion is a reflexive good, instantiated *in* choosing.

very choosing itself; “substantive” goods provide motives for choices distinct from the choosing itself.) One point that Grisez does emphasise and develop in some detail is that one should not choose *arbitrarily* between the various basic goods. In particular, one should not value the subjective aspect of morality, which is indicated by the reflexive goods, over the objective aspect, which is indicated by the substantive goods. Each of the basic goods, whether reflexive or substantive, is good “in a peculiarly different way, since ‘good’ is predicated analogously of all the basic human goods.”²⁵ Therefore, one cannot rightly choose to act against any of the basic goods, but must always “hold fast to *all* the primary principles of practical intelligence, which we spontaneously form as the origin for all our rational deliberation”.²⁶ This is how the phrase “*act in accord with reason* expresses the meaning of virtue”.²⁷ Thus, right reason means acting virtuously by holding fast to all the primary principles of practical reason and avoiding choosing arbitrarily between them.

2.1.8 Religion can be related to the other goods

In this work, it is clear that the reflexive goods are not to be seen as superior to the substantive goods, but as serving to integrate substantive goods into morality. On the other hand, the substantive goods are seen as giving definite meaning to the reflexive goods. Overall, the two types of good are seen to be related in a very close manner, which brings the subjective and objective aspects of practical reasoning together. This relationship is described later in *Contraception and the Natural Law* in this way:

In one sense, indeed, morality is an interplay of subjective and objective factors. Not that it is a mixture of merely subjective meanings and merely natural facts

²⁵ Ibid., 67.

²⁶ Ibid., 70, emphasis added.

²⁷ Ibid. Emphasis is in original, indicating the phrase under discussion.

in the way that situationists imagine. But morality is the process of self-determination, and the self comes to be, not apart from the world or against it, but only as the world enters the mind through knowledge and as the will enters the world through action.²⁸

This explains why Grisez regards his theory as quite different from subjectivist approaches. Grisez's approach is not one that disregards the facts; nor is it one that reduces morality to having good intentions. To be moral is to love *all* the human goods and such a love will want to know the facts and have intentions that are truly in touch with the full reality of all the basic goods, both reflexive and substantive. This implies clearly that love of "religion" as a basic good will not function rightly in isolation from pursuit of knowledge (of religious facts and history, for example, and, in particular, of God's revelation in history).

2.1.9 Basic goods are irreducibly diverse yet participate in pure goodness

Grisez deals only briefly in *Contraception and the Natural Law* with the issue of "the end of man". He stresses that none of the basic goods is absolute, insofar as none of them can satisfy "man's potentiality for goodness as such".²⁹ Nevertheless, "each good uniquely represents the perfect good itself without ever encompassing its absolute goodness".³⁰ In terms that will be developed critically in his later works, and be applied to religion as a basic but also architectonic or overarching good, Grisez makes the following suggestion:

This complex orientation and delicate balance [in man's approach to understanding the basic goods as both irreducibly diverse and yet sharing in goodness] could provide man with a basis for establishing orderly direction in

²⁸ Ibid., 179. Grisez dealt with the relationship between reflexive and substantive goods in his mature work *Christian Moral Principles*, chapter 5, question H, which is examined in ss. 3.1.7 and 3.1.8 below.

²⁹ *Contraception and the Natural Law*, 71.

³⁰ Ibid.

his life. Although the unity would not be monistic and although the actual achievement of goods could not be definitive, the love of all proportionate human goods *as participations in pure goodness* could guide him toward an existence both full and open.³¹

2.2: “Man, Natural End of” [1967]³²

This article is a highly concise treatment of the issue of what the natural end or purpose of man is, as distinct from his supernatural end or purpose. It looks also at whether and how these two ends are related.

2.2.1 Aristotle: man’s end is happiness in contemplation

Aristotle held that “man’s true happiness lies in his distinctive action, the use of reason, which best realizes specifically human capacities”.³³ The “highest excellence of reason is philosophical wisdom ... in contemplation of the truths the philosopher can know about the highest realities”.³⁴ This is done by man’s own natural powers, so even though it is “godlike” it is not “supernatural in the theological sense”.³⁵ All human life is to be organised to facilitate the attainment of this highest good, so that all other goods are secondary to this supreme good of contemplation. Although neither Aristotle nor Grisez say so explicitly, it could be said that Aristotle’s view seems to be that a kind of natural, intellectual “religion”, namely contemplation of the highest truths, is the ultimate good or end for man, insofar as man can achieve

³¹ Ibid., 72. Emphasis added. The pure goodness here is God’s goodness.

³² “Man, Natural End of” appeared originally in volume 9 of *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1st ed. (1967), 132-38. This article was reprinted unchanged in volume 9 of *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed. (Detroit: Washington, D.C. Thomson/Gale; Catholic University of America, 2003), 96-103. Quotations here are taken from the 2003 edition. As mentioned above in note 2, Grisez wrote this article before *Contraception and the Natural Law*, although it was published after it.

³³ Ibid., 96.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 96-97.

happiness by his own ability and action, and all other goods are subordinate to this highest good.

2.2.2 St. Augustine: man's end is the satisfying of his natural desire to see God

Augustine was heavily influenced by neo-platonism, a kind of natural mysticism.³⁶ He emphasised the idea that man has a natural desire for God and is unfulfilled and restless until he finds God. True happiness lies in the fulfillment of man's fundamental desire for God in heaven, where man will know God. This heavenly beatitude can be achieved only by the help of grace and Christ. Augustine's ideas helped to create the notion that man's ultimate happiness is in a supernatural end that fulfils his mind by harmony with God through knowing Him as He is. This final state of supreme fulfillment encompasses all goods, leaving nothing else to be desired.³⁷ Thus, it could be said that Augustine understands "religion" to be a certain kind of harmony with God, which is seeing God as he is in himself (the "beatific vision"). This is a different concept of the good of religion than Grisez's, and much of Grisez's later work is a kind of criticism of Augustine on this score, which is only hinted at in this early work.

2.2.3 St. Thomas Aquinas: man has a twofold end or beatitude

St. Thomas Aquinas followed Aristotle's lead, but developed it hugely.³⁸ Aquinas taught that man has "a twofold end or beatitude", natural and supernatural, with the supernatural end as "the absolutely ultimate goal of human life", which is "perfect

³⁶ See *ibid.*, 97.

³⁷ See *ibid.*, 97-98.

³⁸ See *ibid.*, 98-99, but also the modern Thomists examined in 100-101, and Grisez's own ideas presented in 101-103.

beatitude”, as distinct from the natural end of human life, which is “imperfect beatitude”.³⁹ Aquinas’ approach in dealing with this twofold end is very complex and has been debated and disputed. According to Aquinas, God is the ultimate end of man, as He is for all creatures. And yet, like Aristotle, Aquinas sees man’s will as central to his ultimate fulfillment. The human “will is indefinitely open toward good and is naturally oriented toward God”.⁴⁰ Still, man’s perfection involves more than the fulfillment of this natural orientation toward God: “the greatest perfection man can receive, heavenly beatitude, would fulfil and surpass his capacities in a way he can neither suspect nor wish for without faith and grace.”⁴¹ It is difficult to interpret Aquinas with regard to the serious questions raised by his approach, especially its emphasis on the “twofoldedness” of man’s end. What are we to make of the idea that man naturally desires a happiness that can be achieved only in supernatural beatitude?

Given grace, does man have a natural last end as well as a supernatural one? The negative answer is indicated because man cannot have two ultimate ends. But Thomas’s derivation of a complete doctrine on natural virtues and natural law from a consideration of goods proportionate to human nature (*Summa theologiae* 1a2ae, 61, 94) suggests that man’s natural end is not removed by grace; therefore, the natural end must take a subordinate place within Christian life. This conclusion agrees also with Thomas’s general teaching that grace presupposes nature but does not abridge it.⁴²

2.2.4 Various other answers to the question: *What is the good?*

It is clear that Grisez is particularly concerned in this article with the question of whether the supernatural good is ultimate in a way that substitutes for, or abridges,

³⁹ Ibid., 98.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 99. Grisez makes much of the idea that “man’s natural end is not removed by grace” in his own approach, and he thinks that Aquinas was not clear or consistent enough in his theory on this point, especially insofar as he promoted the idea that man’s natural end is so totally subordinated to his supernatural end that this natural end (including bodily goods, for example) is de-valued.

natural goods. He is concerned also with the issue of whether there is one natural ultimate good, for example, contemplation. He outlines how various recent philosophers and social scientists have named the ultimate natural good for man.⁴³ Spinoza took a somewhat neo-platonic position in saying that man's ultimate happiness lay in a kind of natural mystical state of satisfaction. Locke, Hume, Bentham and Mill equated human natural happiness with pleasure. Kant considered the moral law, derived from reason, to be the ultimate motivation for human action, and renounced happiness as a principle of ethics. Sartre did something similar, but took the moral law to be derived from freedom, rather than reason. Evolutionary theories take man's ultimate happiness to be defined by progress. For Hegel, man's ultimate happiness is defined by "his place in the system" developing towards an absolute reality. Dialectical materialism and American pragmatism see man's ultimate happiness in "the realization of the possibilities of human nature", with particular emphasis on "rationally guided activity and work", and "social solidarity", rather than Aristotle's focus on the "contemplative ideal". Psychology has focussed on "the mature, integrated, and effective personality" as "a standard for human welfare"; and "many social scientists assume that values such as health, technological efficiency, and political freedom" are such standards.

Grisez here seems to be outlining several approaches to the basic human goods, most of which place strong or total emphasis on one kind of good, to the exclusion of any others, and many of which ignore the issue of whether man has a supernatural good or end alongside one or more natural goods or ends. Religion as a basic good is ignored by many recent approaches; it seems also to be left out of Aristotle's approach, unless

⁴³ All the following points and quotations are taken from *ibid.*

we see his contemplative ideal as a kind of natural religion, which is perhaps the best way to view it.⁴⁴ However, although the older approaches of Augustine and Aquinas have a place for religion, for harmony with God, it is not clear in their approaches whether it is a natural good or a supernatural one, or both. Grisez outlines the approaches of several modern Catholic philosophers/theologians to these issues, before giving his own thoughts on them, in which he uses several ideas from these modern Catholic approaches.⁴⁵

2.2.5 Grisez: man's natural end is not religion or God alone

Grisez emphasises that there is “a variety of goods” that different people “in fact accept as their ultimate end”, and that this “proves that the human will is not determined to any definite good, even the highest”.⁴⁶ Grisez wants to make sure that “the positive character” of the “comparative imperfection of any natural end” is not lost from view, as it is likely to be whenever we take an Augustinian approach, which focuses attention on eternal rest gained by the gift of grace as our truest and only fulfillment as human beings. Grisez thus implicitly rejects any approach that puts religion (harmony with God) as the highest and only ultimate good for man, and defines man's natural end in terms of religion alone.

⁴⁴ It should be noted that this goes beyond what Grisez says explicitly in the article.

⁴⁵ The various approaches will not be treated here due to space limitations and because Grisez integrates some of their main ideas in his own thoughts, which are treated here. The philosophers/theologians whose approaches to the natural end of man Grisez outlines are: Santiago Ramirez, from the 16th century, and, from the 20th, Walter Farrell and Mortimer Adler, Jacques Maritain, Joseph Buckley, and Henri de Lubac: see *ibid.*, 100-101.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 102.

2.2.6 Grisez: man's natural end is predetermined by his nature and place in reality

Grisez also makes this point: “from an ethical point of view, what last end every man should seek is predetermined by the nature of man and by his inescapable place in reality”.⁴⁷ Therefore, Grisez’s approach to understanding and appreciating man’s natural purpose or purposes is based on considering “man strictly according to the requirements and possibilities of his nature”.⁴⁸ We can see here the beginnings of Grisez’s attention to human nature and human possibility as the source(s) of moral obligation and human action, and thus, natural human fulfillment.

2.2.7 Grisez: man's natural and supernatural ends are distinct

In this article, we see also the beginnings of a theme that will dominate Grisez’s approach to moral theory and especially the role of religion in natural law. This is the distinction between basic human goods and their instantiations in or through human acts, and the supernatural good of sharing God’s very life. Human goods

belonging to man’s natural end may rightly be sought only so far as they are participations in the perfect goodness of God, although no act within man’s natural ability can attain God as He is in Himself, since intimate sharing in divine life depends upon divine grace.⁴⁹

Grisez rejects the approach of Aristotle that makes only one finite good, the good of intellectual excellence, the ultimate natural end of man, and he agrees with the approaches of more recent thinkers (Farrell, Adler, and Maritain) that “all goods truly perfective of man have a place in his natural end.”

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid. “Human goods” are not explicitly referred to in the article, but Grisez uses the synonymous term “finite” goods.

2.2.8 *Grisez: though diverse, goods can be compared to one another*

Grisez does not list finite human goods comprehensively here, but he does mention two in particular: knowledge of God and of man's place in reality, and health.⁵⁰ He makes an interesting distinction between these two naturally perfective goods of man, one that anticipates a later distinction he makes between the basic good of religion and the other basic human goods. He says of the good of knowledge of God that it is "most noble" among the goods, whereas the good of health is "most fundamental" among the goods. This distinction is interesting because it indicates that early in the development of his moral theory, Grisez was willing to consider the various human goods to be equally necessary and irreducible to one another, whilst allowing that they can differ in importance in subtle ways. One presumes that by the greater fundamental importance of health, Grisez refers to the obvious fact that one needs to be alive and basically healthy in order to have any knowledge of God or man, and so health is most fundamental among the goods in this respect. Nevertheless, life/health is not the only good necessary for man to achieve his natural end: someone who is alive and healthy but who lacks any knowledge of God would be lacking in a perfective good, a good that is most noble. In later works, Grisez develops the idea of the good of religion as pre-eminent among the basic goods in having an architectonic role to play in organising one's life as a whole, whilst not subordinating or replacing the other goods, which all retain their own incommensurable value and place in practical reasoning, human life and man's natural end.⁵¹

⁵⁰ See *ibid.*, 102-103.

⁵¹ In his most recent work, Grisez seems to modify his views on this point: see below, s. 6.3.

2.3 *Abortion: The Myths, the Realities, and the Arguments* [1970]⁵²

We look here at some key points about the basic goods in general and apply this to religion, even though Grisez does not do so in this book, which not surprisingly is focussed on the good of life.⁵³

2.3.1 *The good of religion*

In a chapter that outlines his moral theory, Grisez provides a “list of fundamental human goods”,⁵⁴ including the good of religion, which he identifies in these terms: “Worship and holiness – the reconciliation of mankind with God.”⁵⁵ Grisez purports to write this book as a philosopher and not as a believer,⁵⁶ but he has been criticised for using language here that is theological in nature, rather than philosophical, thus putting in doubt whether the good of religion is a good of the natural law or a good only of faith.⁵⁷ Indeed, in later works, Grisez moves away from such theological (and morally charged) language in speaking of the good of religion.

⁵² *Abortion: The Myths, the Realities, and the Arguments* (New York and Cleveland: Corpus Books, 1970).

⁵³ It should be mentioned, however, that the book includes a substantial chapter on religious views of abortion, 117-184. Although the substance of this chapter could be seen as evidence that the good of religion (and not only the good of life) is at stake in abortion, Grisez does not deal with it in such terms here. Instead, he seems to see “religion” in terms of its institutional and historical embodiment and expression, rather than as a basic human good. This suggests that at least at this stage in the development of his theory, Grisez has not fully integrated his thought about the full range of basic human goods into his moral analysis of specific issues, and he has not fully understood the potential of the good of religion.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 312. Grisez does not list our natural inclinations here, as in *Contraception and the Natural Law*, but lists instead the goods to which our inclinations point. From now on, Grisez’s works list the goods and not the inclinations, perhaps leading some readers to think his theory ignores inclinations.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 313. Grisez does not use the term “religion” in this work for this good, but clearly he is referring to what he calls “religion” in later works.

⁵⁶ See *ibid.*, 267.

⁵⁷ See R. Hittinger, *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), treated in detail in s.8.1 below.

Grisez treats the good of religion here as one of four basic human goods, which are concerned with “unity achieved by reflection and self-determination at each level on which alienation is experienced or believed to exist.”⁵⁸ This kind of basic good involves one’s choosing to pursue it, in contrast to goods such as life and knowledge, which are good in a way that does not include our choosing to pursue them. Grisez is becoming more clear on the character and distinctness of reflexive goods and substantive goods. In later works, Grisez uses the term “harmony” rather than “unity” to indicate the good that religion aims for.⁵⁹

2.3.2 *Goods and needs*

Grisez explicitly links the list of basic human goods to our basic human needs, which are pointed to by our most basic human inclinations: “The objects of such inclinations are what we mean by basic human needs”.⁶⁰ We can become aware theoretically of such needs and our corresponding inclinations by asking questions about what it is that we as human tend to be interested in pursuing by our actions. We can also become aware of them theoretically by joining such questioning of basic human motivation to “a survey of psychological literature and a comparison with the categories of human activity found by anthropologists to be useful to interpret the

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 313.

⁵⁹ This could be because Grisez wishes to retain the word “unity” for our sharing in God’s divine life by charity, which is God’s gift and not a human act; therefore, he uses the word “harmony” to specify the benefit of the good of religion and the other reflexive goods, which are less than unity with God. If this is so, it helps to answer a later criticism of B. Ashley’s in which he says, following Aquinas, that charity not religion is our unity with God: see B. Ashley, “What Is the End of the Human Person?: The Vision of God and Integral Human Fulfillment”, L. Gormally (ed.), *Moral Truth and Moral Tradition*. (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1994), 68-96, at 89, n. 95. Grisez would agree with Ashley here.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 312.

facts of life in any culture”.⁶¹ The findings of psychology and anthropology “lend empirical support”⁶² to the list of fundamental goods given by Grisez.

Still, it is not necessary for a person to be a scholar in order to become aware of his or her basic needs, inclinations, and of the basic goods to which these needs and inclinations point. All that is necessary is to become aware by

experience... of our own inclinations and of what satisfies them; our own longings and delights are facts of our conscious life that we discover as we discover other facts. At the same time, by understanding we interpret these facts in a special way; our intelligence is not merely a spectator of the dynamics of our own action, but becomes involved as a moulder and director. Understanding grasps in our inclinations the possibilities toward which they point and understanding becomes practical by proposing these possibilities as goals toward which we might act.⁶³

So, both experience and understanding are necessary for us to become aware of the basic goods, including the good of religion, and the basic human needs that these goods satisfy. The need that religion satisfies is our need to deal with alienation from God. One becomes aware of this need in a practical way, not a theoretical way, when one grasps the principle directing one to pursue and instantiate it.

⁶¹ Ibid. Grisez refers in two footnotes (nn. 62 and 63) to some examples of such psychological and anthropological literature. The term “theoretically” is used here to refer to a kind of knowing that is distinct from practical knowledge in that it is knowledge of what is the case, rather than what is-to-be done.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., 313-314. This is a very concise passage, showing how one knows *practically* the basic human goods. Note that Grisez denies clearly that the goods are to be seen as possibilities in any theoretical manner, but rather as “purposes-to-be-realized”, which is a practical manner of thinking: see *ibid.*, 314.

2.3.3 Basic practical principles direct open-ended reasoning

Grisez states that our grasp of the basic human goods is “prior to any choice or reasoning effort”, and indeed, makes rational desiring possible.⁶⁴ It is our basic grasp of the good of religion that constitutes our rational desire for it, and enables us to choose to pursue it, and to reason about it. Religion *as a good* is practical through and through, as are all the basic human goods.

In relation to our reasoning about the goods, Grisez makes an important observation (albeit very briefly):

It will always be possible for us to discern more clearly in what such goods as health, knowledge, and friendship concretely consist; it will always be possible for us to seek new dimensions of such inexhaustible possibilities.⁶⁵

Clearly, Grisez is not claiming that we naturally grasp the fullness of the meaning and benefit of the basic goods in our initial grasp of their truth. He acknowledges that we can and should reason about, and investigate, these goods and how to pursue them more and more effectively. This point was lost sight of by some of his harshest critics.⁶⁶

2.3.4 God and the natural law

Grisez’s moral theory clearly rejects the idea that the goodness of the basic goods is imposed by God’s will; rather, their goodness is *intrinsic* to them and to action in

⁶⁴ Ibid. It would seem that this point applies only to the basic goods in general. Our grasp of a specific basic human good, such as religion, is not necessarily prior to all our choices or efforts at practical reasoning. A point developed by Grisez only in later works is that our grasp of the reflexive goods is dependent on our prior efforts to pursue substantive goods, as we see in our examination of his work after *Christian Moral Principles*.

⁶⁵ *Abortion*, 314.

⁶⁶ See the treatments of Hittinger and Di Blasi below in chapter eight.

pursuit of them.⁶⁷ However, Grisez does not exclude God from the natural law. He acknowledges that a religious account of morality is invaluable:

It certainly is impossible to maintain a fully open attitude toward all human goods, irreducibly diverse and incommensurable as they are, unless we accept the reference of our conception of goodness to a reality we do not yet understand.⁶⁸

Only such reference to a unifying source of goodness can prevent us from finding the unity of the goods in one of the goods themselves, and thus to descend into immorality, which tends to deny the incommensurable goodness of the full range of human goods. If we love all the goods, and we are called to do just that if we are to be morally good, we are loving God who is the source of their goodness. This means that the goods ought to be seen *in a religious light* as participations “in a goodness which first belongs to God”.⁶⁹ Immoral acts can be understood as instances of idolatry in such a religious approach to the natural law.⁷⁰ Grisez does not develop his thoughts on these matters in this work, but they are suggestive of later developments of his understanding of the role of religion.

⁶⁷ See *ibid.* Their intrinsic goodness is, of course, created by God precisely as intrinsic goodness.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 316.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 317.

⁷⁰ See *ibid.* Grisez does not deal here with the issue of whether a religious viewpoint is dependent on faith, but his remarks in this work suggest that if one can come to see God as the source of goodness and morality by reason alone, then any adequate natural law theory will have to acknowledge a particularly important role for the good of religion in that natural law theory, and indeed in the natural law itself.

2.4 *Beyond the New Morality* [1st edition, 1974]⁷¹

This text provides the only book-length treatment of Grisez's moral philosophy.⁷² Keeping in mind some reservations concerning its popular style, an examination of the first edition shows that many of the central themes of his later philosophical thought, and its development in his moral theology proper, were present in the earlier stages.

2.4.1 *Religion as one of the basic goods (purposes)*

Religion is included in the list of basic human goods or purposes.⁷³ The authors observe that

men in all cultures and at all times have been concerned about their relationship with a transcendent *Other* to whom the name 'God' is usually given.⁷⁴

Religion as a basic human good is concerned centrally with either re-establishing a relationship with the transcendent *Other* or with strengthening and perfecting it. It is assumed that people have had, and will have, varying beliefs about what this *Other* is and about how to pursue this good.

It is worth pointing out here that "speculative knowledge" is included in the list of basic values⁷⁵ and that all the basic purposes are seen to be equally important and

⁷¹ G. Grisez and R. Shaw, *Beyond the New Morality: The Responsibilities of Freedom* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1974).

⁷² However, it is not reliable as a fully accurate or comprehensive treatment of his understanding of natural law. See the important remarks to this effect in its introduction, xv.

⁷³ This list is much the same as the one we have already seen above. However, Grisez here tends to call the good of inner peace "integrity".

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 69, emphasis in original. This universality is not presented to prove that religion is a good.

⁷⁵ See *ibid.*, 66-67. In later works, Grisez moved away from using the term "values" to using the term "goods", which perhaps better indicates the objective benefits we seek in these fulfillments.

equally to be valued and respected in all our choices.⁷⁶ This implies that Grisez's approach is not one that is confined to a purely subjectivistic perspective. One who intends to be moral will always be concerned with acquiring knowledge, either as a good in itself or as an instrumental good that enables one to pursue other goods effectively, or as both. "Speculative knowledge is most important because unless one has a grasp of truth, he lives a truncated, partial life."⁷⁷

2.4.2 The basic goods are interrelated

However, one does not pursue reflexive goods, including the good of religion, in isolation from other goods. All the basic purposes are related to each other. The authors give an example that relates the substantive good of play to the reflexive good of religion:

If there is no room for the notion of play – doing something because one likes to do it – in one's approach to religion, and if religion is a matter of strict quid-pro-quo necessity, then one has effectively debased religion by reducing it to a kind of deal with the transcendent (I will sacrifice my oxen in order to please the gods and make the rain fall, etc.). If religion is to be something more than a contractual relationship between oneself and the Other, one has to leave room for play.⁷⁸

The authors emphasise the idea that the reflexive goods, which include religion, are not to be seen as isolated goods:

The four reflexive purposes (integrity, authenticity, friendship, religion) are so intimately related that to the degree that one is failing to realize one of them, he is failing to realize them all. This is because each involves, in a different way, the quest for harmony in life – harmony among aspects of the self, harmony between one's self and one's action, harmony between the individual and other

⁷⁶ See *ibid.*, chapter eight.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 72. This helps to answer the criticism that Grisez's approach is a kind of legalism focused on obeying God's will as a code: see Ashley, "What Is the End of the Human Person?", 94.

people, and harmony between individuals and the transcendent Other whom we call “God”. It is simply a fact of experience that when any one of these relationships is disturbed, the other relationships are also affected and to a degree undermined.⁷⁹

2.4.3 The basic human goods are not fully determinate

One further very important point is made in the chapter presenting the eight basic purposes: they are not realities that exist fully yet or that are conceptually “fully determinate”.⁸⁰ It is impossible to say fully what the content of the basic purposes is, because “they have never been fully realized and never can be”.⁸¹ They “constitute the outlines of human possibilities”.⁸² People “cannot help but understand them to some extent (because they are part of us, they sum up what it means to be what we are: human beings), so we can never in our lives exhaust the fullness of what it means to be human.”⁸³ Our initial basic understanding of these basic purposes (goods), including religion, can be developed by us by our “dedicating ourselves to them and seeking their realization in our lives and the lives of others.”⁸⁴

2.4.4 Religion provides hope and thus supports morality

Beyond the New Morality devotes its final two chapters to religion in some detail. The penultimate chapter is called “The Role of Religion”. It distinguishes between religion and morality. There is no “inevitable connection”⁸⁵ between religion and morality.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 72-73.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 73.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid., 74.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 190.

People who have strong religious beliefs can do very immoral things. Nevertheless, religion can be a great support for living a moral life. It provides this support by giving us hope:

To say this is not to assume the truth of religion, but only to point to the fact that hope, founded on traditional religious beliefs and attitudes, does in fact strongly buttress the effort of many people to do what is ethically right.⁸⁶

Religion gives us a positive way to cope with the fact of evil. Without hope we would be tempted to respond to evil by either “a kind of technical-humanistic presumption which takes it for granted that, if only the proper techniques are found and applied, evil can be eradicated from human life” or “despair which takes for granted that evil is ineradicable and can never be overcome.”⁸⁷ The former response leads to a morality of consequences, or consequentialism,⁸⁸ which holds that it can be right to do evil for the sake of good. The latter leads to fatalism and a rejection of the reality and goodness of the world. Religion, by providing hope, is not a solution for all the world’s problems, but it supports the efforts of people to do what is right even when faced with evil.

2.4.5 Religion is not a mere means to an end, but is intrinsically good

The authors are also concerned with criticising the idea that being religious is a mere means to an end, the end of going to heaven. This way of understanding the good of

⁸⁶ Ibid., 197. Clearly, Grisez is not discounting the truth of a religion here, but indicating that religion can be valuable even independently of its objective truth. Of course, religion is more objectively valuable when it is true, and knowledge of the truth is one of the basic human goods.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 197-198.

⁸⁸ “Utilitarianism” is the term used in *Beyond the New Morality*; later works of Grisez use the terms “consequentialism” and “proportionalism” for the same basic approach to ethics.

religion fails to appreciate it as motivating “action performed for its own sake in order to participate in a basic good.”⁸⁹ So religion has its own intrinsic value.⁹⁰

*2.4.6a Religion can motivate acts and sets of acts, and life as a whole*⁹¹

Religion is not concerned only with isolated acts: it can motivate sets of acts. A “pattern of acts” that enable one to participate in the good of religion “can be described as ‘living a holy life’”.⁹² The pursuit of religion, or any of the basic goods or purposes, is not concerned with achieving specific objectives as such, but is concerned with a kind of open-ended pursuit of human possibility.

Again we see the point emphasised that the basic goods are interconnected. The reflexive goods, in particular, “are mutually dependent, so that to the degree a person acts contrary to one he is undermining his participation in all”.⁹³ This means that a person will be committed to pursuing all the reflexive goods as an harmonious whole.

A further, highly important point is made in this chapter, initiating a theme in Grisez’s work that becomes very central.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 191.

⁹⁰ In a later edition, the authors develop this point to answer the common objection to religion: that it distracts us from caring for this world, this life. People who participate in the good of religion are participating in this good here and now. In addition, their participation in the good of religion does not exclude pursuit of the other basic goods here and now, but supports this pursuit. See *Beyond the New Morality: The Responsibilities of Freedom* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2nd ed. 1980), 201-203.

⁹¹ This section and some subsequent sections are further subdivided to indicate close connections between sections. Whenever a cross-reference refers to a section without mentioning the subdivisions, the whole section is indicated (e.g. s.2.4.6 includes both 2.4.6a and 2.4.6b).

⁹² *Beyond the New Morality*, 1st edition (1975), 191.

⁹³ Ibid., 193.

[The] man whose basic commitment is to the good of religion has merely established the emphasis and orientation of his life according to which he will seek to work out his relationship to all the other goods besides religion. A man who is really living a holy life has not cut himself off from everything else in human life except religion ...; he has only established for himself the terms according to which everything else will be fitted into his life and he will relate to everything else.⁹⁴

2.4.6b Religion is the best good with which to integrate one's life

This point is developed in the final chapter, "We must Decide Who We Shall Be".

There Grisez and Shaw focus on basic commitments, which are constituted by sets of choices and actions. The authors insist that

each of us, in order to pull together the strands of his life and be a unified person, must make some most basic commitment which is broad enough to embrace all of his other commitments ... Such a fundamental commitment gives coherence and pattern to what would otherwise be the disordered fragments of life.⁹⁵

Religion is the basic good that provides the best focus for such a basic commitment.

The substantive goods cannot form a suitable focus for all of life, because no one of them "can always be realized in every act of our lives".⁹⁶ The reflexive goods are more suitable. However, the two goods concerned with harmony within the self (integrity and authenticity) are not fully suitable as *the* main focus of one's whole life "since such an emphasis would tend to have the practical outcome of subordinating others to oneself".⁹⁷ The good of harmony with others (friendship, justice) is also not fully suitable "because this orientation would tend to have the effect of subordinating

⁹⁴ Ibid. This is perhaps overstated, with the terms "merely" and "only" giving the impression that Grisez's approach does not value religion except insofar as it motivates one to be morally good with regard to the non-religious goods. He was to be criticised for this by Hittinger later.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 206.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

oneself to others”.⁹⁸ Grisez wants to avoid making following one’s conscience or acting justly the main focus of one’s life as a whole, because to do so could lead to either moral subjectivism or neglect of the proper place of the self and its needs.

Grisez and Shaw argue that religion is the most suitable basic good for shaping the basic *inclusive* commitment of a person’s life:

To the extent that we identify the transcendent Other with the principle which sustains human goods, even when they are not chosen, making one’s religious commitment most fundamental is closely related to – if not identical with – taking one’s moral stand on the side of openness to all of the human goods. Emphasis upon this good can fulfill the need for integration of the person, without in any way constricting or devaluing one’s proper concern for harmony within one’s self and with one’s neighbor.⁹⁹

Religion is capable of being operative in all kinds of choices and it is capable of “including” all the other goods, so to speak, (but not in a way that reduces religion to one or more of the other basic human goods). Religion is the most suitable focal perspective for understanding one’s life as a unified moral endeavour. Religion is a good that lies at the heart of “the fundamental responsibility of human freedom [, namely] the responsibility faced by each person to create his own life, his own self, through the choices he makes.”¹⁰⁰ Therefore, it is not an exaggeration to say that the

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 206-207. In making this point, Grisez develops an idea we saw above in our analysis of *Abortion* (s. 3.3.4) where Grisez sees one’s love of all the goods as a kind of love of God and a participation in God as the unifying source of all goodness and goods. Clearly, even though Grisez does not want to reduce religion to morality, he acknowledges that it is possible for us to very closely relate them when we are morally good in our choices and choose religion as our overarching commitment in life.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 207. It should be noted here that the 2nd edition of *Beyond the New Morality* (1980) makes substantially the same point about the suitability of religion as the focus of an integrated life, but tones it down a little. To the question of which of the reflexive goods is the best one for one’s most basic commitment, the answer is: “It seems doubtful to us that an absolutely definitive philosophical argument can be made in favor of one rather than the others. At the same time it also seems clear that for a person who is already a religious believer religion quite reasonably will play this unifying role” (216). In the 3rd edition (1988), Grisez and Shaw once again recommend making a religious commitment the centre of one’s life and one’s commitments, but without specifying clearly that

basic good of religion lies at the heart of Grisez's natural law theory and, as we shall see in the next chapter, at the heart of his moral theology.

*2.5 Beyond the New Theism [1975]*¹⁰¹

Beyond the New Theism is not directly about moral theology or moral philosophy, but presents a detailed philosophical, cosmological argument for the existence of God and further arguments, arising from this cosmological argument, about how we can speak meaningfully about God and religious truths. It provides the "metaphysical foundations" of Grisez's moral theory.¹⁰²

2.5.1 Philosophy can play a limited but important role

The argument that forms the bulk of this substantial book is extremely weighty in its philosophical technicality and rigour.¹⁰³ However, Grisez does not expect everyone to know and understand (or necessarily to accept in full) such a technical argument in order to believe personally in God. In fact, he readily acknowledges that "most human convictions are based on authorities of one sort or another" and "it is not unreasonable

religion is better than the other reflexive goods as the focus for an integrated life (see 229). Still, this is said: "If one finds a worldview which one has good reason to believe is true, one should accept it and make the commitment to shape one's life in accord with it, for this means living in accord with one's best understanding of reality" (231).

¹⁰¹ As this is a chronological survey of Grisez's work, analysis in this section is confined to the first edition of this book: *Beyond the New Theism: A Philosophy of Religion* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975). The recent reissue, *God? A Philosophical Preface to Faith* (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2005), is exactly the same as the 1975 original except for the new preface. The recent reissue of the main text without changes, and his comments in the 2005 preface (xv) show that Grisez considers this work to be still relevant and sound.

¹⁰² Grisez, "A Contemporary Natural-Law Ethics," in *Moral Philosophy: Historical and Contemporary Essays*, ed. W.C. Starr and R.C. Taylor (Milwaukee, USA: Marquette University Press, 1989), 140.

¹⁰³ Grisez spends several pages, for example, explaining and justifying his use of the word "obtains" rather than "exists" in the strict presentation of the argument. See *Beyond the New Theism*, 43-48 and 172-180.

for a believer to continue to believe what he cannot prove, so long as no weighty reasons are not given for changing".¹⁰⁴ Still, philosophy can play an important part in showing that there are weighty reasons for believing in God's existence and that objections against such belief can be answered.

2.5.2 Grisez's basic argument for God's existence

Grisez's basic argument can be summarised as follows:

Contingent states of affairs within experience do obtain [i.e. occur] although they need not. Their obtaining is not identical with what they are; thus there is a gap of the sort which leads to a demand for explanation – that is, for finding an intelligible link which would close the gap. The obtaining of contingent states of affairs cannot be explained by saying that all such states of affairs together are self-sufficient. An explanation is possible only if there is something distinct from experienced, contingent states of affairs. It is reasonable to demand and to expect an explanation; the objections of empiricism [Hume] and of critical philosophy [Kant] do not show otherwise. Therefore, one must posit a factor which would explain the obtaining of contingent states of affairs. The explanatory factor must be an uncaused cause ... a necessary entity – which obtains merely because it is the state of affairs it is.¹⁰⁵

Even this short summary of the argument can give some idea of the technicality and abstractness of Grisez's approach. What has all this to do with religion as a basic good?

2.5.3 The importance of religious questioning and wonder as a foundation

One part of the answer to this question focuses on where Grisez's argument starts. It begins with questioning. One wonders not only *what* things one experiences are but *why* they are. One seeks to know causes; one tries to fill in the gaps of knowledge and

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 10.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 261. The final part of this summary has been somewhat simplified here as it is not necessary for present purposes to go into the technical details of the argument concerning the contingency of the uncaused cause and so on. A more lengthy summary of the argument, although a "provisional" one (until the arguments of Hume, Kant, Hegel and the post-Hegelians are considered and answered by Grisez later in the book), is given in *ibid.*, 82-84.

understanding. Even children do this – it is not exclusively for technically proficient philosophers.¹⁰⁶ As a young boy, for example, Grisez was given answers to his religious questions by his mother who spoke from her religious tradition, which he internalised as he developed his own religious faith and understanding, and his own way of relating faith and reason. Such is the experience of many; the cosmological argument, and an openness to religious questions, begins with the kind of wonder that is universal among humankind.

2.5.4 *A God who is utterly mysterious but personal*

The end of the cosmological argument is interesting too. It concludes with utter mystery. The “God” that it ends with, as the uncaused cause of everything in our experience, is ineffable. We cannot speak accurately about what God is in himself by using the kind of descriptive language that we might use for any contingent thing. God is utterly non-contingent, whereas everything in our experience is contingent.¹⁰⁷

Does this mean that religion as a natural phenomenon, that is, without any input from divine revelation (and perhaps even with such input), has as its object *nothing*? Can we know anything naturally at all about God? Grisez’s answer is yes, we can. We can know what God is not:

Since one must deny every proposition which applies to *D* [i.e. God] any predicable applicable to a contingent entity, a conjunction of all these negative statements forms a description of *D* which distinguishes *D* from each and every entity given in experience.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ See *ibid.*, 13.

¹⁰⁷ See *ibid.*, 245-247.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 246. Grisez is here taking a *via negativa* or negative theology approach.

Further, it is possible to say rightly that God “causes” and that God “obtains”, because these terms, generate new meaning in the context of their use in the cosmological argument and can be applied to God as they have no descriptive (contingent) content as such.¹⁰⁹ We can also use the terms “one”, “something”, “true”, and “good” about God as long as we use them by way of negation, in a different way than we use them to refer to things in our experience, contingent things.¹¹⁰

All this might seem very “philosophical”, in the sense of abstract and difficult, but very far from “religious” in its most common meaning, which, at least in most theistic contexts, refers to a God or gods and our personal relationship to him or them. Grisez’s argument does open out towards a more personal understanding of God when he analyses how we might accurately understand how the uncaused cause actually “causes” contingent things to obtain. Even though we cannot use the verb “to cause” of God in exactly the same way that we use it for causation in our experience, we do have experience of causation that is similar to the causation involved in God’s causing contingent things to obtain. It is only God’s causing that enables all and every contingent things to obtain. They rely totally on the uncaused cause; the uncaused cause does not rely on them for its obtaining. This structure of dependence is strikingly like that of our free choices on our choosing them, even though the analogy is imprecise.¹¹¹ By understanding “causes” as a relational predicate of God in this analogous manner, and bearing in mind all the time the strict philosophical argument that he has developed in such detail, Grisez thinks it possible and useful to posit a

¹⁰⁹ See *ibid.*, 249-252.

¹¹⁰ See *ibid.*, 252-255.

¹¹¹ See *ibid.*, 268-272.

“model” for understanding God and his causality by analogy with man as one who makes free choices.¹¹² In this way, one can state tentatively that God’s creative causality is an free creative act that presupposes knowledge. God’s act of creating the world is “a form of play” as it does not satisfy any need of God, but God’s act of creating “cannot be pointless”.¹¹³ Grisez outlines this argument only briefly (and the outline here is briefer still) but it leads clearly to an important conclusion:

Since *D* [i.e. God] knows, acts freely, and plays, *D* lives, since these are forms of life. Moreover, the functions which are characteristic of this life are spiritual ones; therefore *D* is a person.¹¹⁴

This model is put forward by Grisez only tentatively. He thinks that “considering the model philosophically, one cannot be certain whether the inferences are sound”.¹¹⁵ Still, he thinks that his argument has concluded to a “God” that Jews and Christians would recognise as “a partial and inadequate concept of what they would call ‘God’”.¹¹⁶

2.5.5a Existential objections to God and religion can be answered

Grisez attends to several “existential” objections to belief in God’s existence in part V of *Beyond the New Theism*. As these are closely related to what people generally

¹¹² See *ibid.*, 270.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 271.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 271-272. Grisez outlines an additional argument in the new preface to the book in the 2005 edition, an argument that he would place at this point in the book, just after outlining the free choice “model” of God’s causality. This new argument is very much related to the developed concept of religion in Grisez’s later work. It leads to a more certain philosophical conclusion that the Creator is a person. See 6.1.4 below, where this new preface is mentioned in the context of Grisez’s 2001 article on natural law and God and religion.

understand as “religion”, it is worth looking at them, albeit only briefly. The titles of the chapters give a good sense of the main arguments presented in them:

- [chapter 21] Human Freedom Is Compatible With Creatureliness.
- [chapter 22] Evil Is Real, But Is Not Created.
- [chapter 23] Religion Need Not Conflict With Humanistic Values.
- [chapter 24] Developing Creatures And A Perfect Creator.

2.5.5b Accurate theoretical understanding is important

A recurrent theme in these chapters is that an accurate understanding of God, as shaped by, or at least consistent with, the philosophical approach in the earlier parts of the book, helps to eliminate obstacles to believing in God (and, we might add, to pursuing the good of religion as a theist). For example, Grisez puts forward several arguments that would rule out as unsound any religion that is dualistic (believing in both a god of goodness and a god of evil) or polytheistic, or which considers a God or gods to be the cause of evil.¹¹⁷

2.5.5c Religion promotes the full range of human values/goods

The chapter “Religion Need Not Conflict with Humanistic Values” deals directly with religion. Firstly, Grisez answers the objection to religion that sees it as subjecting man to the will of God, reducing him to a mere instrument of the divine will. Grisez points out that “traditional religious faith” understands God’s commands not as “arbitrary decrees imposed upon man by an exploiting deity”, but as “a form of loving guidance”¹¹⁸ for our benefit. Conforming our wills to God’s will is not a humiliating submission to a divine dictator, but a sharing in divine goodness and wisdom, and

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 299. There is not enough space here to examine these arguments. Attention is drawn to them simply insofar as they illuminate Grisez’s philosophical idea of God, and also his understanding of religion, which has God as its transcendent object.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 303.

love of the creator's goodness – if that is possible – does not preclude but rather implies the love of every good, including one's own good and that of one's neighbor.¹¹⁹

This implies that the good of religion, as understood by Grisez, is not based on voluntarism, the belief that God's will exclusively defines what is good, which leads to a divine command theory of morality.¹²⁰ To pursue the good of religion, to conform one's will to God's will, is pursue what is rationally required, to be reasonable, to love all persons and their goods, and to love God in loving others.

2.5.5d Religion: not absolute or exclusive, but architectonic and inclusive

Another, related, issue addressed by Grisez in this chapter is that of fanaticism and religion. He admits that religious fanaticism has been a fact in history, but argues that fanaticism is not necessarily connected to religion. The good of religion is not identical to God himself.¹²¹ Religion is “a *human* good, a good which is created and which is realized in human persons.”¹²² Religion is “the relation of harmony or friendship between created persons and God... [It] is *man's* relation to God.”¹²³ Jews and Christians have never understood religion as the only human good.

According to traditional Jewish and Christian doctrine the right religious relation of man to God was inseparable from the right relation of human persons to one another, and from a harmonious inner relationship of the person in himself. Inner integrity was believed to be necessary for sincerity of life, and

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 304. In later works, Grisez becomes more confident that man *can* love the Creator's goodness.

¹²⁰ See *ibid.* Grisez refers here to Aquinas' works *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 3, chapters 121-122 and *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 19, 9-10, to show that Aquinas did not hold a voluntarist view, but rather he held that God is the source of all good and wills only what is for our good, so it is truly reasonable for us to accept and follow God's will.

¹²¹ See *ibid.*, 308. This is a constant and central theme of Grisez's work and his understanding of the good of religion.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*, emphasis in original.

both were regarded as inseparable from love of neighbor, which was considered essential to love of God. Moreover, respect for such human goods as life itself, justice, and faithful marital love was considered essential to the carrying out of love of one's neighbor.¹²⁴

This quote contains several ideas that are central to Grisez's understanding of religion and the basic human goods, most importantly, the ideas that religion as a basic human good is intrinsically connected to the other goods, and the idea that living a good life involves all the human goods simultaneously.

The idea that religion might perform an architectonic role is clearly expressed when Grisez says:

Of course, once a person made a religious commitment, he did not see religion as one particular good among others. The religious orientation shaped life as a whole, animating and harmonizing all particular goods... It endorsed other values and sanctified them.¹²⁵

Grisez also makes the point that as religious commitment is a free choice, it must be the case that there are other distinct human goods that are not reducible to religion. If religion was the only good, or if it was absolute in every respect, then one would not be able to choose it:

Freedom in choosing a good implies its nonabsoluteness, for if one believed that one good included everything of value in another, then it would be impossible to choose the second in preference to the first.¹²⁶

Grisez's understanding of religion as a basic human good is that it is a part of a greater whole: it is a finite created good. As such, it ought not to be treated as an

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid. There is perhaps a risk here of reducing religion to morality, as Hittinger accused Grisez of doing: see s. 8.1 below. Perhaps Grisez should have inserted the qualifier "only" before "one particular good".

¹²⁶ Ibid.

ultimate. “Religious fanaticism is a form of idolatry in which the created good of religion is wrongly exalted to the position of divinity.”¹²⁷

2.6 The four orders ontology in *Beyond the New Theism*

Grisez sets out a kind of ontology, an “inventory of everything given in experience ... which is a part of *descriptive* metaphysics”.¹²⁸ Following the analytical schema of Aquinas, Grisez outlines four orders of the reality given in experience. These orders are picked out by noting how human reason relates in distinct ways to reality, when it discovers, or organises, the inherent order of the various entities it can relate to. Much of what Grisez writes is shaped by his understanding of this ontological schema of four orders of reality, an ontological schema which stretches back to Aristotle through Aquinas.¹²⁹

2.6.1 *Against reductionism*

As can be seen from the title of the chapter in which he first outlines the four orders, (‘Limits of Reductionism’), one of the things that Grisez wishes to emphasise in

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 232, emphasis in original. Grisez does not insist strictly that the four orders include everything given in experience, but says that they include “perhaps all” such entities: see *ibid.*, 233. It should be noted that Grisez does not mean by “entities” necessarily physical beings. One major point in insisting on the reality of *four* orders is that “entities” or realities are not always physical: if they were, there would be only one order, the physical. Grisez thus emphasises the objective reality of the moral order and its irreducibility to any of the other orders, including the physical. Grisez extends his treatment of the four orders in other chapters of *Beyond the New Theism*, especially in chapters fifteen and twenty-three.

¹²⁹ See *ibid.*, 232, footnote one. Aquinas briefly outlined this schema originally in the first lecture of his commentary on Aristotle’s *Ethics*. The four orders ontology is also an important part of the work of John Finnis, who is a collaborator with Grisez: see J. Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, (Oxford, U.K.; Oxford University Press, 1980), 135-138 and 380-383, and also J. Finnis, *Aquinas: Moral, Political, and Legal Theory*, (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 20-23 and 294-298. Finnis’s work is examined in chapter seven below.

delineating them is that reality is not to be understood in terms of only one or two or even three of them, and each of the orders is not to be reduced to any other or set of others. It is a mistake to see reality as only physical, for example; but it is also a mistake to see reality as only a cultural creation. Most importantly, for our present focus on Grisez's moral theory and the place of the good of religion in it, we cannot account for reality fully *only in terms of existential matters*: all four orders must be taken into account for an adequate understanding of any one of these orders and reality as a whole. Coming to understand the distinctness of each of the orders, their irreducibility, and their relationship to each other, is extremely important in avoiding misunderstanding Grisez's work, and, indeed, in avoiding misunderstanding morality itself. Grisez is most emphatic that it is primarily in terms of the third order, the *existential* order, that one must understand morality, and that one must not reduce it to the merely physical, logical, or technical/creative. At the same time, Grisez does not argue that morality is to be understood in existential terms in total isolation from the other three orders. The four orders are united though distinct.

2.6.2 *An outline of the four orders [physical, logical, existential, technical]*

The first order is the *physical* order: "an order which reason does not bring about but only considers."¹³⁰ The second order is the *intentional* order: an order "which reason by its own consideration introduces into its own acts".¹³¹ The third order is the *existential* order: an order "which reason by reflection and deliberation constitutes for

¹³⁰ *Beyond the New Theism*, 232.

¹³¹ *Ibid.* It might be somewhat confusing that Grisez uses the term "intentional" to name the second order, when the term "intentions" is often used to refer to practical aims or decisions, which belong to the third order, the existential order. So, sometimes the term "logical order" or its cognates is used here, as Grisez uses them too, to refer to the second order, the intentional order.

possible choices”.¹³² The fourth order is the *cultural* order: an order “which reason by inventing or planning or habits of using induces in or imposes upon what is in human power”.¹³³

The physical order

The first order is the *physical* order.¹³⁴ Reason considers the physical order as given. It is the order of reality “studied by the natural sciences”.¹³⁵ Grisez mentions the examples of sounds (of a lecturer speaking) and written marks on a page as typical instances of entities of this order.¹³⁶ The normativity found in this order is that of “conformity to natural laws”,¹³⁷ using the term “natural laws” in a very different sense from the term “the natural law” as used in ethics (which names the normativity of the third order). The natural laws referred to in the physical order are the laws picking out the regularity of natural processes, and the normal expectations that people can and do have that such and such an event or process will happen as usual. The normativity of this order is quite distinct from the types of normativity appropriate to each of the other three orders.

¹³² Ibid., 233.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ By putting it first, neither Aquinas or Grisez seem to be saying that it is primary or most important. Nevertheless, it seems appropriate to deal with it first, as the physical order grounds the other three, and so is most fundamental in that respect. Some of Grisez’s critics seem to think he overlooks this and they could be right to an extent.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 232.

¹³⁶ See *ibid.*, 233 and 349.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 237.

The logical order

The second order is the *intentional* order “of thought-entities studied by logic”.¹³⁸ Reason introduces this order into its own acts. An example of a reality in this order is an explanation of something, which, although it can be embodied in a series of physical sounds or written marks on a page, is not to be identified with these physical realities pertaining to the first order.¹³⁹ The normativity of the intentional order is the normativity of the laws of logic. Something is correct in this order if it conforms to logical principles, rather than if it conforms to, for example, (physically-based) psychological association.¹⁴⁰

The existential order

The third order is the *existential* order, the order “of human acts which make up personal and interpersonal life”.¹⁴¹ It is studied by ethics, but also by other disciplines such as history and parts of psychology.¹⁴² Reason constitutes this order by reflection and deliberation about possible choices. Grisez mentions as examples here the deliberate act of communicating a meaning through giving a lecture and the act of asserting a proposition through written marks.¹⁴³ This order includes individual

¹³⁸ Ibid., 232.

¹³⁹ See *ibid.*, 233-234 and 349.

¹⁴⁰ See *ibid.*, 237.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 233.

¹⁴² See *ibid.* Psychology can pursue its studies with a focus on first order realities, when it is primarily concerned with the physical dimension of psychology, or with a focus on third order realities, when it is primarily concerned with human deliberation and choices in their own right. This is one example of the interrelatedness and irreducibility of the four orders.

¹⁴³ See *ibid.*, 233-234 and 349.

deliberation and choice, but also social deliberation and cooperation.¹⁴⁴ The organising unity of this order is found not in physical laws or logical principles, but in

the conditions of a free choice which follow from the values presupposed by all human acts – for example, the requirement that an act be directed to something understood as a good or the requirement that one accept a person’s plausible explanation of something if one sees no reason to reject it.¹⁴⁵

The normativity of the existential order, therefore, is not that of statistical normality or conformity to scientific laws; nor is it the correctness of logical coherence. It is the “rightness and reasonableness of ... conformity to love of human values”.¹⁴⁶ This is why the immorality of an act cannot be adequately accounted for as merely a psychological weakness or illness (which would locate immorality in the physical order) or as ignorance or confusion (which would locate immorality in the logical order): rather, the immorality of acts must be understood as a failure in the existential order, as failure in practical reasonableness and, thus, in love.¹⁴⁷

The cultural order

The fourth order is the *cultural* order of “works of art, products of manufacture, the results of engineering and technology, and also all sorts of symbols, including linguistic ones”.¹⁴⁸ It is studied “by many arts and applied sciences”.¹⁴⁹ In this order,

¹⁴⁴ See *ibid.*, 354-355.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 235. The first example here is what Grisez in other contexts calls the first principle of practical reasoning: see *Christian Moral Principles*, 178-180. (The second is what he calls a rationality norm.)

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 237. Grisez tends to use the term “goods” and “practical principles” rather than “values” in his later works.

¹⁴⁷ This is a central and distinctive theme of Grisez’s moral theory, which seeks to avoid any reduction of morality to any of the three other orders. This is one reason why Grisez criticises so strongly some serious misunderstandings of the word “natural” in the term *natural law*: they reduce morality to the given natural order, the first of these four orders.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 233. Grisez says he disagrees in one respect here with Aquinas, who thought that language belonged exclusively to the second order, the order of logic.

reason creatively “induces in or imposes upon what is in human power”.¹⁵⁰ In other words, here human reason uses and transforms extrinsic nature for practical purposes to achieve specific ends. Grisez points out here as typical the examples of the specific language used by a lecturer or in any written assertion.¹⁵¹ Whereas in the existential order the human person is seen in terms of self-direction through free choice, the human person is seen in the cultural order as “man symboling, man the maker and communicator”, engaging in “a creative interplay with his environment”.¹⁵² What unifies this order is “the fitness of a technique to the goal it is intended to achieve, or ... the aptness of linguistic expression to communicate the explanation of a subject matter”.¹⁵³ The normativity of the cultural-symbolic order is, therefore, the “aptness or adequacy” found in “conformity to the implications of a particular purpose”.¹⁵⁴

2.6.3 The four orders are distinct and irreducible, yet interrelated

The four orders are quite distinct from each other, as each shows us reason relating to reality in different ways. Grisez is emphatic that it will not do for us to reduce reality to any one of the orders. We cannot rightly account for reality in terms of materialism, logic, freedom, or culture; nor can we evaluate reality in terms of only natural laws, or logical principles, or practical/moral reasonableness, or technical/artistic effectiveness. All four orders must be taken into account in understanding the realities of human

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ See *ibid.*, 233-234 and 349.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 248.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 235.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 238. Grisez does not consider effectiveness or efficiency to be the normativity of the existential order; rather, it is the normativity of the cultural-symbolic, or technical, order.

experience.¹⁵⁵ The four orders are united as well as being irreducible to each other, and this unity is important to understand. Grisez begins his analytical treatment of the orders by giving an example of a unitary experience: hearing a lecture.¹⁵⁶ This is experienced by a person as one experience of hearing, even though “one *hears* in four diverse ways”.¹⁵⁷ The diverse ways one hears a lecture are specified in terms of the four orders, each one an aspect of the one reality seen from a different angle, so to speak. And so Grisez says:

Each of the four orders *includes in its own way* what is included in the others. At the same time no one of the orders comprehends the whole of reality – the very ordering principle – of any of the others.¹⁵⁸

2.6.4 *How does the existential order include the others?*

We focus here only on how the third order, the existential order, includes the others. First: the physical order, the order of given nature. One can choose to do something (third order) related to the physical order (first order) – to eat, or sleep, and so on.¹⁵⁹ It seems clear that the substantive basic human good of life and health, which Grisez includes in his moral theory developed in later works, especially *Christian Moral Principles*, is a substantive good that takes its character mainly from the first order, the physical order.¹⁶⁰ However, it is a substantive good that can be the object of the

¹⁵⁵ It should be noted that Grisez does not consider our philosophical knowledge of God and his existence to be matters of experience, but to be found in reasoning that transcends what is given in experience. Nor does he consider God to be a reality in any or all of the four orders: see *ibid.*, 230-232 and 262.

¹⁵⁶ See *ibid.*, 233-234.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 233, emphasis in original.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 235, emphasis added.

¹⁵⁹ See *ibid.*, 236.

¹⁶⁰ See *Christian Moral Principles*, 118, 124, and the treatment of one inadequate theory of the human good, which thinks that the human good is to get what one has natural desires for (prior to choice), 125-126. Grisez has not explicitly linked the basic human goods to the four orders in the way done here.

deliberation and choice characteristic of the third order, the existential order. Most importantly, in making any choice related to the first order, one will have to take into account the normativity of that order, if one is concerned with effective pursuit of the good, which one will be if one is thinking *practically*. So, one who chooses to pursue and instantiate life and health will have to take into account the laws of diet and the regularities of normal human psychological development, which pertain to the first order, the physical order.¹⁶¹ We cannot choose what the laws of nature are. The system of nature and its natural regularities and laws needs to be taken into account in the effective pursuit of any human good, including religion. Surely this also includes taking into account the given aspects and laws of human nature as a given reality.

How can the existential order include the intentional order? It seems that the substantive basic human good of knowledge and aesthetic appreciation, which Grisez includes in later developments of his moral theory, takes its character from the second order, the logical order.¹⁶² Whenever one deliberately chooses to think, thus acting in the existential order, one must take account, if one wishes to be truly practical and, so, effective in one's instantiation of the good of knowledge (whether basic or instrumental),¹⁶³ the particular norms of the second order. If reasoning, for example, is to be good thinking, then it must be clear, consistent, certain, and explanatory; in contrast, bad reasoning will be characterised by "confusion, inconsistency or

¹⁶¹ See *ibid.*, 182.

¹⁶² See *ibid.*, 118, 124, and Grisez's treatment of an inadequate theory of the human good, especially associated with Aristotle, which sees it as exclusively in the exercise of reason, and ignores goods of other types, 126.

¹⁶³ A basic good is one pursued for its own sake; an instrumental good is one pursued for its usefulness in pursuit of another good. One might pursue knowledge, for example, in order to be the better able to pursue the good of health or religion. See *ibid.*, 122.

looseness, inconclusiveness, and lack of illuminating insight”.¹⁶⁴ These are norms of the second order, but they are of direct concern to a person deliberating about how to think well (and act well) – in this way, the existential order includes the intentional order. We cannot choose the laws of logic, but we ought to be logical in our deliberation and choosing.

How can the existential order include the cultural order? Just as one cannot choose one’s own body or the laws of nature, and just as one cannot choose the principles of logic or the truth of propositions, so, too, “one cannot choose that a technological process succeed or that linguistic expressions mean what one wishes them to mean”.¹⁶⁵ The fourth order, the cultural-symbolic order, has its own principles and norms, and one who wishes to choose wisely and to instantiate successfully the particular good or goods one is pursuing in and/or through one’s choice, must take account of those particular principles and norms. The fourth order seems to be the source of the substantial human good that Grisez calls “playful activities and skilful performances [which] in general fulfil persons as makers and sharers in culture”.¹⁶⁶ To pursue this good wisely and instantiate it effectively, one has to strive for “creativity, efficiency, success” and avoid “dull conformism, wastefulness, and

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 118.

¹⁶⁵ *Beyond the New Theism*, 236.

¹⁶⁶ *Christian Moral Principles*, 124.

failure”, which are norms of the fourth order.¹⁶⁷ Thus, the third order, the existential order, includes the fourth order, the cultural-symbolic.¹⁶⁸

2.6.5 *The four orders and religion*

The four orders are distinct but unified in experience. We will look at this unity by examining an example from religion.¹⁶⁹ Our example is a person deliberately and freely using a rosary beads to aid his or her prayer. At one level, this example can be considered as a physical phenomenon. As such, it could be studied by the natural sciences. The physical make-up of the beads could be examined; so too could the psycho-physical make-up of the person praying the beads. Even if not a scientist, one can still appreciate that physical reality is important. It is important to the person praying: their physicality is one reason that people choose to use beads as an aid to prayer. However, the physical reality is not the whole of the reality.

We need to take account also of the meaning of the action and its physical elements. Reference to meaning takes us to the second order of reality, the logical order of thought-entities. The person praying the rosary understands the action in a certain way; otherwise, there cannot be such an action. Religion can be studied and experienced as part of the logical order.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 118-119. See also *ibid.*, 126-127, where Grisez criticises the approach of Nietzsche and others like him, which sees the human good as “living a life which executes a difficult task well”, thus reducing morality and Christian life to the fourth order, the cultural order of creativity and technical effectiveness.

¹⁶⁸ Still, it needs to be emphasised that Grisez is clearly concerned not to reduce the existential order to the cultural, or, in other words, to reduce the moral order to the technical or artistic or scientifically pragmatic.

¹⁶⁹ Grisez applies his ontological schema to listening to a lecture, to written communication, and, in the greatest detail, the human person and human community: see *ibid.*, 233-234, 349, and all chapter 23. He does not apply it to religion, as such, in any detail in any work of his. Indeed, Grisez has not developed his thinking on this analytic schema to any great degree since *Beyond the New Theism*.

Rosary beads are used for a specific purpose. Their usefulness for this specific, limited purpose could be evaluated: Do they help one to pray? How do they aid prayer? And so on. This is to study the symbolic and pragmatic aspect of religion, the cultural order.

However, in Grisez's moral theory, religion is mainly understood as belonging, though not exclusively (as Grisez's work on the four orders clearly indicates), to the existential order. Thus, Grisez understands religion *as a good* to be an aspect of our human fulfillment that we can be rationally interested in pursuing through and in our deliberately chosen actions. In this understanding of religion, one's free choice to use a rosary beads is of the essence of the act of prayer, and of the essence of one's participation in the good of religion, which gives meaning to the physical, meaningful, symbolic free act.

2.7 Life and Death with Liberty and Justice [1976]

This book was co-authored with Joseph Boyle. It refers briefly to the good of religion as one of a few "harmony" goods, which is constituted by "harmony with God".¹⁷⁰ The authors note that "for those who believe in the divine, friendship with God is considered good for its own sake."¹⁷¹ They also make the point, in terms that are almost word for word the same as in Grisez's earlier book, *Abortion: The Myths, the*

¹⁷⁰ See G. Grisez and J. Boyle, *Life and Death with Liberty and Justice: A Contribution to the Euthanasia Debate* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 360. Boyle has contributed much to Grisez's work over the years.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

Realities, and the Arguments (1970), that, if one is not to make of one of the basic human goods the (false) unifying principle of all morality, it is essential to understand God to be this transcendent source, and to understand the goods themselves as “diverse participations in a unity beyond all of them.”¹⁷²

2.8 Conclusion to the chapter

We have seen Grisez develop an understanding of “religion” as a basic form of human fulfillment, a form that is one of several, diverse, irreducible (though interrelated) forms of human fulfillment that he calls the basic human goods. Religion is constituted by harmony with God, which human beings have a natural inclination towards and a need to pursue, a natural inclination and need that ground, but are not identical to, the self-evident practical principle directing us to pursue harmony with God. The fact and virtual universality of our natural religious inclination can be verified by theoretical studies, but the practical principle directing us towards the good of religion is not a grasp of what is already naturally given as such, but our rational grasp of opportunity to pursue one kind of intrinsic fulfillment of human nature through our deliberate actions. Thus, religion is opened and not determinate as a good. One’s understanding of religion can and should develop beyond, but founded on and guided by, one’s initial practical insight into the human need for it and its value.

Grisez is keen to emphasise that religion is not God in himself, but an aspect of our natural end as human beings. He rejects elements of Aristotle’s, Augustine’s and

¹⁷² Ibid., 367.

Aquinas' thought, particularly as they seem to reduce ultimately all of human life and good to the good of religion and/or the good of knowledge (especially knowledge of God's essence in the beatific vision). Grisez rejects all approaches to moral theory that make a single human good, even contemplation of the divine good, the ultimate or only good. Still, Grisez does acknowledge that religion, along with other basic goods, can form the focus not only for choices but for commitments by individuals and groups. Most importantly, Grisez holds that religion is the best basic human good in this regard, as it can be at stake in every choice and commitment (if one so chooses and commits oneself to it), and it can ground the moral life better than any of the other basic human goods. It is necessary for us to see God as the unifying transcendent source of all goods, and of the objective moral (natural) law that directs us to love all that is good, and thus love God. Without such an understanding of God as the ultimate source of goodness, and of human goods as participations in God's goodness, we would be inclined to make a basic human good supreme over all the others, and thus lose sight of what true moral goodness is: openness to and love of all the goods of all human persons.

Grisez sees the good of religion as a reality of the existential order, a quality of our free choices. Still, he does not regard it as an existential reality in isolation from other realities in the physical, logical and cultural orders, all of which he sees as interrelated and united with each other in complex and diverse ways. Grisez develops an argument for the existence of God and an understanding of God as utterly mysterious, but still personal, but he does not insist that the good of religion is grasped only by theists. Still, Grisez clearly holds that a theistic view is the most reasonable view to take and that theism is the most adequate perspective for one to pursue and instantiate the good

of religion. In his early works Grisez takes a mainly philosophical approach to moral theory, but it is one that is open to a theological specification of his natural law theory grounded in the basic human goods, which he develops in the first volume of his magisterial moral theology project, *The Way of the Lord Jesus: Vol. 1, Christian Moral Principles*, to which we now turn our attention.

CHAPTER THREE

CHRISTIAN MORAL PRINCIPLES [1983]

The first, lengthy volume of Grisez's moral theology project lays out the philosophical and theological foundations of his moral theory.¹ This chapter presents what *Christian Moral Principles* has to say about the basic good of religion as part of Grisez's moral theory and especially at its role in the movement in Grisez's theory from natural law theory into moral theology.

3.1 Religion as the object of a primary principle of the natural law

3.1.1 The basic human goods

A list of the basic human goods is given in chapter five of *Christian Moral Principles*. These goods are “aspects of persons”² by which individuals and communities participate more and more fully in being human. These goods appeal to our practical intellect and thus, going beyond emotional desires arising out of our sentient nature

¹ G. Grisez, *Christian Moral Principles*, vol. 1 of *The Way of the Lord Jesus* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1983). Grisez wrote the book with the help of several others (Joseph M. Boyle, Basil Cole, John M. Finnis, John A. Geinzer, Jeannette Grisez, Robert G. Kennedy, Patrick Lee, William E. May and Russell Shaw), but the work is substantially his own.

² *Ibid.*, 121, emphasis added. The treatment of the natural law in the first two sections of the present chapter flesh out the brief outline given in s. 1.2 above. It should be noted from the start that the basic human goods are not presented by Grisez as realities apart from persons, but always as aspects of persons, providing us with reasons to contribute to persons' well-being precisely as persons. This point is completely overlooked by some critics. See, for example, J. Porter, *Nature as Reason: A Thomistic Theory of the Natural Law* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, UK: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005), 130, where she says that Grisez and Finnis are wrong about how we reason about practical matters. According to Porter, “we do not desire [states of affairs] simply as instantiations of basic goods; we desire them because they promote the overall well-being of people and other entities about which we have some concern, or avert harm from them.” However, this is a false dichotomy. According to Grisez's theory, instantiations of the goods are rationally desired precisely because they are thought to promote human well-being (including, but not exclusively, one's own well-being).

(though not necessarily opposed to such emotions), they “provide us with reasons for intelligently wanting something and choosing to act for it as a goal”.³ The basic human goods are diverse, are grounded in complex human nature, and pertain to the four dimensions of being human.⁴ Three of these dimensions have to do with the following: (1) life and health, (2) knowledge and aesthetic appreciation, and (3) work and play. These identify three of the basic human goods. A fourth dimension of being human is our ability to reason practically and choose freely – the existential dimension. A set of related basic human goods pertains to this existential dimension of human well-being.

3.1.2 Religion as a reflexive and existential good

One of this set of existential harmony goods is “religion”:

We experience sin and alienation from God; the goods are the peace and friendship with God which are the concern of all true religion.⁵

³ Ibid., 122.

⁴ See *ibid.*, 124. Grisez does not emphasise the point of “the four orders” in *Christian Moral Principles*, but it seems clear that his thinking about them lies behind what he says about the seven basic human goods and how he organises the list of basic human goods into four categories (with the four existential goods seen as four aspects of the good of existential harmony). A fuller account of the four dimensions or orders of reality is found in *Beyond the New Theism*: see s. 2.6 above. In chapter five of *Christian Moral Principles*, where Grisez presents his list of basic human goods, he first provides a short outline of a theory of the good, following Thomistic lines: see *Christian Moral Principles*, 115-122. This is overlooked by his critics, who seem to think he presents the goods without any reference to theoretical understanding. See, for example, Bebhinn Donnelly, “The Epistemic Connection Between Nature and Value in New and Traditional Natural Law Theory”, *Law and Philosophy* 25 (2006): 1-29. Certainly, Grisez holds that a person does not need to know explicitly any theory (of the good, or of human nature) from which to deduce or derive the primary principles of the natural law, or to know at least some of its norms, at a minimal level; but he does not ignore theoretical issues, nor does he ignore the issue of the nature of the good, in his own presentation of his *theory* of natural law.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 123. (In the original, this quote is found in bold print to highlight it; however, for stylistic purposes, it, and any similarly formatted quotations are given here in regular font.) In light of how he talks about the good of religion later in this work, it is clear that Grisez’s use here of the plural (“goods”) does not imply that he sees religion as a plurality of goods, although it does seem to suggest, correctly, that religion can be instantiated in diverse ways and to greater and lesser degrees. In more philosophically strict works subsequent to *Christian Moral Principles*, Grisez avoids using morally charged terms for the basic goods, such as “friendship with God” for the good of religion.

Religion is included in the four existential or “reflexive” goods, which are concerned with harmony and which include choice in their very definition. They are called existential goods “because they fulfill persons insofar as persons make free choices and are capable of moral good and evil.”⁶ The other three reflexive goods are: (4) self-integration, (5) practical reasonableness, and (6) justice/friendship. With (7), religion, the list of basic human goods is complete.⁷

3.1.3 *The good of religion is not the good of God himself*

As in previous works, Grisez is careful here to distinguish the good of religion from the good of God himself:

Religion is a great blessing, for nothing in life is more important than liberation from sin and friendship with God. However, harmony with God should not be confused with God himself or with the divine life in which Christians share by adoption. The human good of religion – that harmony with God which perfects human persons as human – is only one human good alongside others.⁸

⁶ Ibid., 123-124. In this context, “reflexive” refers to one’s choosing with awareness of one’s choosing.

⁷ See *ibid.*, 124. Religion is often presented by Grisez as the seventh of the goods, and the fourth of the reflexive/existential goods. Again, it is worth noting that the terminology used by Grisez and his school to describe the goods, especially the reflexive goods, varies from work to work. In *Christian Moral Principles*, they are described usually in language that carries a moral connotation, and assumes that these goods are pursued virtuously and effectively. Also, the natural law theory in *Christian Moral Principles* is presented in a theological light. Finally, Grisez was to add marriage as a basic human good in volume two of *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, but this aspect of his work is not our concern here.

⁸ Ibid., with a reference to Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* 11. Grisez also makes reference to Aquinas’s work in this respect too (*Summa Theologiae* II-II, 81, 5). According to Grisez, Aquinas distinguished between the virtue of religion and the theological virtues in that the former does not “bear upon God himself as the latter do”. Religion is seen, therefore, as a natural virtue, rather than a theological one, and as a natural virtue that bears upon God in a more indirect way than the infused, theological virtues. Grisez does not refer much to Aquinas’s treatment of religion as a virtue; this is an area of his theory in need of development. In fact, his whole treatment of virtue, and his integration of a theory of virtue, following along the lines of Aquinas’s schema, is seen as in need of development by one of Grisez’s collaborators: W.E. May, “Contemporary Perspectives on Thomistic Natural Law”, in J. Goyette, M.S. Latkovic and R.S. Myers (eds.), *St. Thomas Aquinas and the Natural Law Tradition: Contemporary Perspectives* (Washington, D.C.: University of America Press, 2004), 113-156, at 154. That Grisez’s understanding of the good of religion can be integrated with Aquinas’s thought on the virtue of religion is made clear by William H. Marshner, “Implausible Diagnosis: A Response to Germain Grisez”, *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 46 (2001): 91-112, at 93.

The good of religion is part of what human persons can know will be fulfilling of themselves as human. There is more to our human fulfillment than religion, however, and this “more” is specified by the other basic human goods.

Still, Grisez clearly sees religion as a very important good; the way he speaks about it in the quotation above lets us know that he does not want to downgrade religion when he distinguishes it from God in himself and our divine life through grace. Religion specifies an essential aspect of our human good, one that ought to be of concern to all people. Even apart from faith in God’s revelation, the good of religion calls on us to fulfil our human nature by deliberately making choices that instantiate harmony with God. However, this harmony with God is not complete unity with God. It can be described as “friendship” with God, but Grisez clearly considers this friendship to be distinct from the divine life that God offers to share with us through grace.

3.1.4 Religion can and should be understood theologically

However, Grisez does not speak of religion as a good that can be known only by reason. Information on the good of religion, and other elements of the natural law, can be, and is, communicated by divine revelation, as will be seen as we continue our analysis.⁹ For one thing, even in the natural law chapters of *Christian Moral Principles* (chapters five and seven especially) Grisez tends to write about the good of religion in purely theistic terms, indeed in monotheistic terms that consider God to be personal. *Christian Moral Principles* takes a primarily *theological* perspective on the natural law and on human goods, as part of a larger project that involves detailing

⁹ This is not to say that revelation is primarily concerned with communicating information. Grisez clearly presents it as involving a personal invitation to enter into intimate relationship with God: see *Christian Moral Principles*, 477-481 and s. 3.4.2 below. On the claim that revelation “includes truths of natural law”: see *ibid.*, 175-178, at 176.

what it is to live a Christian life.¹⁰ This theological approach and aim probably account for the language used in his description of the basic good of religion as

religion or holiness, which is harmony with God, found in the agreement of human individual or communal free choices with God's will.¹¹

3.1.5 Religion is natural peace with God

Nevertheless, the good of religion is a basic *human* good alongside the other basic human goods:

We tend to think of friendship with God as something too elevated to list alongside other human goods ... But although communing with God in Christ does go beyond a merely human good, human fulfillment also is sought and found in the human relationship of peace with God.¹²

We see here that Grisez distinguishes the basic good of religion from the fullness of the new life of grace made possible by faith. It seems that there are two dimensions or

¹⁰ See chapter one of *Christian Moral Principles* for details of how Grisez understands his overall aim in this book and the four volume project of which it forms the first part. It is notable that he uses scripture, for example, as a way towards understanding the human goods of harmony, referring to the story of the Fall in Genesis 3 and how original sin affected our peace within ourselves, with each other, and with God – see *Christian Moral Principles*, 122-123. It is worth noting too that seeing God in personal theistic terms is not confined to a theological perspective; an understanding of God as personal and singular can be defended from a purely philosophical perspective too, as Grisez himself does in the *Beyond the New Theism*: see s. 2.5.4 above. The reissued edition, *God? A Philosophical Preface to Faith* (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2005), makes this even clearer in its new preface: see xv-xxvi, at xx-xxii.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 124.

¹² *Ibid.*, 136, with a reference to a published work on comparative religion by M. Dhavamony “for evidence on this point” (see n. 13, page 139). Grisez has not referred in the years since *Christian Moral Principles* to theoretical works supporting his list of basic goods, and in particular religion. Some recent theoretical backing for his list of goods, and for the inclusion of religion in this list, is found in Sabina Alkire, “The Basic Dimensions of Flourishing: A Comparison of Accounts”, in *The Revival of Natural Law: Philosophical, Theological and Ethical Responses to the Finnis-Grisez School* ed. N. Biggar, and R. Black, (Aldershot/Burlington USA/Singapore/Sydney: Ashgate, 2000), 73-110. See chapter one, n. 23 below for details of her list of goods, abstracted from the various lists of other scholars that she examined. Religion is included in her list. Even though it was not explicitly mentioned in several of the empirical and conceptual studies she surveyed, elements of the good of religion were to be found on most lists, so “there is considerably more implicit affirmation of religion or spirituality than first appears” (97). Alkire mentions also that although some people might reduce the good of religion to some other good (e.g. inner peace or meaningful identity), other people consider some of their actions to be for a religious good that cannot be reduced to other non-religious benefits (see 98). Boyle makes the same point: see s. 7.4.3 below.

levels, so to speak, of human relationship with God: one is the natural dimension of friendship, which is pursued and instantiated in the good of religion, which perfects and fulfils us as human; the other is the supernatural dimension, which is a divinely given gift that goes beyond the merely human good (and, to echo Grisez's terms, beyond mere natural friendship with God).

3.1.6 Reflexive goods, choice and moral good

The reflexive goods, which are concerned with the pursuit of harmony, are

not primarily realized in definite states of affairs, which result from the carrying out of choices. Rather, the existential goods (self-integration, practical reasonableness and authenticity, justice and friendship, and friendship with God) are personal and interpersonal spiritual realities which primarily exist in upright individual and communal choices themselves.¹³

Therefore, religion can constitute part of the moral good, moral uprightness, when it is pursued properly. (Grisez clearly acknowledges that religion can be pursued morally or immorally.) The moral good is not the whole of human fulfilment, however, but only a part, albeit "an intrinsic part", of it.¹⁴ It is a part of our human fulfilment that pertains directly to the will. So, Grisez understands the concept of religion as a basic good as something pertaining directly to our will, to our choices shaped by our will, and to the quality of harmony between our wills and the will of God.¹⁵

¹³ Ibid., 129. Reflexive goods are reflexive insofar as one is aware of one's choosing thus: one chooses to choose, so to speak.

¹⁴ Ibid., 130 -131.

¹⁵ It should be remembered here that Grisez, following on in the tradition of St. Thomas, does not view the will as separate entirely from the *practical* intellect. Both practical intellect and will work together, with "will" as our intelligent grasp of possibility and opportunity, which enables us to choose freely.

3.1.7 Substantive goods provide the content for religion as a reflexive good

The “substantive” basic human goods, listed in *Christian Moral Principles* as life and health, knowledge and aesthetic appreciation, and skilled performance, are non-reflexive, and “are realized in definite states of affairs distinct from one’s choices”.¹⁶ These substantive goods are “the vehicles for the existential goods”.¹⁷ This means that the substantive goods provide the content for the harmony pursued in the reflexive goods. Grisez relates this point to religion briefly:

One cannot pursue religious fulfillment apart from activities in which one seeks to promote bodily well-being or skilful performance or thoughtful reflection; religion which does not make a difference in daily life is meaningless (see Jas 1:23-25; 2:14-17).¹⁸

It is clear from this that Grisez does not see “religion” as an entirely separate good to be pursued in isolation from the other basic goods; even though it is distinct from the other goods, and not reducible to one or more of them, it is never effectively instantiated apart from at least one substantive good and the other reflexive goods too (at least implicitly). It would seem too, although Grisez does not make this point explicitly, that the necessary relationship between reflexive and substantive goods entails that effective pursuit of religion cannot be a purely subjective thing: the pursuit of religion is given objective content by the substantive goods.

¹⁶ Ibid., 129.

¹⁷ Ibid., 130. This point is completely overlooked by Grisez’s critics. Hittinger and Di Blasi’s errors in this regard are looked at in chapter eight below. Another example is B. Ashley, “What Is the End of the Human Person?: The Vision of God and Integral Human Fulfillment,” in *Moral Truth and Moral Tradition*, ed. L. Gormally (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1994), 68-96, at 85-86. One problem with Ashley’s interpretation of Grisez is that he fails to acknowledge that the basic human goods can be means to an end (or, instrumental goods) as well as ends (or intrinsic goods): see *ibid.*, 81. Although Grisez has made his thinking clear on these points, perhaps it could be said that he has not made it clear enough, and that he has not developed some aspects of his natural law theory, especially with regard to the interrelationships between the basic human goods. He has, however, clarified theologically some important aspects of how religion is related to the good of knowledge, as we will see (ss. 3.4.3ff below).

¹⁸ *Christian Moral Principles*, 129.

3.1.8 In Grisez's moral theory, religion is not a substantive good

Although religion is seen to require substantive content (from objective knowledge of reality, for example), it does not play the role of a substantive good in Grisez's moral theory. Precisely as a good, religion is existential and reflexive, a quality of our choices and commitments. Religion, as a practical good-to-be-pursued, is not seen as consisting of a group of persons, or a set of places, buildings and physical objects, to be considered or studied theoretically; nor is it a set of beliefs to be held in thought or analysed logically, nor something to be admired as beautiful; nor is it a set of practices or symbols to be used to achieve a specific goal or set of goals.

The core of religion as an existential good, as understood by Grisez, is found in the choices and commitments of a person or community to instantiate and pursue harmony with what that person or community understands as God's will. These choices might be for the following actions:¹⁹ holding and professing religious beliefs or knowing religious persons or symbols; carrying out religious actions well (rituals, for example, or acts of charity); appreciating religious beauty and worth (in religious art, for example, or the beauty of the idea and reality of God); doing acts for the sake of one's own or others' bodily health and life (avoiding unnecessary risks, for example, or making efforts to feed the hungry). Such actions may be done for the sake of basic substantive goods, goods such as knowledge, excellence in performance, appreciation of beauty, life and health, but they may also, *at the same time*, be done for the sake of the harmony goods too, including the good of religion.

¹⁹ The applications and examples in this paragraph are my own and not Grisez's, though, in my judgment, they are suggested directly by his thought in *Christian Moral Principles*. The Thomistic ontological schema treated by Grisez in *Beyond the New Theism* (see s. 2.6 above) is drawn on here, as are the basic human goods mentioned by Grisez in *Christian Moral Principles*.

The other reflexive goods can be involved along with religion too. So a person going to Mass for the sake of religion, for example, might be seeking also the good of community by participating in the common good of the Church, or he might be seeking the good of “self-integration”, (which can also be called “inner harmony” or “order within the self”), or he could be seeking the good of “practical reasonableness or authenticity”, which brings “harmony between one’s moral reflection, free choices, and their execution”.²⁰ It is clear that the basic goods are not entirely separate objects, as such, but realities that can interpenetrate each other and be combined with each other in various ways in our choices.

3.1.9 Primary practical principles and basic goods

Precisely as a distinct, basic human good, religion forms the object of a primary principle of practical reasoning.²¹ This principle is a specification of the first principle of practical reasoning, namely, “Good is to be done and pursued and evil avoided.” There are several other specifications of the first principle of practical reasoning, which direct action to the pursuit of the other basic human goods.²² The primary practical principle that corresponds to the good of religion directs us to pursue religion and to instantiate it (to “do” it) in chosen actions. This principle can be formulated as follows: “Religion is to be pursued and done, and its opposite avoided.” As religion is

²⁰ Ibid., 124.

²¹ See *ibid.*, chapter seven, questions C and D, 178-183. It is true therefore that Grisez does seem to acknowledge a distinction between the *good* of religion and the *principle* directing us to pursue and instantiate the good. Grisez does not make much of this distinction. See, however, G.V. Bradley and R.P. George, “The New Natural Law Theory: A Reply To Jean Porter”, *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 39 (1994): 303-315, at 305, where the authors draw attention to the distinction between goods and principles directing towards the goods. They insist that Grisez has never spoken of self-evident basic goods, but of self-evident basic principles. (They argue that this is but one of many misreadings by Porter of Grisez’s and Finnis’s work.) Arguably it is an important distinction.

²² See Appendix 1 below for an outline of the primary principles of the natural law.

harmony with God, the evil to be avoided is conflict with God. So, one of the foundational truths of practical thinking and action is that harmony with God is to be pursued and instantiated and conflict with God is to be avoided (insofar as it is in our power to do so). The primary principle of practical reasoning corresponding to the basic human good of religion is one of the foundational ordinances of the natural law.²³

3.2 Religion and moral goodness

3.2.1 Two phases of the natural law: generally practical and morally practical

The primary principle directing us to pursue and instantiate the good of religion is a naturally known truth²⁴ that marks out religion as one of the “fields of practical possibility” that “make possible all human acts”.²⁵ As a primary practical principle, it belongs to “the first phase” of the natural law, or practical reasoning, the phase concerned with “what might be done”.²⁶ This phase includes all practical thinking and action shaped by it. It includes even wrongdoing, which is not irrational, but practical and rational, albeit to a limited extent. The second phase of practical thinking is concerned “with what ought to be done”, which is the strictly moral phase.²⁷ In

²³ See *ibid.*, chapter Seven, question A, 173-175.

²⁴ See *ibid.*, 173.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 178. The use in the subheading of the phrase “generally practical” for this phase of the natural law is my own.

²⁷ *Ibid.* The use in the subheading of the phrase “morally practical” for this phase of the natural law is my own. It helps to keep clear that the moral phase involves being practical too, following the first principle of practical reasoning perfectly. Thus the first principle of practical reasoning is the foundation of all practical reasoning, including the moral phase. It is not left behind in the moral phase, but pervades it, and is specified by its normativity (integral directiveness).

Grisez's moral theory, the two phases are analysed separately.²⁸ Nevertheless, even though the two phases of practical reasoning are treated analytically, and, so, separately, in his moral theory, Grisez states: "these phases are not usually separated in practice".²⁹

Grisez wishes to present practical reasoning as having two phases at least partly because he wishes to show both how free choice is possible and how a person can be morally responsible for wrongdoing. In relation to religion as a basic human good and to its corresponding primary practical principle, for example, Grisez's theory holds that it is possible for persons to make free choices in relation to religion only because it is a field of practical possibility that one can grasp as a possibility for pursuing an aspect of human fulfilment *before* one faces the further moral issue of whether and how one ought to choose to instantiate it in a particular choice. Therefore, the goodness of "religion" is not from the very beginning moral goodness, strictly speaking, but more general practical goodness. One can be faced with the moral question of whether to pursue the good of religion in a particular way or not because this basic good can be pursued in ways that respect all the other goods fully or in ways that fail to respect all the goods fully. The former are morally good ways of pursuing (and instantiating) religion; the latter are morally bad ways of doing so.

²⁸ The first phase (practical rationality in its most general form) is looked at in *Christian Moral Principles* chapter seven, questions C and D; the second phase (practical rationality in its fullest form, morality) is looked at in *Christian Moral Principles* chapter seven, questions E – G, and the following chapters, eight to twelve.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 178.

3.2.2 *Basic goods and moral goodness are distinct but related*

So, it is part of Grisez's moral theory that at the most foundational level the basic good of religion is not yet a fully *moral* good. It is a "practical good", so to speak, though to a limited extent, in that it enables human persons to participate at least partially in the good of harmony with God (insofar as we understand God and harmony with God). Nevertheless, it is clearly part of Grisez's moral theory that it is morally wrong to pursue the good of religion in an unnecessarily limited or partial way. One ought to pursue harmony with God in a moral way. Pursuit of religion is moral only when it is done as directed by the first principle of morality and its specifications in the modes of responsibility.³⁰

3.2.3 *Harmony with God can be blocked by non-moral factors too*

It is possible to pursue the good of religion and to act to instantiate it without participating fully in that good even though the failure is not a moral failure, (i.e. in one's own control). Religion as a basic good is an essential aspect of "integral human fulfillment", which is the fullness of being a human person in all aspects, including both existential and substantive goods, and including both individual and social aspects of human well-being.³¹ It is possible, and ultimately inevitable, that one will fail to achieve the substantive goods (life and health, knowledge and appreciation of beauty, excellence in work and play) even whilst making upright moral choices in pursuit of them. A morally good person can be unhealthy or ignorant or inept through

³⁰ On the first principle of morality, see *ibid.*, 184-189 and on the modes see 189-195 and 205-226. The first principle of morality is "In voluntarily acting for human goods and avoiding what is opposed to them, one ought to choose and otherwise will those and only those possibilities whose willing is compatible with a will toward integral human fulfillment" (184).

³¹ *Ibid.*, 132. Although Grisez moves away from this concept in his 2008 article (see s. 6.3 above), his moral theory continues to place the *integral* fulfillment of us as human persons, as individuals in community, at its centre.

no fault of his own, and yet be morally good.³² One's instantiation of reflexive goods is also limited by social factors outside one's control.

Moral goodness is only a part of integral human fulfilment, of human happiness. This implies that virtuous pursuit of the specific good of religion can be engaged in without the actual achievement of substantive goods such as knowledge or excellence in one's performance (or without achieving life/health). Nevertheless, ideally, one ought to pursue the good *integrally*, with due regard for all the various aspects of human fulfilment: "The upright person is concerned not only to choose rightly but also to serve all the human goods."³³

If one's pursuit and instantiation of harmony with God is limited unnecessarily, in a way that one could avoid, then one is pursuing or instantiating religion immorally and imperfectly; and if one's pursuit and instantiation of harmony with God is limited only in a way that is outside one's control, then one is pursuing and instantiating the good of religion in a moral, upright way (even though the *effectiveness* of one's participation in harmony with God might still be imperfect due to non-moral factors such as inculpable ignorance).

3.2.4a One ought to understand basic goods integrally

This idea of the necessity (for personal uprightness) of one's being interested in serving *all* the human goods is central to Grisez's understanding of how generally

³² See *ibid.*, 128-130.

³³ *Ibid.*, 132.

practical reasoning becomes properly moral reasoning.³⁴ Grisez is at pains to avoid the idea that one can or ought to understand or pursue any basic human good, including religion, as an isolated or absolute good. Ideally one ought to understand and pursue any good, including religion, in a way that is open to all the other goods. So, although one can grasp the point of pursuing harmony with God prior to any understanding of religion as one of an integral set of interrelated, irreducible, diverse and incommensurable basic goods, one grasps the point of religion, and instantiates it more *effectively*, as well as morally, only when one understands it integrally.

3.2.4b Religion can be understood on different levels

It can be said, in light of the points above, that Grisez's moral theory presents a complex idea of religion as a basic human good. Religion can be understood on at least two levels:

- a. At its most basic, religion is a generally practical good. It appeals to our basic rational interest in pursuing, in and through action, harmony with God and avoiding conflict with God.
- b. At a more developed level, religion is a precisely moral good. It appeals to our rational interest in harmony with God, in a way that is simultaneously open and dedicated to all the other forms of human goodness specified in the diverse basic human goods.

3.2.4c Understanding religion at the moral level of Grisez's theory

Looking at point (b) in more detail, we can say that the goodness of religion *can be understood fully* only at the moral level of understanding, even though the practical principle that directs us to pursue the good of religion is grasped even at the merely practical level. So, a full understanding of the goodness of religion can be had only at

³⁴ This is one major theme of chapter seven of *Christian Moral Principles*.

the moral level, which, as it were, subsumes the lower, practical level, and enables the person to see religion in the fullest light of reason: integral reason, right reason.³⁵

To understand what has just been said we need to look a little further at the moral phase of practical reasoning. This phase is controlled by the first principle of morality, which is specified by the “modes of responsibility”.³⁶ Therefore, one’s pursuit of religion, which ought to be directed not only by the first principle of practical reasoning and the specific primary practical principle directing one to pursue the good of religion, but also by the first principle of morality, ought to be shaped by all the modes (when relevant, of course). One ought to avoid pursuing or instantiating harmony with God in a way that violates any of the modes.³⁷ This rules out any pursuit of harmony with God that lacks proper concern with the full range of the basic human goods, or that is fettered by inertia, as directed by the first mode. It also rules out any approach to religion that is overly individualistic or that overlooks the value of cooperation, as the second mode directs. Pursuit of religion that is motivated by unreasonable emotional desires is also ruled out as immoral, according to the third mode, and the fourth mode rules out pursuit of religion shaped by unreasonable fear or disgust. The fifth mode concerns being impartial or fair in all one’s choices, so any pursuit of religion that is unfair or unjust is ruled out by this mode. The sixth mode

³⁵ See *Christian Moral Principles*, 187. This point concerns only a logical relationship, not a chronological one. It is possible that a person might initially grasp the good of religion in a way that simultaneously unites the two phases of practical reasoning, thus grasping its practical point in a way that is immediately truly moral. It needs to be said that the point here about the necessity of seeing the good of religion at both the practical and moral levels or phases of practical rationality is not explicitly mentioned in *Christian Moral Principles*, but is implied by what is said there in a more general way.

³⁶ See *Christian Moral Principles* chapter eight for details of all eight modes of responsibility. See Appendix Two below for details on the modes of responsibility and the first principle of morality as presented in *Christian Moral Principles*.

³⁷ The application of the eight modes of responsibility that follows in this paragraph is my own; Grisez does not apply them all to religion in chapter eight of *Christian Moral Principles* or elsewhere in that work, or in any of his works. None of Grisez’s critics seem to have noticed the relevance of the modes to one’s understanding of the basic human goods.

rules out choices that are superficial, concerned with empirical aspects of goods in a way that interferes with a more perfect sharing in a good or avoidance of a bad – so any pursuit of religion that is unreasonably focussed on its empirical aspects is judged immoral by this mode. Religion that embodies vengeful or unreasonable hostile feelings is ruled out by the seventh mode. Finally, any approach to religion that would either absolutise it above the other goods, or treat it as inferior to one or more of them, is definitively ruled out by the eighth mode.

3.3 How one comes to be aware of the good of religion

3.3.1 Religion is not necessarily a virtue, but more basic

Even though it is clear from Grisez's theory that it is only from the fully moral point of view that a person can fully understand the good of religion and effectively pursue it, it is also clear that Grisez's moral theory holds that one's grasp of the principle directing one to pursue religion is not dependent on one's being virtuous. At the most basic level or phase, practical reasoning is available to all, even sinners. How does one come to know, at this most basic level or phase, the natural primary principle directing one to pursue and instantiate the intrinsic good of religion?³⁸

³⁸ We analyse here how Grisez's moral theory accounts for how one can come to know by reason the principle directing us to pursue the good of religion for its own sake. Obviously, one can come to know the good of religion by being brought up within a religious tradition and community and learning about religion and how to be religious from a very young age. It could be said that for many people, perhaps most, this is the way they first learn about the good of religion. It could also be argued that Grisez's natural law theory, whilst it does not discount this way of coming to know the good of religion, tends not to mention it much, and that this is a weakness in his theory. Still, even a person who is brought up in a religious context still needs to grasp naturally the basic practical principle that harmony with God is worth pursuing *for its own sake*. Our treatment of how religion is naturally grasped as a good indicates how such a person, and all persons, can come to be aware of the intrinsic practical worth of religion (and not just the worth of being true to one's social identity or united with one's social group, for example, which would be grounded in basic human goods other than religion).

The principle directing one to pursue the good of harmony with God, and the other primary principles corresponding with the other basic human goods, “cannot be learned as conclusions from more basic truths.”³⁹ One does not deduce a primary practical principle from any prior principle. Nor does one learn it from experience in the way that one learns what *is* the case from experience. Knowing the principle directing one to pursue the good of religion “is to understand something of human possibility”.⁴⁰ With the frame of mind that asks “What might I bring about or not bring about?”, shaped by the practical principle *Good is to be done and pursued*, “people experience their tendencies and understand in them possibilities which could be satisfied by action.”⁴¹ These tendencies are natural, arising from one’s human nature, and interpreting them in a practical frame of mind enables one to project “possibilities implicit in one’s naturally given tendencies”.⁴² One is not necessarily virtuous in being able to do this: one is virtuous only when one does this in a way that respects the integral directiveness of all the basic goods, and chooses in a way that is not just practical, but fully and integrally (i.e. morally) practical.

³⁹ Ibid., 181. This is why Grisez, following the clear lead of Aquinas in *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 94, 2, refers to the primary principles of the natural law as self-evident, *per se nota*. James Hanink notices one implication of this in “A Theory of Basic Goods: Structure and Hierarchy,” *The Thomist* 52 (1988): 235, “There is no demonstration that a given basic good is such nor even that there are basic goods. That is, there is no argument for such conclusions whose premises we must accept on the pain of self-contradiction. For if self-contradiction threatens, a skeptic could always impoverish his life so as to see as unattractive what which is attractive or to treat as instrumental that which is not. So here we can only recommend that the skeptic ‘look again’.” Hanink is only partially correct in his final point, in that one could argue with a sceptic using dialectical arguments for a good or goods: see s. 6.1.1 below.

⁴⁰ *Christian Moral Principles*, 195.

⁴¹ Ibid., 196.

⁴² Ibid., 196 and also 182-183.

3.3.2 *How knowledge of the good of religion is naturally acquired*

Knowing the basic principle directing one to pursue the good of religion is not something that happens suddenly out of nowhere, so to speak, with no antecedent conditions or experience. Knowledge of the good of religion is not innate and it is not a data-less intuition. It is acquired as follows. Firstly, people become aware of substantive goods, such as life and productive activities. How? People experience their “natural inclinations and the things which fulfill these inclinations” and bring satisfaction. Then they gain practical insight into “the total experience of natural inclinations and their fulfillment” and so they can “project goods as possibilities which can be realized by [their] own action”. Thus, people first act spontaneously to realize some basic human goods and then they learn to act by free choice for them. Finally, having come to learn to pursue and instantiate substantive basic goods by their free choices and commitments, the “experience of free choice itself becomes part of the data for understanding existential goods”, which include religion.⁴³

Grisez does not directly apply these points to the good of religion in the chapters of *Christian Moral Principles* where he elaborates his natural law theory, but he does discuss in an earlier chapter of *Christian Moral Principles* (in a lengthy appendix to chapter 2) some points about how one is to understand one’s naturally possible knowledge of God, and part of this discussion offers some clues as to what are the

⁴³ Ibid., 181. Grisez gives the brief example of curiosity and the development of understanding of the good of knowledge, and also mentions the goods of friendship and justice here, but does not mention religion.

natural tendencies concerning religion and the experiences that makes possible practical insight into the basic good of religion.⁴⁴

3.3.3 Realities grounding our grasp of the good of religion

Grisez outlines “the general form of the reasoning by which one comes to know God from experience”, a form that he says is “simple enough”.⁴⁵ Reason “follows the pointing of [the world of experience and the knowing self] beyond themselves”. The experience that we have as humans of the world is “in many ways ... incomplete”. It is natural to engage in reasoning to try to fill the gaps thus experienced and known by seeking after causes.⁴⁶ The incompleteness of the world is felt in the various ways that the world fails to satisfy “the human mind and heart”. Grisez refers to four universal human realities to specify what is meant here.⁴⁷

- a. Our awareness that we will die; this fact seems absurd to persons, who have an inherent sense of their own dignity.
- b. Our awareness of solidarity and community with ancestors and descendants; this suggests another dimension of reality, outside time and space, in which we remain with others.
- c. Our poignant sense of evil, especially our own guilt, which cries out for salvation and forgiveness.
- d. The realization that the world of things which come to be and pass away needs as a principle of its reality something independent in being.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 63-67, a substantial appendix to the chapter on free choice, in which Grisez discusses how one can understand the compatibility of free choice with God’s causality. Our main concern here is with one page in particular: 65.

⁴⁵ All quotes in this paragraph are from *Christian Moral Principles*, 65, unless otherwise noted. Grisez makes reference to Rom 1:20 and the teaching of Vatican I in support of his approach to showing how God’s existence can be known by reason. Even children and simple people can come to know of God’s existence by this kind of reasoning, and philosophers can engage in it in a sophisticated manner.

⁴⁶ See *ibid.*, 64.

⁴⁷ The wording is taken directly from *ibid.*, 65, but the formatting is added.

This final point, the realization that contingent reality needs a cause that “must have its reality of itself”, is described by Grisez as “shaping all this experience”. In other words, the first three experiences (of mortality, of community and its limitations, and of evil and guilt) are shaped by our overall sense that our experienced world and selves are radically incomplete and in need of explanation and meaning from some source that is different from us, and all contingent being, in that it has its being from nothing else more basic or primordial than itself.⁴⁸

After referring briefly to the four limitations of the world, listed above as (a) to (d), Grisez summarises his cosmological argument.⁴⁹ He then sums up his overall position:

Nothing within the world of experience nor even the human self grasped in knowing this world is able to remove the absurdity of death, unite the community of humankind, overcome evil, and account for the reality of things not real of themselves. And so an Other, apart from the world of experience but required by it, is posited as an invisible and higher reality. This Other almost inevitably is thought of as a person or as something like a person. Virtually every human group seeks ways to live without tension and in harmony with this quasi-personal Other. The ways diverse peoples find and use constitute their religions. Thus, religion of some sort is almost a universal phenomenon.⁵⁰

Along with the experiences thus specified, in which we are aware of the frustration of our practical pursuit of life, community, inner peace and authenticity, and knowledge,⁵¹ we have an awareness of our inherent dignity and human solidarity and

⁴⁸ Point (d) above was treated by Grisez in great detail in *Beyond the New Theism*, which was treated in the previous chapter: see s. 2.5 above, especially 2.5.2.

⁴⁹ *Christian Moral Principles*, 65-66.

⁵⁰ Given the direct reference to religion in this quote from page 65 of *Christian Moral Principles*, it is somewhat surprising that the page, and the appendix it forms part of, are not mentioned in the index under the heading of “religion”; see *ibid.*, 944.

⁵¹ The direct reference here to the frustration of our pursuit of the basic human goods is my own, not Grisez’s in *Christian Moral Principles*. The last point about knowledge, in particular, goes beyond Grisez. His last point, point (d) above, is interpreted as expressing, among other things, the frustration

our need for salvation and hope, as well as our awareness of the universal necessity for contingent being to have an uncaused cause. It is experiences such as these, and the reasoning by which we seek to make sense out of such experiences, that ground our knowledge of the practical principle directing us to seek the good of religion in and through our action.

A person can come to have the practical insight that it would be good to pursue harmony with God because the four experiences mentioned by Grisez are problems on a very large scale, in fact, on the largest scales we can think of: the historical, global, and cosmic scales.⁵² We can pursue the good of life, for example, in concrete instantiations, as we try to deal with individual or even social instances of illness and threats to health, but we find ourselves with a more-than-human problem when we face the fact that all our efforts to pursue life are doomed to fail ultimately. In such circumstances, which are universal and keenly felt by humanity in virtually all cultures, it is easy to grasp the point of trying to achieve some measure of harmony with the ultimate Source of life, in the hope of coping with mortality. It is the same with the other three experiences – failure to maintain community, to deal with guilt, to account for contingency – they all point human persons beyond the merely human toward a more-than-human Source that it would be good to know about and be at peace with, even to a limited extent. Hence the primary practical principle directing us to pursue religion (however we can) is grasped naturally.⁵³

of our pursuit of the good of knowledge. See also s. 4.1 below for how Grisez develops his thinking in the 1987 article co-authored with Finnis and Boyle.

⁵² This paragraph goes beyond what Grisez says in *Christian Moral Principles*.

⁵³ Later in *Christian Moral Principles*, Grisez explains how this rational desire for harmony with God, which presupposes such experiences as we have seen here, along with our rational desire to know the truth about life and history, are the natural grounds for our ability to freely choose to make the act of

3.3.4 One's initial grasp of religion can and must develop

This natural grasp of the good of religion is not initially a full understanding of the goodness of religion; nor is it a complete understanding of God; nor is it a complete knowledge of how one is to pursue harmony with God. Initially one grasps the good of religion as something very basic and very simple. Even a child (beyond the age of reason) can grasp rationally the good of religion in this basic way. However, the very basic understanding of religion that one begins with can be developed, and indeed must be developed, as is the case with the other basic human goods too:

Experience of fulfillment together with theoretical inquiry leads to more or less detailed practical sketches of the basic goods... The secondary parts of the understanding of the basic forms of human goodness can develop and vary, and they can include mistakes and thus be open to correction ... The various levels of existential harmony are understood as good on the basis of human tendencies no less fundamental than the urges to survive, to play, and to understand. For everyone wants peace of mind, friends, and a favorable relationship with unseen Power. But differences in experience and in theoretical beliefs make a great difference in how people conceive these goods in specific detail.⁵⁴

The term "religion" in Grisez's moral theory does not denote necessarily a fully worked out set of beliefs and/or practices about God and his will; still less does it denote necessarily true religious beliefs or effective religious practices. The basic human good of religion is seen by Grisez as a field of human possibility to be explored and, ideally, to be more and more accurately understood and effectively instantiated through action at the individual and social levels.

faith, thus accepting God's revelation and entering into the new covenant. See ss. 3.4.2, 3.4.3 and 3.4.4 below.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 196.

The practical principle directing one to pursue and instantiate the good of religion calls for more than just the initial basic grasp of the point of such a pursuit and (attempted) instantiation to be effective.⁵⁵ The primary part of the principle directing one to pursue the good of religion seems to be seen by Grisez as rather “thin” in content, so to speak, but once one grasps the basic insight that it would be good to pursue harmony with God, in some way and however minimally one understands what is meant by “God”, one has grasped the point and knows the principle.⁵⁶ However, there seems to be a complexity to the good of religion and to the principle directing us to pursue it, in that the “secondary parts”⁵⁷ of one’s understanding of the good of religion can and must be developed and, insofar as one is in error, corrected.

Although Grisez insists that the primary practical principles, including the one directing toward the good of religion, are basic and underived, not in any way deduced from theoretical knowledge, it is evident that he does not want to completely separate the practical from the theoretical. His moral theory fully acknowledges that theoretical knowledge can and should be a major factor in how our initial grasp of the

⁵⁵ Another way of putting this is to say that the good of religion is just one of the basic human goods, not the whole of the good. So too is inner consistency (or authenticity, as Grisez sometimes calls it). It is not enough for a person to be sincere and conscientious in his or her pursuit of the goods, including religion: a conscientious person will also want to be objectively correct in his or her knowledge. We should remember that knowledge is one of the basic human goods and that the goods form an *integral* set.

⁵⁶ It needs to be said, however, that Grisez does not develop clearly in *Christian Moral Principles* philosophical answers to the questions: How do we know that the more-than-human source of reality wants to help us deal with our more-than-humanly-solvable problems? How do we know that harmony with the more-than-human source of all reality will bring us peace and fulfillment? Grisez’s attention as a moral theologian is on how divine revelation accepted in faith answers these questions, rather than with specifically philosophical answers to them. Still, Grisez had addressed some philosophical issues in great detail in *Beyond the New Theism* (see s. 2.5 above) and addresses some aspects in works subsequent to *Christian Moral Principles* (see s. 5.1.4 below, which looks at his approach to faith in *Living a Christian Life*).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

goodness of religion, and the other basic goods, is developed and made more and more correct and practically effective.

3.4 The place of the good of religion in Grisez's moral theology: faith

3.4.1 Theological development of one's knowledge of the good of religion

It could be argued that the major part of *Christian Moral Principles*, chapters nineteen through thirty six, is devoted to a theological development of our understanding of, and participation in, the goods of knowledge and religion, and that this development includes a great deal of theoretical knowledge about God, revelation, faith, Christology, Christian modes of responsibility, prayer and sacraments, and Church authority. This knowledge is theoretical in that it concerns what was, what is, and what will be.⁵⁸ This theological information and elaboration is presented with a practical aim in mind, of course, and not just theoretical interest, and so it is possible that someone who reads it with a practical frame of mind shaped by primary practical principles, which are outlined in chapters five, seven and eight of *Christian Moral Principles*, will be greatly helped *to do something*: to pursue and instantiate the goods of knowledge and religion (and, indeed, other basic goods too) in the most effective and fulfilling way – “The Way of the Lord Jesus”.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ The term “theoretical” is not used here to mean hypothetical, or abstract, or irrelevant, as it often is in everyday usage. It is used here, and constantly in Grisez's theory, in its Aristotelian sense, always in contrast to “practical”. Theoretical knowledge is knowledge of what is given already, of what is (or was, or will be); practical knowledge is knowledge of what is to be, or what ought to be. Theoretical knowledge is descriptive; practical knowledge is prescriptive.

⁵⁹ It is also possible that a reader of *Christian Moral Principles* could approach it in a purely theoretical frame of mind and so miss its practical religious importance and value.

3.4.2 *The bridge between natural law and moral theology: the act of faith*

It would seem that here we are at the intersection or bridge between strictly natural law theory and moral theology proper. The key to understanding how Grisez sees this intersection or bridge is found by studying how he analyses the act of Christian faith.⁶⁰ Christian faith is “the acceptance of [God’s] personal communication”.⁶¹ It is not merely the acceptance of information about God or his existence, which might be motivated by only the specific pursuit of the good of knowledge. Faith is a choice, not an inevitable acknowledgment of self-evident or obvious facts or logical conclusions. Faith is essentially concerned with “a personal relationship”.⁶²

One has good reasons to put one’s faith in God’s revelation; it is not an arbitrary choice, even though it is a free choice. “It is a choice made for the sake of the human goods of truth and religion.”⁶³ This highlights the reasonableness of the human act of faith. There exist “factors that make it possible to give responsible assent”⁶⁴ to God’s revelation. There are “provisional grounds of faith which finally matures into absolute acceptance of God’s self-revelation”.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Grisez deals with this in chapter twenty of *Christian Moral Principles*, questions B to F, and in chapter twenty four, question D.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 482.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 480.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 485. In the moral order, the good of *truth* and the good of *knowledge* are synonymous: someone seeking knowledge is seeking truth. So Grisez often uses the two terms interchangeably. Whether one actually finds objective truth depends on moral factors and non-moral factors. In this respect, the basic good of knowledge is similar to the good of religion, the effective instantiation of which is also limited by moral factors and non-moral factors, as examined above. Someone seeking a basic human good is acting subjectively, but is seeking the objective reality of the good sought. Subjective and objective are closely linked in Grisez’s moral theory and in morality.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 486. Grisez makes reference in his main text to the teaching of Trent and Vatican I, and to the theological analysis of Aquinas, in his treatment of faith. Grisez mentions as two initial provisional grounds for faith the fact that people often and reasonably rely on testimony that seems honest, and that the preaching of the Gospel is accompanied by signs that back up its truth.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, referring to Mark 8:22-26, John 4:6-42 as examples.

Two motivating factors for faith, which are closely related to the good of religion, are mentioned later in the same chapter of *Christian Moral Principles*. First, we have a moral responsibility to acknowledge the reality of sin and strive to avoid it and its consequences, and this motivates the act of faith because faith “is necessary for justification and the overcoming of all the humanly devastating consequences of sin”.⁶⁶ Second, because we live in a situation of sin and temptation, “the act of faith and fidelity to it are not only morally required but are in one’s own best interests. The alternative is failure to be fulfilled, now and eternally, both as a human individual and as one called to membership in the divine family.”⁶⁷ Thus, the human act of faith is seen by Grisez as motivated, especially in its initial stage, by our intelligent desires both to avoid sin (and its effects) and seek harmony with God, and avoid ignorance and seek knowledge of God and his will.

As said already, faith is not the acceptance of bare facts or information, but an acceptance of personal communication by which God invites the human person into communion with him. This communication from God is mediated through the Church: “Thus, converts come to the Church and seek faith from her in baptism because they think her teaching true and her way of life a sound path to peace with God.”⁶⁸ Pursuing the good of religion is not an exclusively individualistic thing, but has a necessary community and tradition dimension.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 492.

⁶⁷ Ibid. The two motivating factors mentioned by Grisez here echo the experiences and kinds of awareness presupposed by our grasp of the good of religion: human mortality, social disintegration, evil and guilt, and the mystery of contingency: see s. 3.3.3 above.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 485. Note the reference to the goods of knowledge and religion as motivating factors for the human act of faith. (The phrase “peace with God” is another way of referring to the good of religion.) It

3.4.3 *The basic goods of knowledge and religion are interrelated*

As faith is chosen for the sake of religion and knowledge, the interplay or combination of these two basic goods should be acknowledged.⁶⁹ As we have already seen, we can and do pursue the basic goods in combination with each other. In particular, Grisez mentions the substantive goods being “vehicles” for the reflexive goods.⁷⁰ This combination of the substantive good of knowledge and the reflexive good of religion would seem to be a case in point. One’s knowledge and understanding of how the good of religion is to be instantiated and pursued is something that grows and develops as one’s knowledge of religion grows and develops so that one is more surely in touch with reality (which is the object of the good of knowledge).⁷¹ Before one can make the act of Christian faith, one needs to know more than the basic principle that religion “is to be done and pursued” (following the first principle of practical reasoning and its specification regarding that particular aspect of human fulfillment). One needs one’s initial, general grasp of the principle to be further specified by accurate knowledge of what is involved in the good of religion. In particular, given the fact that God has revealed truths about himself and his will, and that man is a fallen creature who finds it difficult to know the truth about God, one needs to know, at least to some extent, central elements of God’s revelation before one can fully understand the nature of true religion and know

could be argued that Grisez does not give enough attention to people who are brought up in the faith and who never explicitly “convert” to it. Still, it would not be difficult to adapt what he does say to the situation of people who are brought up as Christians, who stand in need of continual conversion.

⁶⁹ This is a point only implied by Grisez’s treatment of the issues in *Christian Moral Principles*.

⁷⁰ Grisez clearly acknowledges that a person can choose a single act for more than one motive, or, in other words, in pursuit of more than one basic human good: see *ibid.*, 181-182. See also s. 3.1.8 above.

⁷¹ Pursuit of the good of knowledge has as its object the achievement of contact with objective reality, knowledge of what is real. Those who criticise Grisez for being too subjectivist seem to overlook his emphasis on the good of knowledge as an integral part of human fulfillment and of morality.

how to pursue it soundly and effectively. Then, interpreted in light of one's practical insights that it would be good to be in (greater) harmony with God and to know God better, one's knowledge of what God has revealed in Christ and through the Church puts one in a position to make the act of faith as a freely chosen human act.

This shows that the practical good of religion, or at least its effective instantiation, can be specified in the light of one's theoretical knowledge, one's knowledge of what is, or was, or will be – as revealed by God in Christ and mediated by the Church. In fact, the good of religion ought to be thus specified if one is to be in touch objectively with reality and to act in a way that is totally reasonable.

3.4.4 Faith is a human act and more

It is clear that the Catholic Church considers the act of faith to be the most adequate response to reality, a response that is completely reasonable. Grisez agrees fully. According to him, the act of faith is “a reasonable, free human act” from start to finish.⁷² However, the act of faith is more than just a human act made for the sake of human goods. Following the constant teaching of the Church, Grisez insists that “faith is both a human act and a divine gift”.⁷³

From the human side, the one who makes the commitment of faith causes himself or herself “to share in the human goods of the Christian community”; not only that, but

⁷² Ibid., referring to the teaching of Vatican I.

⁷³ Ibid., 487.

the act of faith “contributes to constituting, from the believer’s side, the intimate relationship with God”.⁷⁴ But then:

in the act of living faith, one’s acceptance of God’s proposal is transformed by being made out of love for him. The transformation occurs by God’s gift, the love poured forth in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, and not by a self-creative act of our own. Thus, we participate in divinity by our own free choice – not, however, by constituting ourselves divine, but by God’s so constituting us.⁷⁵

3.4.5 *The motivations of Christian acts*

There is, therefore, in the single act of living faith *a self-constituting dimension* corresponding to human action for the goods of religion and knowledge, which disposes us to live for integral human fulfilment, and *a God-constituted dimension* corresponding to the gift of God’s love poured into our hearts, which disposes us to live for God’s goodness.

The self-constituting dimension causes the one who makes the act of faith (for the sake of knowledge and religion)

to share in the human goods of Christian community, such as religion and truth – for example, one becomes a catechumen, associates with members of the Church, participates in some of their religious acts, such as prayers, and receives instruction in the faith.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Ibid., 485. Note that Grisez says that the human act of faith “contributes to constituting” our relationship with God, not that it “constitutes” it. Grisez does not hold that we can constitute our relationship with God totally by ourselves and our choices. God’s action is necessary too.

⁷⁵ Ibid. It should be noted in what follows that often in *Christian Moral Principles* Grisez uses the following phrases virtually interchangeably (though not without nuance): the love of God, God’s love, the divine goodness, our sharing in divine life, our sharing in the divine nature, charity, the gift of the Spirit, God’s love poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, our status as God’s children, sanctifying grace. I will follow this usage here. Some aspects of this are controversial, but this present work does not enter into all the complicated difficulties: for more details, see *Christian Moral Principles*, 592-595, 614-616 and 681-682.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 485.

Grisez does not see the good of “religion” as pertaining only to the pre-baptism stage of Christian life. He says also that the act of living faith, in its being at the same time both human and divine, and its being the primary act of the Christian life, the fundamental option of the Christian, “is the paradigm for every other act of Christian life”.⁷⁷ Religion (and knowledge) *continue* to motivate and shape the acts of one’s Christian life after faith and baptism, because such acts also are human acts rationally motivated for the sake of religion (along with other goods, including knowledge).

However, as the human agents who choose the acts of Christian life are now children of God who share in divine life, their acts will be motivated and shaped in a way that is also divine, and so they are also “divine acts”, in a mysterious way. In other words, all human acts of the Christian life will be motivated both by the basic human goods, especially religion and knowledge, and also by the divine goodness, present in the divine life given to us by the Holy Spirit when we make the act of faith and receive baptism.

3.4.6 Natural and supernatural are both gifts of God, but distinctly so

Thus, in his analysis of the act of faith, Grisez sees faith as having two dimensions: it is a human act motivated by the goods of knowledge and religion, a free choice undertaken for humanly grasped reasons (but not determined by them); at the same time, it is a divine gift received by the one who makes the human free choice. The former, it could be said, refers to the level of nature and natural law, the dimension of reality constituted by our basic awareness of practical principles, followed by reasoning, deliberation, choosing and acting for human goods; the latter could be said

⁷⁷ Ibid.

to refer to a higher dimension than nature and natural law, a supernatural dimension, in which man can share in the divine life and divine nature not by his deliberation and choice or action, but by God's choice, action and gift.⁷⁸ In making this distinction between the free choice of the believer to believe and the free choice of God to pour his love into our hearts (see Rom 5:5),⁷⁹ Grisez is following what was said in the Decree on Justification of the Council of Trent.⁸⁰

One major aim of Grisez's here is to clarify "how God's love invites, respects, and ultimately divinizes a human being".⁸¹ The phrase "God's love invites" indicates the fact that the act of faith is right from the very start (and not only ultimately) God's gift. The points made by Grisez in his analysis of faith are not meant to suggest that the "natural" aspect of the act of faith, its being a human free act for the sake of religion and knowledge, is unrelated to God, or independent of God, and that only the ultimate supernatural aspect of faith is dependent on God. No, both the natural and the supernatural aspects of faith are fully dependent on God. As Grisez often says in his

⁷⁸ Again, it needs to be noted that Grisez does not use the language of "natural law" and "supernatural dimension" in this respect; but the language used here corresponds to what Grisez is saying in *Christian Moral Principles*. See *ibid.*, 478, paragraph 3.

⁷⁹ Romans 5:5 is a biblical text that Grisez refers to often in *Christian Moral Principles*, as can be seen by looking at the scripture index in *Christian Moral Principles*, 957.

⁸⁰ See *ibid.*, 583-586. An English translation of the Council of Trent's Decree on Justification can be found online at <http://www.americancatholictruthsociety.com/docs/TRENT/trent6.htm> [accessed 17th July 2008]. Perhaps it could be argued that much of the difficulty of this part of Grisez's theology is simply the effect of the complexity of the issues involved, which are virtually impossible to reconcile in one, totally clear understanding. It is notoriously difficult to see how to put together into one coherent understanding of reality: God's free gift of grace, God's universal causality, our free choices, our good works, and the contributions to our salvation of God's grace and our own good works. One might consult the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* on justification, grace and merit, and notice the way that Grisez is trying to be faithful to all the different aspects of the Church's teaching on these topics: see pars. 1987-2029.

⁸¹ *Christian Moral Principles*, 585.

work, our free choices are God's creation.⁸² God's justifying and sanctifying love respects our humanity by allowing us an active part in our own justification. Our active part in our own justification is not one that is independent of God's grace, of course, but one by which we initially cooperate with God's grace, which precedes any choice or act of our own, in making our free choice to believe and accept God's offer of a share in communion with him, and we continue to cooperate with God's grace and live out our communion in divine life by living a Christian life that is motivated by human goods and divine life.⁸³ Thus, our human act of faith, made for the sake of knowledge and religion, is changed into the "living faith which works through love (cf. Gal 5:6) and keeps the commandments".⁸⁴

Grisez sums up his point about the distinctive roles of religion and divine goodness in the act of living faith in this way:

One is prepared to accept the gospel because it is credible; seeing that one ought to believe it, one chooses to do so. Before receiving God's love, one makes this choice for the sake of some human good, such as avoiding God's punishment or enjoying his favor. Having accepted God's proposal and thereupon received his gift of love, however, one is disposed by this love toward the divine goodness which God is and which he shares with his children. Thus, one has *an additional reason, his goodness*, for choosing to listen to God and adhere to him faithfully. One's choice is thereby transformed, not as if one chose to assent to a different gospel, but by being *a differently motivated choice* to assent to the same gospel.⁸⁵

⁸² On this point, it is worth noting, for example, how often Grisez makes reference to Ephesians 2:10, in which our good works are clearly spoken of as God's creation. In the scripture index to *Christian Moral Principles*, this passage is shown to be referred to in seven places in the book. The substantial third appendix to chapter three of *Christian Moral Principles* deals in some detail with our choices as both free and caused by God. One might also refer to chapter eighteen of *Beyond the New Theism* for more on the topic of God's causing all our free choices, as he does every contingent reality.

⁸³ See *Christian Moral Principles*, 614-616, for Grisez's understanding of the various uses of "grace".

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 584, final note (referring to official Church teaching supporting the point) omitted.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 585, emphases added. The phrases "avoiding God's punishment or enjoying his favor" are another way to refer to the basic good of religion. Note how Grisez sees love of God going beyond the good of religion as such: love of God is love of God both for himself and as he shares his own divine life with us.

3.4.7 Divine goodness and human goodness are distinct but related

Grisez makes a clear distinction between two types of good: the human good and the divine good. They are distinct and irreducible to one another, but they are related too. Although our human act of faith is not for the sake of the divine goodness in any direct way, our human act of faith, made for the sake of the basic human goods of religion and knowledge, *is necessary* for our receiving the gift of God's love poured into hearts, justifying and transforming us. Earlier in *Christian Moral Principles*, Grisez said that constant openness to all the human goods (i.e. moral goodness)

is important for one's future choices, for one's attitude toward other people's choices, *and for one's readiness to accept a share in divine life, which includes in a higher mode all the created goods of human persons.*⁸⁶

It is a mistake to see Grisez as putting the good of religion (and all the basic human goods in both their individual and integral directiveness) in a category totally unrelated to, and separated from, the divinely given gift of the love of God that forms *the principle of Christian life*.

How one's willingness to be morally good is related to one's sharing in divine life is further illuminated when Grisez says that

choices which conform to the primary principle of morality – a will to integral human fulfilment – leave open the possibility that the meaning of human life is not limited to what persons actually choose and attain, but derives at least in part from humankind's greater possibility of fulfilment in Jesus.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Ibid., 186, emphasis added. Again, it should be noted that it is clear in Grisez's natural law theory, and its theological development, that our natural openness to moral goodness is already God's gift to us, and not some achievement of our own, independent of God. See, for example, *ibid.*, chapter seven, questions A and B, on the natural law as participation in the eternal law.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 188. This point is a theological development of what Grisez had said in earlier works about the extremely important role of belief in God (as the transcendent source of all goods) in helping us to avoid making any basic human good the supreme good, and thus being immoral: see ss. 2.1.9, 2.3.4, and 2.7 above.

A genuinely religious attitude is seen as open to God's goodness:

A genuinely religious attitude acknowledges that human purposes and possibilities have meaning which transcends their particular significance for the individual – *meaning related in some way to God's goodness.*⁸⁸

The meaning of human life, including the natural law, is not confined to our natural fulfillment but also somehow includes openness to God's love and goodness and our possible fulfillment by grace.

3.4.8 *Sin and religion*

Grisez treats sin in *Christian Moral Principles* in a series of six chapters in between his treatment of natural law (chapters two through twelve) and his treatment of moral theology proper (chapters nineteen through thirty six).⁸⁹ Are these chapters on "sin" natural law theory or moral theology? They are filled with theological references and arguments, but it would be a mistake to think that Grisez, therefore, thinks of sin as an exclusively theological concept. He defines sin as

moral evil considered precisely insofar as it is contrary to the good of religion – contrary, that is, to the fulfillment of humankind's potential for harmony with God.⁹⁰

Sin is not something that only Christians (or Jews) can be aware of or commit; it is possible for anyone to be aware of and/or commit sin because anyone can know the natural law and choose to go against it:

⁸⁸ Ibid., emphasis added.

⁸⁹ Although the last two chapters of *Christian Moral Principles* can be seen as a kind of appendix to its moral theology proper, it is reasonable to include them under the heading of moral theology. Both chapters develop points made in earlier chapters concerning the relationship between conscience and the Church's teaching authority.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 314. This important reference to "religion" is not mentioned in the index entry for "religion", see *ibid.*, 944.

For *even without faith*, people can realize that immorality offends not only against reason and, often, the rights of one's neighbor *but also* against the more-than-human source of meaning and value called 'God'. One who violates moral requirements refuses to accept his or her limitation as a creature and implicitly rejects God's wisdom and love, the source of meaning and value in creation at large and in human life in particular.⁹¹

This (at least) implicit rejection of God's wisdom and love, which is a constitutive part of every immoral act that makes it a sin, is a violation of the natural law "and so violates the eternal law in which natural law participates."⁹² Such a sin by an unbeliever, (sometimes spoken of as a kind of "philosophical sin", as distinct from "theological sin" committed by those with faith), can be mortal.⁹³ It is clear, therefore, that failures to follow the natural law, and in particular failures to respect and serve the good of religion, can be mortal sins. Failure to love the good of religion is therefore a serious obstacle to sharing in the divine life that is the gift given by God in and through living faith (and baptism).

From what he says about religion and faith and sin, it can be argued that Grisez sees the good of religion as both a very important human good in its own right and a good that forms a kind of link between natural law and revealed law (or, in other words, between the natural morality of reason and the Christian moral life shaped by love of God). The good of religion is violated, at least implicitly, in every immoral will and act. And any immoral choice, or any kind of unwillingness to accept the primary

⁹¹ Ibid., 317, emphases added. This reference to religion is not indicated in the index to *Christian Moral Principles*. Grisez makes reference to Rom 1:18-22 just before this quote; to this could be added the famous reference of Paul to the natural law, in Rom 2:14-15, which supports the point made here, that even those without faith can know the reality of sin. Arguably, the words "at least" should be placed before the words "implicitly rejects God's wisdom and love", as it is obvious that Grisez accepts that one can explicitly reject God's wisdom and love by violating moral requirements.

⁹² Ibid. Grisez here echoes Aquinas's classic definition of natural law as the rational participation of the eternal law in the rational creature: see *Christian Moral Principles*, 174.

⁹³ See *ibid.*, 317-318.

principle of morality, is a kind of idolatry.⁹⁴ So any refusal (deliberate failure) to pursue and instantiate integrally the basic human goods is simultaneously both sin and a failure to live in harmony with God. Thus, the good of religion is violated in every immoral kind of willing, at least implicitly. The good of religion and avoidance of sin are intrinsically linked. Thus, the good of religion and our openness to receiving the love of God are intrinsically linked too.

3.4.9 Supernaturally transformed motivation: what does this mean?

The good of religion (along with knowledge) motivates the human act of faith, which is then transformed by charity/grace into a sharing in the divine life, the love of God. Even though the initial act of human faith, motivated by human goods, is transformed by God's love into justifying, living faith, this initial "act of reasonable submission" made for the sake of religion and knowledge "is not suspended when the gift of faith is received".⁹⁵ The good of religion is continually important for living faith. The transformation by God's love of a person's act of faith does not negate the basic human good of religion. Somehow the human good (of religion) and the divine good (of sharing in God's divine life of love) are linked, though distinct and irreducible to one another, and can operate in our motivation simultaneously.

But what is the relationship between the human goods, including the good of religion, and the divine goodness that we can share by God's gift? What is the nature of the transformation of motivation effected by the gift of God's love poured into our hearts

⁹⁴ See *ibid.*, 188. Note that Grisez does not confine his understanding of human voluntariness to only choices. One can be responsible for other kinds of willingness: see chapter nine of *Christian Moral Principles*.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 485.

by the Holy Spirit, and how is this divine love related to motivation toward human goods? How is the act of living faith, shaped by the infused disposition to love God with divine love itself, “differently motivated” than the act of faith carried out for the sake of religion and knowledge?⁹⁶

One possible answer to these questions is that the supernatural motivation provided by divine revelation accepted by living faith replaces the merely human motivation, with the result that divine goodness is seen as a new, better motivation for human acts, one that supersedes the motivation provided by basic human goods. This is a position that Grisez rejects totally.⁹⁷ He rejects the idea that the supernatural replaces the natural, that the love of God replaces our human love of integral human fulfillment in the basic goods. Religion is not, to coin a phrase, a “supergood”.

3.4.10 Biblical insights into the good of religion and its non-absoluteness

Grisez criticises certain aspects of the Old Covenant in the Old Testament.⁹⁸ Because they were affected by “the fallen human condition and living in the early stages of divine pedagogy which culminates with Jesus”,⁹⁹ the Israelites were inevitably lacking in a fully correct understanding of the basic human goods, and they misunderstood the good of religion, seeing it as a good that was more important than other goods. As “a side-effect of certain other aspects of divine revelation”,¹⁰⁰ the people of God in the

⁹⁶ See s. 3.4.6 below.

⁹⁷ One of the central themes of all Grisez’s work is that grace does not supersede or replace nature.

⁹⁸ See *ibid.*, chapter eight, question H, where Grisez treats the eighth mode of responsibility, which is: “One should not be moved by a stronger desire for one instance of an intelligible good to act for it by choosing to destroy, damage, or impede some other instance of an intelligible good” (216-222, at 216).

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 219.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 218.

Old Testament thought of their specific aspirations to be God's covenantal people as a higher good that relativised other goods, even the good of human life, and so they condoned, and even saw as God's command, war against their enemies and the widespread use of the death penalty.¹⁰¹

However, with Jesus an improved, more accurate understanding of religion is revealed: "Jesus undermines the traditional understanding of the subordination of other human goods to the good of religion."¹⁰² It is clear that Jesus is presented by Grisez, not only in the part of *Christian Moral Principles* being looked at here but throughout the book,¹⁰³ as the key to understanding how human goods and divine goodness are related. The *new* covenant that Jesus makes available to all humankind is a good, but it

is not a limited set of human goods, such as Israel hoped for. Hence, the relationship with God no longer demands the constrictions upon human fulfillment which were taken for granted as acceptable both by the Pharisees and the zealots.¹⁰⁴

This good, the new covenant, is a sharing in divine life by sharing in unity with Jesus, who is both fully human and fully divine.

¹⁰¹ See *ibid.*, 218-219 for details and biblical references.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 221. The phrase "traditional understanding" here refers to what Grisez takes to be the Old Testament's inadequate and provisional view of religion: that it takes precedence over all other goods.

¹⁰³ See especially *Christian Moral Principles*, chapters nineteen, twenty-two, and thirty-four.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 221. The Pharisees made the prescriptions of the law absolute and sought to separate themselves from evil; the Zealots tended to reduce the kingdom of God to a purely earthly political fulfillment and sought to destroy evil. Grisez sees Jesus as taking a very different approach, one of merciful and reconciling love.

3.5 The place of religion in Grisez's moral theology: Christology

3.5.1 Christological considerations are central

Grisez's moral theology is centred on the Incarnation, on Jesus as both fully human and fully divine, and on Jesus as the model for Christians.¹⁰⁵ An adequate Christology is essential for understanding how human and divine goodness are related. Specifically, understanding the role of religion in moral life is essential in coming to understand Jesus Christ; and understanding Christ sheds light on religion too.

3.5.2 Jesus pursued the basic human good of religion

As man, Jesus pursued the basic human good of religion. This pursuit was at the heart of his life and mission:

Jesus had to choose – and did choose – to live his human life in fulfillment of the unbreakable communion between him and the Father. This choice is his basic commitment. Scripture testifies that his basic commitment was a religious one: “My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work” (Jn 4:34, cf. Jn 5:30) ... A commitment to doing God's will is a commitment to the good of religion, that is, to that human fulfillment which consists in harmony between humankind and God. It is also a commitment to the persons involved: to humankind and to God.¹⁰⁶

Jesus did the will of the Father, pursuing his basic commitment to the good of religion, by finding and carrying out his own personal vocation, which was “to overcome sin and communicate divine life to fallen humankind by establishing a new

¹⁰⁵ See *ibid.*, chapters twenty-one and twenty-two.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 530, emphasis in original. Paragraph numbers are omitted (the quote moves from paragraph one into paragraph two of chapter twenty-two, question B). Note that Jesus' pursuit of the good of religion is not exclusively individualistic, but includes at its heart a deep concern for the good of man. By his pursuit and instantiation of harmony with the Father, Jesus makes possible harmony with the Father for the whole human race insofar as people can be united with Jesus.

and lasting covenant.”¹⁰⁷ Facing extreme opposition to this commitment and personal vocation from the religious and political leaders of his day, Jesus remained faithful even when faced with the threat of execution. His free acceptance of death carries out his personal vocation and is redemptive. Jesus’ free acceptance of the cross

is a gift to the Father. The Father receives and approves this gift and in return raises Jesus from the dead. The gift and response together perfect the relationship of friendship between Jesus as man and the Father; this relationship displaces the alienation from God of fallen humankind. This new relationship is more than the friendship of the old covenant, for by it Jesus, as Word Incarnate, communicates divine life to his human brothers and sisters.¹⁰⁸

3.5.3 *Jesus, sacrifice and the good of religion*

Thus, sacrifice is at the heart of Jesus’ mission and our redemption by him. Sacrifice is also at the heart of the good of religion: “Sacrifice is central to all religion. The very notion of sacrifice involves a gift offered to God”¹⁰⁹ Sacrifice involves offering to God what he has already given us (everything being God’s gift in the first place) as an effective sign of a harmonious relationship with him. Sacrifice also involves accepting difficulty or loss and is therefore a sign of one’s sincere devotion to God. The most important thing in offering sacrifice is the attitude of the one who offers the sacrifice, the sincerity and purity of heart with which the gift is offered. Also, it is important that God accept the sacrifice.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 532. By “personal vocation”, Grisez means the specific, unique calling from God to Jesus and to each one of us, to do the good deeds that God the Father has prepared for each of us to do as his will, loving actions that are appropriate to our own individual talents and circumstances, and that serve the needs of others. Personal vocation is presented in *Christian Moral Principles* as a central theological concept in Grisez’s moral theory: see *ibid.*, 532-538 (regarding Jesus) and 559-565 (regarding Christians).

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 539.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 468, with a reference to *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 85, a. 3, ad 2, and III, q. 48, a. 3.

¹¹⁰ See *Christian Moral Principles*, 468. What is said here about “God” is spoken from a Christian point of view. There are also non-Christian concepts of sacrifice as being to “the gods”, but they include many of the same essential elements outlined in this paragraph. Even though such non-Christian sacrifice is an instantiation of religion to some extent, Grisez’s moral theology would see it as clearly inferior to Christian understanding and practice of religious sacrifice.

The fact that Jesus' life and freely accepted death were a sacrifice to the Father is seen particularly in his institution of the Eucharist.¹¹¹ "To the extent that Jesus outwardly does anything to carry out his redemptive commitment, he does it at the Last Supper."¹¹² By instituting the Eucharist as a memorial of his redemptive death, Jesus puts sacrifice at the heart of the Christian life:

As the celebration of the Passover kept the old covenant alive, so the celebration of the Eucharist would keep the new covenant alive – until Jesus comes. Thus he makes his sacrificial act not just an example to be followed but, more basically, a communal act embracing in itself all the subsequent acts done by his followers in fulfilling this command of his. Those who share the Lord's Supper share his covenant-forming commitment: they are to do the Eucharist in memory of him.¹¹³

It is clear then that understanding the good of religion and the central place of sacrifice in this good is essential in helping us to understand a number of things: Jesus himself as man; his human commitment to do the Father's will and his carrying out of his personal vocation in obedience to the Father; Jesus' free acceptance of his death as the sign of his total harmony with the Father and his faithfulness to the Father's will; our redemption by Jesus. Further, understanding the good of religion also helps us to understand Christian life as our essentially *religious* following of Jesus centred on the Eucharist. Christian life is to be a religious commitment to carry out one's personal vocation come what may, in obedience to the Father, offering it all up to the Father in union with Jesus' redemptive act.

¹¹¹ See *ibid.*, 538-541.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 538.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 539, with a reference to *Summa Theologiae* III, q. 73, a. 3 and q. 79, aa. 5-6. See also *Christian Moral Principles*, 553-555.

Indeed, Christian life itself is a living, spiritual sacrifice (see Rom 12:1; 1 Pt 2:5). Thus, human goods, immanent in a Christian life, can be given to God. From one point of view, giving human goods to God can be understood as putting them at the service of all that God intends in creating. Obedient service fulfils the Father's providential plan, builds up Jesus' body toward ultimate fulfillment, and cooperates with the Holy Spirit's sanctifying work.¹¹⁴

3.5.4 *Jesus reveals the natural law*

To understand the basic human good of religion correctly we need to know Jesus. Indeed, according to Grisez's moral theory, the natural law as a whole, including the directive to pursue the good of religion, is fully understood in practice only by including the Christian faith perspective, which accepts and appreciates the reality of Jesus as God-made-Man. Though a divine person, Jesus was fully a man, and he reveals what it is to be perfect human being. Grisez clearly acknowledges that Jesus reveals the natural law:

In him, human persons see what a man can be. His good life is not rendered ambiguous by mixed motives; his human commitments are not limited by compromises with sin. The possibilities of human nature, which are known naturally (up to a point and with more or less mixture of error), are revealed in Jesus and become accessible to every man and woman by faith which accepts him in his total, Incarnate reality.¹¹⁵

Note that the human nature that Jesus reveals is not a static, closed, and fully given reality, but an openness to possibility suitable to human beings, an openness that is specified in the human goods, an openness that is shared naturally by all men and women, a specific kind of openness that characterises us as human. Note also that revelation (through Jesus) makes clearer what can be known by reason. Revelation is

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 469, emphasis omitted.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 620-621, at 621 (chapter twenty-five, appendix two: "The humanity of Jesus and the natural law"). There is a note attached to this extract from *Christian Moral Principles* that refers to Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 22, which teaches that Jesus "fully reveals man to man himself". This is a Conciliar reference that Grisez refers to often, as can be seen from the index in *Christian Moral Principles*, 965, (listing 19 sections of *Christian Moral Principles* that refer to this paragraph of *Gaudium et Spes*). Grisez makes reference elsewhere in *Christian Moral Principles* (183) to *Gaudium et Spes*, 29, 41 and 45, and to *Lumen Gentium*, 13 and 40, to make the same point about Jesus revealing "what human nature can and should be".

necessary because, as Grisez recognises, knowledge by natural reason of our human possibilities, which is to say, knowledge of our human nature and world, is not without error and limitation.

3.5.5 *Jesus: fully human but also fully divine*

Jesus was not just a man pursuing and instantiating the basic human goods, especially the good of religion, in carrying out his basic commitment to do the Father's will. Jesus was a divine Person, the Word made flesh (see Jn 1:14). As God Incarnate, Jesus had two wills, a human will and a divine will.¹¹⁶ All Jesus' actions were both humanly *and* divinely willed, both wills unified in the one person of the Word:

As a man, [Jesus] makes a commitment to the human good of friendship with God, discerns his unique human vocation with respect to this good, and lives out this vocation. His whole life is a well-integrated system of human acts. But the divine will of the Incarnate Word can hardly have remained inoperative with respect to anything he did humanly, whether the performing of miracles or the accepting of sufferings. Thus, the whole life of the Lord Jesus was both divine and human at the same time.... *Insofar as he is God, Jesus reveals the Father in the medium of his human nature and life as a man. Insofar as he is man, the Word responds to the Father in a manner appropriate to a man in perfect communion with God.*¹¹⁷

Grisez acknowledges that it is pointless to speculate about the exact relationship between divine and human in Jesus – apart from emphasising that Jesus is in the two natures

‘without any commingling or change or division or separation; that the distinction between the natures is in no way removed by their union but rather the specific character of each nature is preserved and they are united in one person and one hypostasis’.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ See *ibid.*, 517-520, with references to authoritative Church documents on these matters.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 519, emphasis in original, two notes omitted.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 516, quoting from the Council of Chalcedon. Once again, it is worth making the point that the difficulty of parts of Grisez's theology (in this instance, understanding how the divine and the human are related in the Christian and the moral life) reflects the complexity of the issues involved, which have historically been the source of much debate and study that have never fully resolved the apparent

We simply do not understand what the divine nature is, or what divine causality is, in themselves, to be able to fully grasp what the relationship is, in any detail, between the human and the divine in Jesus – or in Christian life, which follows Jesus.¹¹⁹ However, a number of false ideas of what the relationship is can be marked out as inadequate. One of these false ideas is that the divine takes over from the human, replacing it, annulling it, superseding it. This is not true of Jesus; nor is it true of the Christian who follows in the way of the Lord Jesus.¹²⁰

3.6 The Christian life has both human and divine dimensions

3.6.1 The divine does not annul the human, nor the human the divine

Although it is important to see that the divine does not annul the human in Jesus and the Christian, it is also important to see that the human does not annul, or substitute for, the divine in Jesus or the Christian. Jesus' divine nature is united to his human nature – they are both natures of the one divine person, the Word, who performs the one set of actions in and through the life of Jesus Christ, with his divine and human wills working in complete unity (without being mixed together into a sort of new hybrid nature and will).

This is an important point for our study here of the place of religion in the moral theory of Grisez. The basic human good of religion pertains to human nature and human willing, both in Jesus and in human persons. Religion is an aspect of human

incoherencies, and probably never will. A useful concise presentation of Church teaching on the Incarnation is found in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 456-483.

¹¹⁹ See *Christian Moral Principles*, 516-517, 523, and 63-67.

¹²⁰ See *ibid.*, 514-517.

fulfillment that both Jesus, as man, and human persons grasp naturally as a good to be pursued and instantiated in and through our chosen actions. The good of religion is the good of being in harmony with God in our choices and actions. The human act of faith is made as a human choice for human goods (perfections of human nature's potential), particularly the goods of religion and religious knowledge. Yet, this human act of faith for the sake of human goods is transformed by the gift of God's love poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, transformed into a sharing in the divine good, in divine love, by which we are part of God's family, united in the Son with the Father through the Spirit. We are not divine in exactly the same way as Jesus is, by nature, but by adoption:

Divine life in us is a disposition to fulfillment in divinity; it is the love of God which is poured forth in our hearts and inheres in us. Receiving this gift by faith, we act in faith both according to our divine love and according to our natural human love. Divine and human are thus *united in the Christian dynamically*, not hypostatically. Nevertheless, this union is real and is without commingling; likewise, the distinction of the divine and human in us is real and is without any opposition.¹²¹

Just as the two wills of Jesus operated in his living his life, so too one's human will, in willing basic human goods – the good of religion is one pertinent example here – is united in a mysterious way with God's divine will, which now operates in union with one's own human will and enables the Christian to will according to one's new, divine “disposition to fulfillment to divinity”, which “inheres in us” by God's grace, by his gratuitous gift.¹²²

¹²¹ Ibid., 590, emphasis added.

¹²² This idea of God's will and ours becoming one in our sharing of the divine nature is well expressed in the remarkable quotation from St. John of the Cross given by Grisez in *ibid.*, 583. This quotation is more clearly emphasised in *Fulfillment in Christ: A Summary of Christian Moral Principles* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 283. This work, co-authored by Grisez and Russell Shaw, is a shortened version of *Christian Moral Principles*.

3.6.2 *God's love is dynamically related to our human love of human goods*

The new divine disposition, one's sharing in the life of the Trinity, is conceptually distinct from one's human love of human goods and one's human acts, but it is not separated in actual Christian life from one's human love and human acts. The new disposition, the love of God that makes us God's children through our unity with his Son, disposes us *to love God as God*, but this is not opposed to, or sealed off from, our human love of the basic human goods and the persons we are directed to love by the basic principles of practical reasonableness.

God is perfect goodness. Every other good reflects and participates in his perfect goodness. Loving God is thus inseparable from loving created things to the full measure of their goodness. But one who does not love human fulfillment to the extent that is in his or her own power is failing to love a created thing as it should be loved and so failing in love of God. The requirements of morality, however, are simply the implications of love of human fulfillment to the extent that it is within human power. Therefore, one is obliged to meet the requirements of morality if one is to love God with charity.¹²³

This quote is an important one in Grisez's work as a whole as it sums up a central point in his moral theology, and it accounts for the unity between his natural law theory and his moral theology. Grisez is saying that even though the love of God in its fullest sense, as the divine gift of sharing God's goodness itself, is not in our human power to pursue and instantiate, this love of God is "inseparable" from loving acts that *are* within our power, moral acts that pursue and instantiate the basic human goods. What does Grisez mean by this inseparability? We need to look first at Grisez's understanding of acts within our power, the acts making up the moral life.

¹²³ *Christian Moral Principles*, 602.

3.6.3 Three levels of understanding: creation, old covenant, new covenant

Christians are called to choose and act the way that Jesus did: to follow the way of the Lord Jesus. However, according to Grisez's moral theology, this means more than just following the natural law in its pure philosophical form, or even as encapsulated in the old covenant: loving God and neighbour as oneself.¹²⁴ It is helpful here to look at what could be termed three 'levels' of moral understanding.¹²⁵

The most basic level is that of *creation*, in which we are aware of the natural law at its most basic – here we can speak of the first principle of practical reasoning and its specifications in the basic human goods, along with the first principle of morality and its specifications in the modes of responsibility, followed by the specific moral norms based on these practical and moral principles.¹²⁶

Then there is a second level, at which *the old covenant* is revealed:

God loves first; he offers the [Old Testament] covenant. This fact creates a new situation for human moral life. The new situation is what transforms the basic requirement that one's will be toward integral human fulfillment into the commandments of love of God and neighbor. For all human hope of fulfillment depends upon God's mercy and faithfulness, and the human contribution to this fulfillment is to do good – or, at least, to avoid harm – to one's human fellows, particularly to members of the covenant community.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ See *ibid.*, 603-604.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 603-605. Grisez does not deal with these 'levels' as discrete levels in the way done here, but the approach here is clearly suggested by what Grisez writes in *Christian Moral Principles* at this point. It should be noted that the levels are distinct, but they are interrelated too: the second incorporates and specifies the first, and the third incorporates and specifies the first and second. Thus, lower levels are open to being specified by higher levels.

¹²⁶ This is all treated in chapters two to twelve in *Christian Moral Principles*, and is Grisez's natural law theory, unspecified by revelation. It needs to be said that this philosophical level of the natural law can be informed by good philosophical knowledge of God and of God's will, and by the elements of truth and grace found in other religions. This point is not always emphasised by Grisez, as he is focussed on Christian theology as giving content to the natural law, but it is clearly acknowledged in those parts of *Christian Moral Principles* that deal with the salvation of non-Christians: see *Christian Moral Principles*, 655-657 and 743-745.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 603. Note that Grisez here clearly acknowledges that facts matter to morality.

At this second level, the philosophical wording of the first principle of morality is better phrased in specifically religious terms, as one's understanding of practical reasoning and morality has been specified by divine revelation (pre-Christ).

The third level of moral awareness is *the specifically Christian level*, in which Jesus becomes the norm of all moral life. The goods we hope for when we act morally for integral human fulfillment, and which the old covenant specified in the commandments shaping the life of God's people, are finally and definitively made actual in Jesus and his life. So the fulfillment that gives moral integrity its point is

more than an ideal; it is being accomplished in the fulfillment of all things in Jesus. Thus, Christian love transforms the first principle of morality into a more definite norm: One ought to will those and only those possibilities which contribute to the integral human fulfillment being realized in the fulfillment of all things in Jesus.¹²⁸

This third level incorporates the other two levels, but perfects them in light of the fullness of divine revelation in Christ and also in light of our unity in faith with Jesus, a unity that empowers us to live like Jesus. Thus, natural law morality is incorporated into Christian morality, which perfects it.

In terms of our present focus, we can say that religion can be understood at the three levels just mentioned: at the most basic level, religion is a pursuit of harmony with the transcendent by the power and in the light of reason alone; at the next level, it is living in harmony with God in the light and by the power of the old covenant; at the third

¹²⁸ Ibid., 605, note omitted. Note that we are here talking about *human* fulfillment, fulfillment in all the basic human goods, in the context of the fulfillment of *all* things in Christ. It is human fulfillment that gives moral life its point, as it is only this fulfillment that we have the power to directly pursue and instantiate. What this might mean for our action to protect the environment, for example, is not treated by Grisez in *Christian Moral Principles*, but it is treated in later volumes: see ss. 5.1.6c and 5.3.8 below.

level, it is living in harmony and peace with God *through our human union with Jesus*, by which we are enlightened and empowered to live as Christians in the way of the Lord Jesus in the new covenant.

3.6.4 Union with Jesus has three distinct but related dimensions

Union with Jesus is seen by Grisez as having three aspects, which are related.¹²⁹ The second and third specify what is meant by human union with Jesus (i.e. by religion at the third level mentioned above). The first kind of union, which has to do with sharing his divine life, is mediated by the second and third.

The three distinct but related dimensions of unity with Jesus are:

- a. sharing his divine nature and sonship through the love of God received as gift;
- b. bodily unity with Jesus in sacrament and church;
- c. unity between Jesus' human acts and our human acts in Christian moral life.

The first way is union with the divine nature of Jesus, by which we humans become “partakers of the divine nature” (see 1 Pt 1:4) and “enjoy familial intimacy with the Father”.¹³⁰ This is the love of God, or charity, that we have already seen Grisez describe as a divine gift that transcends any merely human understanding or act. The second way we are joined with Jesus is “bodily union”.¹³¹ In some mysterious way,

¹²⁹ The three kinds of unity treated here are not a parallel to, or specification of, the three levels of morality treated in the previous section.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 463, emphasis in original. This unity with Jesus is treated in *ibid.*, 463-465 and chapter twenty four (573-598).

¹³¹ See *ibid.*, 463 and 465-467. We are concerned here with the relationship between the first and third kinds of union with Jesus; this second kind of union is important but not directly relevant to our present concerns. The three kinds of union begin now and are perfected in heaven. The second kind of unity is perfected in the resurrection of the dead, for example.

we are united with Jesus not only spiritually but bodily – our membership of the Church, the Body of Christ, is emphasised by this mode of union. The third way we are joined with Jesus is by “community in *human acts*”.¹³² Our human acts in pursuit of the basic human good of religion, for example,¹³³ can link us with Jesus, who, as we have seen above, also pursued the good of religion in his own acts as a man doing the will of the Father. Of course, it is not only our acts in pursuit of religion that can unite us with Jesus: all our morally good acts unite us with Jesus and all his morally good acts.¹³⁴

Grisez is very insistent that the first kind of union with Jesus, our sharing in the divine life by the gift of the Spirit, is not a human act, and so it is distinct from the third mode of union with Jesus, which does directly involve our human acts. And yet:

Although the gift of the Spirit is distinct from and far transcends the human acts by which we respond to Jesus in faith, our response [in and through these human actions] is nevertheless the condition for receiving the higher unity with Jesus in divine life.¹³⁵

According to Grisez here, our human cooperation with God in making our human act of faith, is a “condition” for our receiving the gift of divine life, God’s love. It is not that God is “conditioned” by us, however, but that he chooses to give us the gift of grace through our own free choice to make the act of faith, a free choice which is

¹³² Ibid., 463, emphasis added.

¹³³ This is not an application that Grisez makes directly, but obviously acts instantiating human harmony with God unite us with Jesus in a powerful way, for religion was at the very centre of Jesus’ life, as Grisez clearly emphasises (see ss. 3.5.2 - 3.5.3 above).

¹³⁴ As Jesus is divine, this means that all our morally good acts, not just those explicitly for the sake of religion, can instantiate the good of religion insofar as they unite us with Jesus, who not only as man perfectly instantiated the good of religion, but who is a divine Person sharing fully in the divine life and love. Being in harmony with Jesus thus brings us into harmony with God, and, further, it disposes us to perfect unity with God in fully sharing the divine gift of God’s very life in heaven.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 463, with reference to Jn 20:31, and Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 108, aa. 1-2.

already a kind of cooperation with God speaking to us through the natural law and directing us towards the good.¹³⁶ Also, God wishes us to enjoy the gift of his love throughout all our Christian lives, in which all our actions can be motivated by living faith. Grisez's theology holds that the first kind of unity with Jesus (sharing in the divine life that Jesus has as divine) is conditioned on our unity with Jesus of the third kind (in morally good acts shared with Jesus' morally good acts as both human and divine).¹³⁷

3.6.5 Religion and receiving the gift of divine life

Our human openness to the good of religion, and our pursuit and instantiation of the good of religion in the act of faith, is, in a sense, used by God to give us his great gift of sanctifying grace, which is a share in God's life, God's love. It is not that our human act instantiating the good of religion *achieves* divine fulfillment in God's love; this divine fulfillment is a totally free gift from God, and hence it is *grace*. However, God's grace is mediated to us through our act of faith. And as religion is an important motivating factor for the act of faith, religion mediates God's grace to us.

Our union with Jesus begins even before we are *explicitly* and *consciously* united with him in the three ways mentioned above (in divine life, in bodily unity, and in human acts). Our moral goodness, including our openness to the good of religion and our choices to pursue it morally, is already a kind of implicit union with Jesus, and is already a gift of God to us through the natural law and natural virtue. Ordinarily, this implicit union with Jesus through the natural law needs the explicit completion and

¹³⁶ This point is more clearly developed in a later work of Grisez's, along with Boyle and Finnis, which will be examined in the next chapter: "Practical Principles, Moral Truth, and Ultimate Ends" (1987), as we will see in the next chapter.

¹³⁷ It is not entirely clear where the second kind of unity, bodily unity, fits in this scheme.

perfection of living faith and baptism in which we receive full union with Jesus, including union with the divine life of Jesus.¹³⁸ The natural law, therefore, can be seen as opening out – in both its potentiality and its need – towards its perfection and completion in faith and grace.

3.7 How do God's love and divine revelation affect the natural law?

3.7.1 Divine love has a humanly understandable effect

If it is true that the natural law opens out toward the fullness of divine revelation and grace, it is also true that divine revelation and divine love affect the natural law. If the love of God, charity, is a divine gift that disposes us to divine fulfillment that transcends our merely human potential and abilities, what, according to Grisez's moral theory as theologically informed and shaped, is the transformative effect that God's truth and love have on morality, which pertains to human potential and human abilities? We have already seen Grisez refer to the transformation of our motivation for faith that occurs when the gift of charity is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, a transformation that affects the human motivations constituted by the principles directing us to pursue and instantiate the goods of knowledge and religion.¹³⁹ So what is the nature of this *transformation* of faith (and of all the Christian acts flowing from the act of faith)? The difficulty in answering these related questions comes from the mysterious nature of charity, God, and God's causality. In

¹³⁸ On this point, see *Christian Moral Principles*, appendix to chapter twenty-six "The upright who have not heard the gospel", 655-657, where Grisez follows Vatican II's lead in seeing the goodness of non-Christians as a gift of God's grace that can save them, even whilst calling them to full communion with Jesus in the Church. "Those who are upright seek God insofar as they know how. They receive the gift of divine love which enlivens their love of human goods and makes them conscious of the unsatisfactoriness of the human condition and the inadequacies of conventional morality", 656. See also appendix two to chapter thirty, at 743-75.

¹³⁹ See ss. 3.4.2, 3.4.3, and 3.4.4 above.

spite of this mysterious nature of the divine life in itself, however, it would seem that Grisez wishes to point out clearly that divine love has a distinct effect, a *humanly understandable* effect, on our human motivation.¹⁴⁰ In other words, it would seem that the love of God that inheres in the Christian purely by God's gift, a gift which transcends our human nature and human potential, has an intelligible effect on how we understand our human nature and its potential.

God's love has an effect on how we are to act in pursuit of human goods, which fulfil our human potential in all the various aspects picked out by the basic human goods. We need divine revelation to know of this effect with certainty and clarity, and we need grace and faith to share in it. Still, it is not an effect that totally transcends our natural humanity in the sense of being ineffable, totally separate, and having no effect. Although the love of God poured into our hearts by God does transcend our humanity (and in so doing allows us to be fulfilled by the divine nature), it also motivates us as humans in a new way to pursue the human goods. This is an instance of grace perfecting nature. Grisez spells out what all this means in the chapters of *Christian Moral Principles* where he explains the specificity of Christian ethics.¹⁴¹

3.7.2 How God's love transforms natural law ethics: specifying it

The way that Grisez speaks of grace perfecting nature with regard to the moral domain is usually in terms of Christian faith *specifying* the morality known by human reason.

¹⁴⁰ It seems that Grisez wishes to try to understand to some extent, and to some practical purpose, the relationship between grace and nature, even if its full reality is ultimately mysterious.

¹⁴¹ Chapters twenty-five to twenty-seven.

Christian norms add to common human moral requirements from within, by specifying them, not from without by imposing some extrahuman demand upon human acts. Rather than ignoring or violating the general requirements of human morality, one who lives by Christian faith fulfils them.¹⁴²

Grisez makes the point that Christian morality, morality transformed by charity and faith and hope,¹⁴³ does not totally transcend our human morality; nor does it add to the natural law new basic principles from outside our humanity, extrinsic requirements of our new Christian identity as sons or daughters of God; nor does it oppose or neglect the natural law. “The teachings of faith neither conflict with any of the general principles of morality nor add any new principles to them.”¹⁴⁴

It must be said that Grisez deals with the transformative effect of charity on ethics mainly by looking at how the *moral* level or phase of the natural law is specified by divine revelation and grace.¹⁴⁵ He does not directly deal in any explicit detail with how the primary principles of practical reason, which constitute the generally practical phase of natural law (the foundational or roots phase), are affected by charity. In fact, it would seem that the primary principles directing us to pursue and instantiate the basic human goods are not affected by charity as such, insofar as they remain the principles they always were: we continue to be directed as Christians (who are still human) to pursue and instantiate the substantive and reflexive human goods, including religion. But our motivation to pursue them is affected, just as the modes of responsibility are affected, by the theological truths we come to know through faith,

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 608.

¹⁴³ We will speak of the transforming effect of charity from here on, assuming that charity works through faith and hope.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 607.

¹⁴⁵ On the two phases of the natural law, see s. 3.2.1 above.

by the new relationship of hope that we enter into with God in Christ, by our new status as sons and daughters of the Father, by the charity poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. As was noted above, the way we ought to understand and pursue the basic goods benefits greatly from seeing them and pursuing them integrally, when we think and choose according to the modes of responsibility.¹⁴⁶ Surely it is also true then that the way we are to understand and pursue the basic goods will be affected by the way that charity shapes Christian disposition, choice and action.

3.7.3 How charity affects the primary phase of practical reasoning

Grisez indicates the effect of charity on the first phase of the natural in an important passage, which we look at here in two parts. The first part is the following:

Charity is a disposition toward fulfillment in superhuman, divine goodness. The most basic choice in Christian life, the choice to accept Jesus with living faith, is made out of this love. It follows that the love of God which inheres in the Christian is analogous to simple volition. It is a principle of action toward heavenly fulfillment similar to one's natural and necessary disposition toward human fulfillment.¹⁴⁷

In chapter nine of *Christian Moral Principles*, Grisez outlined what natural “simple volition/willing” is, namely, a “constant, underlying disposition toward the [human] goods”, which is presupposed by all “volitional desire, choice, voluntary action, and volitional enjoyment”.¹⁴⁸ Now, in chapter twenty-five, “Christian Love as the Principle of Christian Life”, he says that charity is a kind of supernatural simple volition, which disposes the Christian toward divine fulfillment in the goodness of

¹⁴⁶ See s. 3.2.4 above.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 600. It is true that the passage being analysed here is in small print in the original, and so is not included in the main substance of the chapter. Arguably, Grisez should have highlighted it by using a bigger font or even bold print.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 231. In “Practical Principles”, Grisez, Boyle and Finnis use the term “aliveness” for this kind of volition. So: charity is a supernatural aliveness to divine good and to human good(s) *through* divine good, so to speak.

God. So the Christian has basic natural dispositions towards pursuing and enjoying human goods *and* a basic supernatural disposition towards receiving and enjoying the divine good. However, Grisez also says that our new divine disposition affects our natural dispositions:

However, the love of God poured forth in our hearts must not be regarded as merely another simple volition of an additional human good, inserted in us alongside the love of human life, knowledge of truth, [religion] and so on. Divine goodness and human fulfillment are not direct alternatives. The love of God *includes and transforms* all the natural forms of simple volition. Hence, out of love of God, Christians act both for the human fulfillment to which they are naturally disposed by simple volition and also for fulfillment in divine goodness.

The morally significant acts of Christian life are always inspired both by love of God and by love of some human good. According to the latter principle, they always are acts suited to human nature, although many of them, beginning with the act of living faith, can be done only by grace.¹⁴⁹

First, note the sentence: “The love of God includes and transforms all the natural forms of simple volition.” This tells us that charity strongly affects the first phase of natural law, at its most basic level where we are alive to the basic forms of opportunity for fulfilling our natural potential. Grisez is saying here that the divine gift of God’s love changes (“transforms”), without distorting or destroying or rejecting (“includes”), our most fundamental practical understanding of the basic human goods. This includes religion, which is one of these human goods.

Second, note the point that, even though the gift of divine love is not achieved by any action of our own, we still are required *to act for* divine fulfillment “out of love of God”. Our acting for divine fulfillment is simultaneous with our acting for human

¹⁴⁹ *Christian Moral Principles*, 600-601, emphasis added. The word “religion” is inserted here as all the basic human goods, including religion, are being referred to. Also, this whole passage follows on in the original context from some remarks of Grisez about how religious acts such as devotions and prayer, especially the Eucharist, can be acts of charity only insofar as they are good acts serving the good of religion.

fulfillment in the basic human goods. Each kind of action seems to be related to the other in some way. As we saw in the section above devoted to the Christological dimension of Grisez's moral theory, the divine and the human exist in us in a way analogous to how they exist in Jesus.¹⁵⁰ The divine and the human are distinct in us, and not merged together; but neither are they totally separate. There is a mysterious dynamic relationship between them. One aspect of this is that the divine can powerfully (dynamically) affect the human.

3.7.4 Specific Christian norms

Although Grisez holds that the natural law remains operative for Christians, just as it does for all persons, he also holds that there is a distinctively Christian morality. Divine revelation accepted by living faith, the life of grace we enter into by faith, and the new status we are given by God in living faith, (all of which can be summed up in the single word "faith"), have an effect on our human motivation, the motivation shaped by the primary practical principles. This is how Grisez summarises his thinking on how Christian ethics is distinctive:

Yet faith does generate specific norms proper to Christian life. It does this by proposing options both possible for and appealing to fallen men and women – options which either cannot be conceived without faith or would lack sufficient appeal to be considered in deliberation in the absence of Christian hope. Specific moral norms are generated only when proposals are articulated as appealing possibilities for choice. Thus, by advancing fresh proposals, faith generates specific norms which could not be known without it.¹⁵¹

In other words, faith and hope, by which we live in charity, enable us to see or understand differently and so to choose differently. We can see or understand opportunities in the light of faith that we would not otherwise be able to see or

¹⁵⁰ See ss. 3.5.5, 3.6.1 and 3.6.2.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 607.

understand, and so we can be motivated to act for the sake of the basic human goods, including harmony with God, in a way that is new (“fresh proposals”). We are alive to new opportunities in a new way. Grisez describes this new way of acting for integral human fulfillment, this new aliveness, by specifying “Christian modes of response” that transform *from within* the natural law modes of responsibility.¹⁵² We will look in a little detail at one of these to see how natural law is transformed by divine love, and where the good of religion fits in this transformation.¹⁵³

3.7.5 *The fifth mode of Christian response: be merciful*

The Christian is called not only to be impartial and fair in responding to human goods and to human persons (as the fifth mode of responsibility specifies),¹⁵⁴ he is called also “to be merciful according to the universal and perfect measure of mercy which God has revealed in Jesus”¹⁵⁵ (the fifth mode of Christian response). Each time Grisez introduces an answer devoted to explaining a particular mode of Christian response,¹⁵⁶ he relates the mode to the effect of charity (or, in other words, the love of God poured into our hearts by the Spirit uniting us with Jesus) on human motivation. Regarding mercy, this is what he says:

¹⁵² See chapter twenty-six of *Christian Moral Principles* for a complete treatment of the Christian modes of response. Grisez presents these eight modes of Christian response as corresponding closely with the Beatitudes, the gifts of the Spirit, and with various virtues. We have space here to look only briefly at these modes, but an adequate presentation of Grisez’s moral theory in its theological fullness would need to look at all of them in detail. We present an outline of them in Appendix Three below.

¹⁵³ In this, we are following the lead of Grisez who used the example of mercy in relation to the Golden Rule when explaining the specificity of Christian norms in a publication just after *Christian Moral Principles*: “Presidential Address: Practical Reason and Faith,” *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 58 (1984): 2-14.

¹⁵⁴ See *Christian Moral Principles*, 211-213.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 644.

¹⁵⁶ In chapter twenty-six of *Christian Moral Principles*.

People whose primary love is charity are disposed to divine goodness before all else. But God practices no partiality and is utterly and absolutely faithful; he is unconcerned with justice to himself, for his own goodness is absolute. *One identified by charity with the universal good can and will take the same totally disinterested and selfless attitude.* Thus the fifth Christian mode of response is to “be merciful according to the universal and perfect measure of mercy which God has revealed in Jesus”¹⁵⁷

Charity affects how we are to live by the natural law’s modes of responsibility, in this case the mode requiring us to be impartial and just. This effect comes through *our being united with God’s way of being and seeing.* We see the world through God’s eyes, so to speak.¹⁵⁸ God is impartial, totally faithful, utterly selfless, and absolutely good: we are called to share through charity his impartiality, faithfulness, selflessness and goodness. If we see the world through only human eyes, which in historical reality is a human understanding weakened by the Fall, we find it very difficult, if not impossible, to live according to the fifth mode of responsibility. We will find it difficult to see the attraction of the impartiality, to see it as offering any real opportunity for fulfillment. When we see things from God’s point of view, *in harmony with him* because we are united with him in Christ (in faith, hope and charity), we are able to transcend all difficulties.

Christian revelation, accepted with living faith, transforms the understanding of human goods and human community. Human goods can and will be realized in the fulfillment of everything in Jesus; there, too, everyone willing to accept a place has one. All the boundaries of existing societies dissolve.¹⁵⁹

This transformation of our vision is not our own achievement; it is God’s gift. It is grounded in what God has already done for the Christian in Christ:

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 644, emphasis in original. The internal quotation is Grisez’s expression of the mode itself.

¹⁵⁸ The terminology here is not Grisez’s, but it is closely based on his approach to this issue: see especially his highlighted point explaining why Christian love requires moral goodness, at *ibid.*, 602 (top of page). *Seeing* is used here as a synonym for *understanding*.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 644.

Having been redeemed, sharing in God's own justice, the Christian must be altogether impartial in sharing redemption with others. Only so is the requirement of impartiality fulfilled by one who knows himself or herself to be a child of God.¹⁶⁰

Grisez relates all this to charity and its effect, but it seems closely related to the good of religion too. Charity enables one to pursue human fulfillment more perfectly, by motivating one to see and choose *in total harmony with God's will*, which is now dynamically united with one's human will. Thus *charity perfects the natural harmony with God that is religion*.

3.7.6 Fulfillment in Christ and the primary principle of Christian morality

Foundational in all this is the truth that our integral human fulfillment has begun already and continues to be achieved in and through Jesus Christ. This is a truth seen only with the eyes of faith. It is a truth that motivates us to fulfil the requirements of the natural law in a new way, with much greater hope and love than we could have naturally. Fulfillment in Christ is at the foundation of Christian morality, according to Grisez's moral theology.¹⁶¹ The new, singular, primary principle of Christian morality, according to Grisez, is:

One ought to will those and only those possibilities which contribute to the integral human fulfillment being realized in the fulfillment of all things in Jesus.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 645.

¹⁶¹ It is interesting in this regard that the shortened version of *Christian Moral Principles*, co-authored by Grisez and Russell Shaw and published eight years later, was called *Fulfillment in Christ*.

¹⁶² *Christian Moral Principles*, 605. In later writings, Grisez tends to express the primary principle of Christian life in terms of intending or seeking the kingdom (of God) in all one's choices and acts. Reference to seeking the kingdom, contributing to, and witnessing to it, are found in *Christian Moral Principles* (see 470, 514, 819) but it does not stand out as clearly as it does in later writings (see chapter six below).

This principle arises out of seeing one's life, with all its choices and commitments and actions, as cooperation with Jesus in his work of redemption.

Another way of putting this new primary theological principle of morality¹⁶³ is the new commandment of Jesus: "Love one another as I have loved you" (John 13.34).¹⁶⁴ Christians are called by God to abide in the love that has been given to us, poured into our hearts by the Spirit, and to live our lives inspired and guided by this love, which is a pure gift to us from God. Such a life is modelled on the life of Jesus, who embodied all the Beatitudes and all the modes of Christian response, and is lived in union with Jesus. Most especially, the sacrificial act of Jesus, sacramentally made present at the Last Supper and consummated on the cross, is the foundational act of his life and of Christian life:

In this completely virtuous act Jesus overcomes all the disharmonies of sin – within the individual, among the principles of human actions themselves, among human individuals and groups, and between humankind and God. Hence, Jesus' act includes both the norms for the choices essential to these existential harmonies and their virtuous fulfillment. These norms and their realization are the modes of Christian response.¹⁶⁵

Jesus not only reveals the principles of Christian life in his teaching, he exemplifies and embodies them in his deeds. In the Cross, especially, Jesus overcomes all disharmonies.

¹⁶³ This theological principle of morality specifies the natural law principle of morality that Grisez presented in an earlier chapter of *Christian Moral Principles*: see *ibid.*, chapter 7, question E, and s. 3.2.2 above.

¹⁶⁴ Cited and commented upon in *ibid.*, 604.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 662-663. Note the *fourfold* reconciliation in Jesus, which embodies the harmonies that are the objects of the four primary existential principles of the natural law. The Eucharist perfects the existential dimension of the natural law, bring us true peace and goodness.

3.7.7 Prayer and the sacraments

As we have seen, Grisez considers the basic good of religion to be the overcoming, or at least the lessening, of disharmony with God. Jesus has instantiated this perfectly in his life and death. Jesus, therefore, exemplifies and fulfils the good of religion perfectly, along with the other existential goods. Union with Jesus is an essential requirement for us fallen and redeemed people to share perfectly in the existential goods, including the good of religion. And for sharing in the moral good too, which is the integral pursuit and instantiation of the basic human goods, especially the existential goods. All of Christian life can be understood under the heading of “union with Christ”.¹⁶⁶ It is entirely appropriate, therefore, that Grisez finishes off his substantial first volume of *The Way of the Lord Jesus* with a series of chapters devoted to prayer and the sacraments as principles shaping Christian life.¹⁶⁷

Grisez sees our union with Jesus Christ as the central reality of our lives as Christians, and prayer and the sacraments are essential for our unity with Jesus. Prayer and the sacraments are essential for organising Christian lives because they enable living faith, which we have seen is the foundational act of Christian life according to Grisez’s moral theology, *to be integrated into all* of our lives.¹⁶⁸ We cannot look in detail here at Grisez’s treatment of this theme, but it is important to point out one

¹⁶⁶ In this respect, it is interesting the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*’s section on morality is called “Life in Christ”. Grisez tends to speak of union “with Jesus” because he wishes to emphasise the humanity of Jesus, which mediates his divinity.

¹⁶⁷ See *Christian Moral Principles*, chapters twenty-nine to thirty-three (705-806). Actually, *Christian Moral Principles* finishes with a chapter devoted to eschatology (chapter thirty-four) and two devoted to Church authority and dissent (chapters thirty-five and thirty-six), but the main body of his moral theology finishes with a hundred pages devoted completely to prayer and the sacraments as integral to the Christian moral life. Along with the central place of Christology, this spirituality aspect of Grisez’s theological moral theory is rather unique in manuals of moral philosophy/theology and manifests Grisez’s desire to engage in a renewed moral theology in line with Vatican II’s prescriptions: see *Christian Moral Principles*, 13-14. This is an aspect of his work that is often overlooked.

¹⁶⁸ See *ibid.*, 705.

relevant aspect of his focussing on the sacraments so substantially in these chapters of *Christian Moral Principles*. This point concerns the place of religion in the Christian life, and in morality, and in Grisez's moral theory.

The good of religion has to do with seeking harmony with God and avoiding or lessening conflict with God, through our own human choices and actions. The sacraments are God's gifts to us, but they also involve our own action, our cooperation with God (which is itself God's gift). Beginning with the Last Supper and the Cross, God has given us a way of being involved with our redemption and sanctification, and of being united more and more with him in his goodness and life:

Included within Jesus' single act of self-oblation are the subsequent actions performed to fulfill his command by the apostles, their successors, and their successors' priestly assistants. *Thus, in the Eucharist – and by association with the Eucharist, in all the other sacraments – Jesus' redemptive act is made present to us, available for our cooperation and effective for our sanctification.* As extensions into the present of Jesus' unique redemptive act, the sacraments have all its complexity. They reveal and communicate the divine life which they signify, while at the same time responding to it with appropriate human worship. Furthermore, these two aspects mutually include each other.¹⁶⁹

The sacraments are both human and divine, and one aspect of their human side is that they enable us as humans to seek and instantiate harmony with God, to seek and instantiate the basic human good of religion. Thus, the basic human good of religion, whilst it is not the whole reality of any sacrament, or of the Christian life, is one important motivating factor for the acts by which we experience the sacraments and live out our lives as Christians. Whilst the sacraments are the channels of divine grace, they also are the occasions for human worship, which makes sense only in light of the basic good of religion, specified by divine revelation in Christian faith, but

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 726, emphasis in original, two notes omitted. The omitted notes refer to sections of the Third part of the *Summa Theologiae* to support Grisez's theology. This quotation spans two paragraphs in the original, but this has been ignored here for stylistic reasons.

carried out by human acts shaped by principles of practical reasoning. The sacraments are examples, therefore, of the dynamic interrelationship of the natural law (the law written in our hearts at our creation) and the new law of Christ (the love of God poured into our hearts at our recreation).

3.8 Conclusion to the chapter: different levels of harmony with God

The good of religion has a central place in Grisez's moral theory. It is central in the natural law theory and also in the theological development and extension of it, insofar as the good of religion is the good of *harmony with God*, and all that has been dealt with in the preceding theological sections has to do with the effect that our *union with God* (in faith, hope and charity) has on morality. However, is "harmony with God" the same thing as "union with God"? Grisez's moral theory, with its dynamic interrelationship between natural law theory and moral theology, seems to imply that there are different levels of harmony with God.

At the most basic level, the natural level, harmony with God is an open-ended field of human opportunity that we can pursue and instantiate, and can participate in more or less, by our choices and actions. This is what "the basic good of religion", at its most fundamental, refers to in Grisez's moral theory. It is the object of a primary principle of the natural law, of practical reasoning at the natural level. It is God's gift through creation.¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ This level of Grisez's moral theory is treated in chapters two to twelve of *Christian Moral Principles*, and it is found also to some extent in chapters thirteen to eighteen, which deal with sin.

The primary natural level of Grisez's moral theory, which deals with practical reasoning, or the natural law, can bring a person to the brink of faith, so to speak, insofar as the act of faith can be made only by someone who is motivated by the goods of religion and knowledge. The act of faith is a human act, and so it is shaped by the primary principles of practical reasoning that shape *all* human acts. These primary principles of the natural law are natural, but they are not independent of God. The natural law is God's law, and our capacities to know and act according to the natural law are given to us by God the Creator. The specifically human aspect of the act of faith is God's gift to us.¹⁷¹

The act of faith is also God's special and gratuitous gift, which mediates supernatural, sanctifying grace, and so our human act of faith made for the sake of religion and knowledge is not the whole reality of living faith. There is *a higher level of harmony* with God that is possible for us to participate in. This is the level of unity with God through our unity with Jesus, made possible by the Father's constituting us as his sons and daughters through our sharing in his divine life (love, charity). This unity with God in Jesus also involves a sharing in God's revealed *truth* too, insofar as our sharing in charity opens our eyes to see the full truth about our world, our lives, and ourselves. We learn to see through the eyes of God and to live according to the divine life within us. Thus, the higher harmony with God, which is God's special gift to us and not something we participate in purely through our human actions, is able to transform our knowledge of the natural law and our ability to live by it.¹⁷² We come to

¹⁷¹ Grisez's emphasis on the distinction between the human and the divine in Jesus, the Christian, and the act of faith, might lead one to forget that the specifically human is also God's creation and gift, and depends totally on God.

¹⁷² On this point about how the divine life enables us to live moral lives, see *ibid.*, 613, and the whole of chapter twenty-seven of *Christian Moral Principles*.

know the truth and this truth sets us free to live by God's law, thus participating in both human fulfillment and divine fulfillment.

The good of religion is involved in the first level, the natural law level, obviously. The basic human good of religion is the object of a natural principle of practical reasoning, one that motivates a wide variety of religious acts, commitments, communities, traditions, beliefs and practices. The practical principle directing us to pursue and instantiate the good of religion is involved also in the higher level of harmony with God too, however, as it is specified and perfected by divine revelation and grace, and Christians are enabled to pursue and instantiate a harmony with God that is perfectly, humanly fulfilling, but also somehow more than humanly fulfilling.

One verb that Grisez uses several times, for what is called here a pursuit and instantiation of our union with God in Jesus through faith and charity, is "abiding in". We are called to abide in God's love, following on the words of Jesus in John 15: 9.¹⁷³ This gets across the idea that this higher level of "religion" is different from the natural law level of religion as a basic human good, in that at the higher level (i.e. of living faith) we already have the status of being God's sons and daughters by our being given a share in divine life/love/charity by God and not through our own pursuit or instantiation of a merely human good, and our choices and acts flow from this already-given-gift, rather than from our own natural practical knowledge and moral acts. This is why Grisez wants to distinguish the good of religion from the life of grace, as we saw early in our analysis of *Christian Moral Principles*.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ See *ibid.*, 581, 600, and 604.

¹⁷⁴ See ss. 3.1.3 and 3.1.5 above.

The life of grace is a special divine gift that transcends human capacity and achievement, of which “religion” as a basic human good is one aspect. Still, it seems that the life of grace, especially in its transformative effect on morality, is closely related to the good of religion insofar as the life of grace involves our sharing in God’s life and truth and so *it is the highest form of harmony* with God, one that is a perfection and fulfillment of the human good of religion (and all the other goods too) whilst transcending the merely natural possibilities of “religion” by bringing us into the divine life itself by a pure gift of grace.¹⁷⁵

Still, using the term “religion” for two levels of fulfillment might be confusing, and it might lead to us thinking that the supernatural level of fulfillment is a substitute for the natural level, that grace *replaces* nature, or that the supernatural is the same as the natural level, that grace *is* nature. Grisez’s use of the term “religion” exclusively for a primary principle of the *natural* law is useful in that it avoids any abolition of the natural by the supernatural or confusion of the two.

At its most basic level, the basic good of religion is a natural good. Beyond this, it can be specified by divine revelation and can motivate the act of faith as a human act seeking harmony with God in the Christian religion. Beyond this, our pursuit and instantiation of all the goods specified by the natural law are dynamically affected by

¹⁷⁵ The fact that Grisez is willing to use both the term “sanctifying grace” and the term “actual grace” for charity is interesting in this regard. It would seem that Grisez recognizes that there is a twofold aspect to charity. In one sense charity is a transcendent, divine gift, above any human, natural potential or fulfillment, such as religion: thus the term “sanctifying grace” is appropriate for charity. However, in another sense, charity has a very human effect, in that it can aid us *dynamically* in our living humanly good lives, and in our abiding in God’s love: thus the term “actual grace” is appropriate for charity. See *Christian Moral Principles*, 614.

the new filial status we are given by God in charity and living faith. We understand all the human goods more clearly and hopefully, and their lack of attraction in a fallen world is dealt with by us seeing them and the world through the perspective of divine truth. Prayer and sacraments, especially the Eucharist in which we are united with Jesus, are understood and cooperated with as principles of life, life seen as cooperation with Jesus in his work of redemption. This redemption was accomplished by Jesus' complete harmony with the Father, and we come to share in redemption in our coming to be united with Jesus. All of our Christian lives can be understood as cooperation with Jesus in bringing redemption to all people. Thus, religion is transformed by living faith. Instead of being only a human fulfillment to be pursued and instantiated by our human actions, it becomes also a divine gift for us to abide in and live out of, as we pursue our human fulfillment with new vision and realism and hope, and as we open ourselves to the divine fulfillment that transcends human fulfillment.

CHAPTER FOUR

“PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES ...” [1987]

The main work to be looked at in this chapter is a substantial article on moral philosophy, which Grisez co-authored.¹ It devotes considerable attention specifically to religion as a basic good and so develops and clarifies its role in Grisez’s moral theory.

4.1 Preliminary remarks about the good of religion

4.1.1 *The basic human goods and the basic good of religion*

The first part of the article deals with “Practical Principles”, among which is the principle directing us to pursue the good of religion, one of the basic goods.² The authors list religion as one of seven basic goods. These seven basic goods are the same ones we have seen in *Christian Moral Principles*, but they are identified here using language that is generally practical and not specifically moral, unlike that used in *Christian Moral Principles*, which was more morally charged. As in previous works by Grisez, these goods are divided into substantive goods, which do not include choices, and reflexive goods, which do. The substantive goods are (1) “life itself – its maintenance and

¹ G. Grisez, J. Boyle, and J. Finnis, “Practical Principles, Moral Truth, and Ultimate Ends,” *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 32 (1987): 99-151. Henceforth, this article will be shortened to “Practical Principles”. At the end of the chapter, we look briefly also at one other publication of Grisez’s shortly after “Practical Principles,” which develop some of its ideas on religion.

² We do not look here at everything the authors say here about practical principles, but focus on religion and its place in their theory.

transmission – health, and safety”, (2) “knowledge and esthetic experience”, and (3) “some degree of excellence in work and play”.³ The reflexive goods, which are defined as goods essentially concerned with seeking to avoid or overcome various forms of conflict and/or to attain or maintain various forms of harmony, are (4) “various forms of harmony between and among individuals and groups of people”, (5) “inner peace”, (6) “peace of conscience and consistency between one’s self its expression”, and (7) “religion”, which is the focus of our treatment here.⁴

The basic good of religion is introduced in the following terms:

... most people experience tension with the wider reaches of reality. Attempts to gain or improve harmony with some more-than-human source of meaning and value take many forms, depending on people’s world views. Thus, another category of reflexive good is peace with God, or the gods, or some nontheistic but more-than-human source of meaning and value.⁵

4.1.2 Grounded in human experience of tension

When the authors refer to the source in human experience that grounds the insight into the good of religion, they use the phrase: “tension with the wider reaches of reality”. There are a number of clues in the article that help to explain what they mean by this phrase.⁶ When they explain the “genesis” of the first practical principles, the authors state that people do not grasp the point of pursuing the various forms of human goods by some

³ Ibid., 107.

⁴ Ibid., 108. Social harmony is listed here before the two kinds of harmony to do with the self, as social harmony is a very obvious good. The order is not significant. However, it can be helpful to consider the four existential goods as being concerned with self, then other human persons, and then God.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Once again, every attempt will be made to demarcate the direct assertions and arguments of Grisez (and his co-authors) from interpretations and applications of my own.

kind of “data-less” intuition or by innate knowledge. Data is necessary, and it is provided by “natural dispositions” or, put another way, “natural inclinations” that we experience.⁷ The reflexive goods include choices in their goodness, and so the data grounding practical insights into the reflexive goods “include volitions”. The authors go on to explain the nature of such volitions in this way:

Various forms of disharmony involving choices bearing upon substantive goods thwart one’s interests. *The will’s frustrated intentions* are natural inclinations which are data. And so, volitions specified by the substantive goods are part of the data for the insights whose content is the reflective practical principles.⁸

If we apply this to the genesis of the practical principle directing to the pursuit of the good of religion, we can say that one begins to grasp the good of religion when one becomes aware of the thwarting of one’s interests in substantive goods and one’s choices to pursue and instantiate the substantive goods. In one’s pursuit of life and health, knowledge and esthetic experience, and work and play one encounters difficulties that thwart one’s interests in these goods. Thus, one becomes aware of a kind of conflict or tension. But how is the conflict grounding one’s grasp of the good of religion distinct from the inner conflict within the self and from inter-human conflict?

4.1.3 Specifically religious tensions: sin and a difficult world

In the final part of the article, the authors speak specifically about the tension involved in one’s coming to grasp the good of religion, and give us some indications of what might

⁷ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 109, emphasis added. Grisez and his co-authors use “data” as a plural.

be the “will’s frustrated intentions” that provide the data for our grasping the good of religion:

Aware of this more-than-human source of meaning and value, most human persons also are acutely aware that they are not in complete harmony with it. For everyone sometimes makes immoral choices. And everyone finds the natural environment, which so clearly points to its transcendent source, in some respects a hard and cruel world. The fish are not to be found; crops fail; fire destroys carefully built dwellings; everyone gets sick, is hurt, and eventually dies. Harmony with the more-than-human source of meaning and value plainly must be pursued.⁹

The quotation specifies two causes of our becoming aware of tension between us and the more-than-human source of meaning and value: our making sinful choices and our experience of the difficulty and cruelty of the world.¹⁰

Before we examine these two causes, we must briefly analyse something else. The authors refer to our being already aware of the transcendent source, independently, it would seem, of our experience of sin and the harshness of life in this world. How does one thus become aware of “this more-than-human source”?

4.2 The cosmological argument developed

4.2.1 The cosmological argument

As the first part of the answer to this question, the authors outline briefly the cosmological argument that was developed by Grisez in depth in *Beyond the New*

⁹ Ibid., 142.

¹⁰ These two sources of tension are similar to the experiential grounds for our grasp of the good of religion treated above in *Christian Moral Principles*: see s. 3.3.3.

Theism.¹¹ This argument shows how we naturally become aware that each and every reality we experience is contingent and so calls inevitably for an ultimate non-contingent source to account for its reality. Contingent reality is constituted not only by physical things such as the stars and planets and bodies and so on, but also “human experience, feeling, thought, volition, action, and fulfillment”.¹² And, as contingent reality *is but need not be*, its being caused is very similar to a free choice. This leads us to understand the more-than-human source as being like a person causing “according to a plan” (as every free choice is shaped, however simply, by some plan of action, and brings into being the contingent reality that is the chosen action) and so the transcendent source of reality is seen as the transcendent source of meaning.

4.2.2 *A new development of the cosmological argument*

Thus far, the argument is the same one made in *Beyond the New Theism*. However, the authors now make a new point that develops the previous cosmological argument. The transcendent source of meaning is also a transcendent source of value, because it is not only the source of the existence (or obtaining) of practical principles themselves, but also the source of the very directiveness of practical knowledge.¹³ The directiveness of the basic goods (and the practical principles that call us to pursue and instantiate these goods) is not a necessary reality, but a contingent one, and so this directiveness, too, calls for an

¹¹ See ss. 2.5.2 and 3.3.3 above. John Finnis briefly outlines the argument in the final chapters of *Natural Law and Natural Rights* and *Aquinas*, which are treated in chapter seven below.

¹² “Practical Principles,” 141.

¹³ See *ibid.*, 142. In *Beyond the New Theism* Grisez prefers to use the terms “obtains” rather than “exists” in his cosmological argument for technical reasons that will be ignored here. The distinction between God being a source of “meaning” and being a source of “value” is implied in the “Practical Principles,” but not stated as explicitly as in the present work.

explanation, one that only a transcendent (i.e. non-contingent, necessary) reality can provide. Following on from this point, the authors develop a very important extension of it:

But since, in this case, the transcendent source is of directiveness, that source can only be thought of as if it were a person anticipating human fulfillment and leading human persons toward it.¹⁴

In this last point, although they do not use the traditional language of natural law theory, the authors are reiterating the classical philosophical idea that God is the author of the natural law, the objective moral law that human reason can discover and know (and, indeed, to some extent, constitute by its own proper use). The sheer contingency of all practical principles leads us to understand them as ultimately created by God, and the fact that they direct us to human fulfillment prompts us to understand that this Creator leads us to fulfillment as human beings as part of his plan. Just as the contingency of the objectively existing natural physical world and its intelligibility can lead us to know of God as the intelligent and powerful Creator, so too can the contingency and intelligibility of the objectively existing moral domain.¹⁵ When one is aware that the moral domain is created by God, who is the more-than-human source of all that is, one can become aware that one's failure to live in accordance with the moral order is a failure to live in harmony with God, who gives the moral order both its existence and directive nature.

¹⁴ "Practical Principles," 142. The directiveness referred to here is directiveness towards human fulfillment.

¹⁵ See on this the important section of *Beyond the New Theism* that deals with the four orders of reality, 130-140, treated above in s. 2.6. Although the cosmological argument is often applied only to the physical order, Grisez and his co-authors are now applying it to the moral order too. Grisez and his school do not deal in any detail with the relationship between God's being the creator of the physical order and God being the creator of the moral order. It might also be argued that in this article the authors go beyond a purely cosmological argument, such as that in *Beyond the New Theism*, to include elements of an argument from design (thus making reference to not only the existence or obtaining of realities, but to their intelligibility too).

4.3 Religion and knowledge

4.3.1 A very basic awareness

Grisez, Boyle and Finnis are not claiming that one must first have an accurate, theoretical, philosophical knowledge and understanding of God and religion before one can have any practical understanding of God and religion. Their position is quite different: one begins with no theory as such, but with some experience of religious tension and some understanding of it, coupled with some, perhaps dim, awareness of a more-than-human dimension of reality; then one grasps the practical point of pursuing the good of religion and attempting to instantiate it by action(s); and then one can develop a more adequate and fuller theoretical and practical understanding of God and how one might pursue harmony with him. One can be aware of being sinful and in need of harmony even if one is not fully aware in any philosophically sophisticated manner of a cosmological argument.

In fact, it is an important aspect of the moral theory of these authors that one's initial grasp of the practical principle directing one to pursue and instantiate the good of religion is necessarily simple and unsophisticated. As in previous works, Grisez presents the basic goods as open-ended fields of possibility to pursue and in which to participate, not objectives to be comprehensively and finally achieved.¹⁶ Therefore, it is fully in keeping with Grisez's understanding of basic goods and their role in practical rationality, that one's initial grasp of the good of religion is usually quite minimal and one's

¹⁶ See especially "Practical Principles," 103 and 117-119. See also ss. 2.4.3 and 3.3.4 above.

understanding of how to pursue and instantiate religion (harmony with the transcendent source of meaning and value) is usually quite incomplete, distorted, and even erroneous. A child can grasp the good of religion to an extent, even though this “grasp” is only a beginning. Adults, too, can be more or less wrong in their understanding of God and how to pursue and instantiate harmony with God, whilst still grasping clearly that it is important to pursue and attempt to instantiate some kind of harmony with God, however this “God” is understood. This is why their initial quotation on religion (see note 5 above) talks about religion in a very general way: the good of religion, *as it is grasped as the object of a first principle of practical reasoning*, involves one’s pursuit of harmony with “God, or the gods, or some nontheistic but more-than-human source of meaning and value”. And the minimal experience needed to grasp the point of such pursuit is “tension with the wider reaches of reality”.

4.3.2 *Basic religious awareness can and should be developed by knowledge*

The truth of the first practical principle directing us to pursue the good of religion is a practical truth, and as such cannot be deduced or derived from purely theoretical knowledge (or, as it is a primary principle, any other practical knowledge either). It is underived and basic in itself.¹⁷ Still, theoretical knowledge is important in the development of this basic awareness of this first practical principle. The very basic insight directing us to pursue the good of religion can be “enhanced” by “theoretical knowledge, true opinion, and experience”, just as the other basic goods can.¹⁸ Grisez and

¹⁷ See *ibid.*, 102 and 106. The existence of basic goods and their identification and defence can be argued for indirectly, by theoretical “dialectical” arguments or self-referential arguments: see *ibid.*, 111-113.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 109.

his co-authors specifically mention religion as a good that can be understood more or less well, depending on one's theoretical knowledge, true opinion and experience:

For example, both sound metaphysics and experience in practicing authentic religious faith contribute to one's understanding of the good of religion. In doing so, they enhance the power of the practical principle underlying the religious quest.¹⁹

A little further on, the authors make the point that one cannot “effectively pursue friendship with God without knowing (by reason and/or faith) at least some truth about God”.²⁰ What this means is that in Grisez's moral theory, although it is necessary to begin deliberating about one's actions with first practical principles, such as that associated with the good of religion, it is not sufficient to have only first practical principles; one also needs other kinds of knowledge, including theoretical knowledge. And this ‘knowledge’ is not just opinion, but knowledge of the truth, or else it will not enable one to effectively pursue and instantiate any basic good.²¹

With regard to religion, then, it is not enough to have a simple awareness that one is in conflict with the more-than-human source of meaning and value and that one ought to pursue and instantiate some measure of harmony with this source; one needs to pursue accurate and helpful knowledge about this source and the means available for us to

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 111. The word “effectively” here seems to mean, quite precisely, “with effect” rather than “with a satisfying effect”. Understood in this way, what Grisez and co-authors are saying is that some knowledge is necessary for us to be able to pursue religion (as “friendship with God”) *at all*. R. Black, *Christian Moral Realism: Natural Law, Narrative, Virtue, and the Gospel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), at 96-97, seems to misunderstand this point.

²¹ One needs also to have emotional motivations if one is to act for any good, and emotional motivations are linked to perception, memory and imagination of sensory realities: see “Practical Principles,” 100, and 104-105.

effectively achieve some degree of harmony with it.²² One's pursuit of such religious knowledge is shaped by one's grasp of the basic goods of knowledge and religion, whose directiveness, working together, ensures that one is not content simply to make a sincere effort to pursue the good of religion, but to conscientiously make an effective effort to do so. Although the first principle that directs us towards the good of religion is very simple and basic, it has a dynamism "built into" it that requires us, and enables us, to develop our knowledge of religion and to pursue and instantiate the good of religion in more and more effective ways.

4.4 How one becomes aware of the good of religion

4.4.1 Our experience of sin and sinfulness

Having acknowledged that Grisez, Boyle and Finnis allow for an understanding of the good of religion as an open-ended field of possibility that can, and should, be more and more deeply and accurately understood and effectively pursued, we can return to our examination of the origin of our basic grasp of the good of religion, which grounds the possibility of such development of understanding and effectiveness. As we have seen, one element in this basic, simple initial grasp of the good of religion is our experience of sin. We experience ourselves as directed to pursue human fulfillment by trying to instantiate various goods, such as health and life, knowledge, and work, but we also find ourselves failing to act according to what we grasp as moral standards. Thus, we

²² What Grisez and his co-authors say here echoes what Grisez said about the motivating role of religion and knowledge with regard to the act of faith: see ss. 3.4.1 – 3.4.4 above. However, Grisez does not hold that it is only theological knowledge that can help us to pursue religion; philosophical knowledge of God, such as that demonstrated in *Beyond the New Theism*, for example, can help also.

experience ourselves as letting ourselves down as individuals, and letting down our families, neighbours and communities. But, insofar as the objective existence and directiveness of moral standards are not accounted for adequately by ourselves individually or our communities, we can see ourselves letting down not only ourselves individually and our communities, but also the “wider reaches of reality”, the cosmic dimension of morality, so to speak. We find ourselves breaking the natural law and being in tension with the natural law’s lawgiver, even though we might (inaccurately) consider that lawgiver to be nature itself, or humanity itself, or some other nontheistic transcendent source of value.²³ No-one wants to live in a situation of tension, particularly one in which we are in conflict with the wider context of our whole existence. It is not just that we do not like to feel guilt; we also do not like to understand ourselves to be failures, to be “out of synch” with reality and its principles. (In other words, we do not like to feel guilt that we understand to be deserved.) And so we easily grasp that there is a point in our attempting to overcome this tension, this conflict, this deserved and inescapable guilt – in other words, we grasp naturally the practical good of religion.

²³ It is worth noting that this line of argument does not seem to take account easily of persons who refuse to acknowledge any more-than-human source of value or meaning, for example, those who see humans exclusively as creating our own meaning and values. Maybe Grisez would consider such people to have made themselves, individually or socially, their own “god” or “gods”, with harmony with self or group/humanity as their “religion”. Such people would seem to reduce the good of religion to one or more of the other three reflexive goods listed by Grisez and his school: inner peace, peace of conscience and consistency between one’s judgements and actions, peace with one’s communities. Grisez does not deal directly with this issue in his work on moral theory, but *Beyond the New Theism* can be read as a philosophical answer to such reductionism, and parts of *Living a Christian Life* can be read as philosophical and theological answers to it too, especially chapter one, in which a kind of Christian apologetics is briefly outlined.

4.4.2 *Our experience of a harsh world*

As well as our experience of sin, the authors mention a further dimension of our experience of religious tension. This is our experience of the harshness of life and the difficulties of living in the world as it has been experienced by virtually every human person through all history. They mention a few examples: “The fish are not to be found; crops fail; fire destroys carefully built dwellings; everyone gets sick, is hurt, and eventually dies.”²⁴ Here we come up against the same ideas we saw in Grisez’s brief but thought-provoking treatment in *Christian Moral Principles* of the sources of our natural knowledge of God.²⁵ Humans find ourselves and our actions in pursuit of life and health, and other basic forms of human fulfillment, coming up against what we might describe here as more-than-human difficulties. Such difficulties point toward the need for a more-than-human solution to our difficulties, and so the point of the religious quest for meaning and value can be grasped by anyone who experiences the fragility of life and the limitations of human action.

4.4.3 *A natural theology*

In summary, then, we can say that Grisez and his co-authors present us with a kind of natural theology,²⁶ which begins with a focus on how our basic awareness of the existence of a transcendent creator emerges naturally from our awareness and understanding of the contingency of all experienced realities. Then, in addition to this theoretical awareness of the transcendent source of reality, we have a practical awareness

²⁴ See “Practical Principles,” 108.

²⁵ See s. 3.3.3 above.

²⁶ Grisez, Boyle and Finnis do not use this phrase here (or in their other works, to my knowledge).

of our lack of harmony with this Source, pointed to by the facts that we sin and we face inevitable and deeply frustrating limitations in our hopes and actions. In both the theoretical and practical phases of the argument, it is the inevitable limitations, the human limitations, that point clearly to the need for a more-than-human Source of reality, meaning and value. It is as if Grisez is saying that the dynamism of the human intellect and will, if one is willing to accept the logical implications of this dynamism, points ultimately towards God, who alone can account for the existence and intelligibility of reality, including objective morality, and who, therefore, alone can save the human intellect and will from being ultimately absurd in their dynamic thrust to know and love. Human intellectual and volitional dynamism, which might be called “the human spirit”, is at the heart of the religious quest, the quest for harmony with the transcendent Source.

4.4.4 The community dimension

This religious quest is not something that is a purely individual matter. Our individual responsibility and need to seek accurate religious knowledge is great. So we need the help of others, particularly in light of the fact that knowing how to realise any harmony with the more-than-human source of reality is difficult.²⁷ The various religions have developed as people in various communities and settings have tried to find ways to pursue harmony with whatever they have come to understand as the transcendent source of meaning and value. Thus, both in the case of individuals as they grow and the case of groups and cultures as they evolve and change, religious belief systems and practices develop as, virtually universally in human history, people respond both individually and

²⁷ See “Practical Principles,” 142.

socially to their natural responsibility “to seek religious truth, embrace what appears to be that truth, and live according to it”.²⁸

4.5 True and false religion can be distinguished

4.5.1 Human actions are a kind of cooperation with God

Grisez, Boyle and Finnis provide an analysis of human action and its place in a kind of natural theology. Crucial to grasping the point of the religious quest is our becoming aware of the discrepancy between our hopes and our abilities/achievements. In line with their philosophical attention to the process and implications of human free choice,²⁹ the authors develop their understanding of religion and its role in morality (and, thus, in their moral theory) by focussing on this discrepancy.³⁰

One always hopes to achieve some benefit whenever one acts. But success in achieving any benefit is not fully within anyone’s power. Therefore, one necessarily “hopes in whomever or whatever will make one’s effort fruitful.”³¹ (We can add here that it is true also that even the whole community of humankind cannot guarantee the success of our efforts to pursue and instantiate human fulfillment. It is natural, therefore, for people virtually universally to put their hopes in a source that transcends the self and the

²⁸ Ibid. Grisez and his fellow authors are specifically echoing Vatican II, *Dignitatis Humanae*, 2 and 3.

²⁹ The authors point out in the introduction to the article that free choice is the most important element of the framework of their whole article and theory: see “Practical Principles,” 100-102.

³⁰ See *ibid.*, 143-144.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 143.

community.) Further, as we have seen, the more-than-human Source of meaning and value is the source of the directiveness that motivates all our actions, as this directiveness itself is part of contingent reality standing in need of a non-contingent source, and so, as the source of our rational motivation, the transcendent Source shapes all our hopes. Further still, this transcendent Source is the source too of the fulfilments that we seek through action. In addition, we naturally think of this Source as if it were a person (which is the reason I have written it with a capital initial). So, we end up thinking of a transcendent personal Source who is the ultimate cause of everything, including us, our thoughts, choices, actions and fulfilments.

We can add here that this Source is necessarily this ultimate cause if our hopes and activity are not to be seen as ultimately absurd. To see our hopes and activities as ultimately absurd would rob them of their practical value; and to see objective morality as ultimately merely a human creation or “fact of mindless nature”, would rob it of its motivating power. There is, in a very real and practical sense, no *point* in seeing our hopes, actions, and moral standards as ultimately absurd.³²

The authors conclude thus:

Therefore, for those who recognize the reality of a more-than-human personal source of meaning and value, *every human action is carried out in cooperation* with that unseen, more-than-human source, understood to be both directing human persons toward their fulfillment and helping them to bring it about.³³

³² There certainly would be no point in affirming or arguing for the absurdity of morality and human action. To advert to this is to make a self-referential argument.

³³ *Ibid.*, 144, emphasis in original. It should be noted here that the authors do not mean the word “cooperation” to refer necessarily to fully morally good cooperation. If “all” human actions are to be understood as involving cooperation with God, then even sin involves some level of cooperation with God,

This is a very important point. Earlier in the article, the authors wrote that “human actions can and naturally do lead to the instantiation of certain *participations* in divine goodness.”³⁴ What this meant is that God’s being the source of the goodness of the basic goods makes our pursuit of these goods, at least implicitly, a kind of participation in God’s own goodness as Creator. The authors go beyond this point, however, when they argue that not only is God the source of the basic goods as directive, but he is also the source of the goods as actually fulfilling. God does not only direct us towards goals and benefits; he helps us to achieve our goals and benefits by causing these goals and benefits to exist.³⁵

4.5.2 Human action involves willing the fulfillment of God

The authors extend their argument by focussing on the implications of seeing all human actions as cooperation with God. “In any cooperation, the other party, as a personal agent, also has intentions.”³⁶ Understanding the transcendent Source as a Person, rather than,

but it cannot be a morally good kind of cooperation. Sin involves a kind of manipulative and partial cooperation with God. This point will be developed below.

³⁴ Ibid., 135, emphasis in original.

³⁵ It seems therefore that the authors are developing what Grisez said in *Christian Moral Principles* when he wrote that life could be understood *in the light of faith* as a kind of cooperation with Jesus. Here, Grisez and his co-authors are writing philosophically, not theologically, and yet they argue that life can be seen even *by the light of reason* unaided by faith as cooperation with God. Clearly, faith enriches considerably the concept and possibilities of life as cooperation with God, as these authors recognise in the final part of this article. Life as cooperation with Jesus can be seen as a specification in the light of revelation of the more general cooperation with the Source of meaning and value that the authors speak of here. We could say that Grisez’s faith has illuminated his natural law theory, allowing him to see more clearly a philosophical truth. Thus the theology of *Christian Moral Principles* has led to clarification and extension of Grisez’s natural law theory in “Practical Principles”.

³⁶ Ibid., 144.

say, an impersonal energy or force, we must assume that the transcendent Source cooperates in our actions for his own reasons, for his own fulfillment. “Hence, in every action every human person naturally and *necessarily wills* (what cannot be thought of otherwise than as) a *fulfillment of the unseen source* of meaning and value.”³⁷

The authors make the point that speaking of such “fulfillment” of God should not be taken as implying that God lacks anything; the language they use in their argument here is a kind of “relational predication”, which speaks of God only insofar as we are related to him and he to us, but does not claim to speak about God in himself.³⁸ Still, even though the language must be read as a kind of analogy, and is limited as such, it emphasises a point about the more-than-human Source of meaning and value that is important: this Source is not in our power, this source is not a mere means to our ends. The reason for this is that “God emerges in the very exercise of human agency as one who directs human persons to act and brings about what is not within their power.”³⁹ In other words, the way that we have come to understand God as a personal Source of all reality, emphasises our ultimate contingency and powerlessness, and thus our need for a truly independent, objective and non-contingent Reality to be this Source.

³⁷ Ibid., emphasis in original.

³⁸ See *ibid.*

³⁹ Ibid. What Grisez is referring to here is our understanding of God, and not God himself.

Grisez, Boyle and Finnis end up with the following conclusions in their concisely outlined natural theology.⁴⁰ All human willing, because it puts its hope necessarily in the transcendent Source, is a kind of cooperation with this Source. Because this Source is a Person with intentions of its own, it is understood to cooperate with all human action for its own reasons. These reasons are for fulfillment of the Source's own purposes. Therefore, all our actions are to be understood as a kind of willing of the purposes of God, insofar as these actions, in their ultimate and inescapable contingency and limitation, are a kind of cooperation with God, who makes everything actual. The authors call this cooperative willing "the fundamental human love of God", which is "natural" for those who recognise "the reality of a more-than-human, personal source of meaning and value".⁴¹

4.5.3 *What about sin?*

The idea that *all* human actions are to be understood as a kind of cooperation with God seems puzzling. What about sin? How can we understand sinning, which is obviously a kind of human action, as cooperation with God?

Firstly, Grisez and his co-authors are not saying that all human action is an *explicit* cooperation with God. Although they do not point this out using the terminology of "explicit/implicit", it is clear from their discussion that they do not assume or argue that

⁴⁰ It could be argued that their presentation of this natural theology is too concise, and that it needs to be extended, especially to respond to objections, such as Grisez did in the extensive arguments of *Beyond the New Theism*. However, none of the authors has done this and so it remains an area of their work in need of development. The present work aims to contribute to this development.

⁴¹ Ibid.

all human action is carried out with any explicit awareness of its being a kind of cooperation with God.⁴² Their argument is a more modest one: all human action is *at least implicitly* a kind of cooperation with God. Obviously, one might not be explicitly aware always of its being so. Their argument seems to say that even if one is not aware of cooperating with any ultimate Source when one chooses and acts, one's choosing and acting must involve hoping for whatever conditions are necessary for success, and such conditions must include the transcendent Source of reality, meaning and value, whether one knows this or not. So everyone's actions are a *de facto* cooperation with God, whether they understand them to be so or not.⁴³

Secondly, the authors are not claiming that all human action is *morally good* cooperation with God. Here, they are quite explicit. They distinguish between two types of cooperation. The first kind of cooperation obtains when human persons act in cooperation with God exclusively for their own (human) fulfilment, and only insofar as it is necessary

⁴² In an earlier part of the article, the authors make the point that some human actions are carried out for the sake of substantive goods rather than reflexive goods: see *ibid.*, 139. This means that the good of cooperation with God, or in other words, the good of religion, is not explicitly at stake in all actions. They do not rule out the possibility, however, that one can do an action explicitly for one basic human good, such as life, whilst at the same time other basic goods are instantiated implicitly in the same action.

⁴³ However, Grisez and his co-authors seem to assume that people who understand their actions in general to be cooperation with God are already aware of God as the transcendent Source of reality: see nn. 33 and 41 above. Belief in God is a condition for explicitly understanding one's actions as cooperation with God. Perhaps Grisez would accept the following point, however: that for those who do not believe in God, their actions are implicitly a kind of cooperation with God, but they understand their actions only imperfectly, and see them as cooperation with all the necessary conditions for the success of these actions, whilst failing to see that God is the ultimate such condition. Presumably, such people have some kind of substitute for God as their ultimate condition for successful action: maybe "scientific progress", "scientific truth", or "social justice", or "luck", or "destiny", or "nature's law", and so on. Thus, even atheists can be understood to conform to Grisez's theory here: even they always act with reference to an ultimate condition or set of conditions with which they are motivated to act in cooperation with, or at least to be resigned to and accept with some grace, insofar as they can. Even atheists have a religion of sorts.

for this selfish fulfilment, but not for God's own (divine) fulfilment.⁴⁴ This cooperation is an unreasonably limited cooperation, a cooperation in which the will "subordinates the fulfillment of others to the benefit it seeks for itself" and "establishes an exploitative relationship" with the other.⁴⁵

4.5.4 False religion and true religion can be distinguished practically

This kind of exploitative willing instantiates the basic good of religion, but only in an immoral way. It is immoral because it fails to respect the integrity of the basic human goods in their integral directiveness, and so it pursues and instantiates the good of religion only in a mutilated and fragmented and miserable manner.⁴⁶ It is clear that Grisez and his fellow authors acknowledge that the basic good of religion can be understood and pursued in a very imperfect and unacceptable way:

Those who relate to others in this [immoral] way try to coerce them, trick them, manipulate them, bargain with them, evade their claims for mutuality, and, ultimately, get along without them. Many entire religions and some forms of every religion are marked with these signs of morally bad will.⁴⁷

In this quotation, Grisez and his fellow authors point out a specifically *practical* way of distinguishing between true and false religion. True and false religion are distinguished by the kind of willing involved in each. False religion is marked by "morally bad will", which manipulates, tricks, bargains with, evades and even ignores the purposes of God.

⁴⁴ See *ibid.*, 144-145.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁴⁶ See *ibid.*, 126-127, for an explanation of what characterises the will as immoral, using these adjectives.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 145.

Another way of distinguishing false religion from true religion would be to point out that false religion lacks accurate knowledge of God and his purposes. Grisez and his fellow authors do not mention this more theoretical way of judging religion to be inadequate, and one can be confident that they would not reject it⁴⁸ as a method of evaluating the truth of any religion, or any religious attitude or lifestyle, but their approach in this article is thoroughly practical in its focus on the will. Practically considered, false religion is constituted by willing that lacks the integrity of “a will toward integral human fulfillment”, willing that violates the first principle of morality.⁴⁹ This kind of willing, morally bad willing, constitutes cooperation with God insofar as one hopes in God for the fulfillment of one’s intentions, but it is a morally bad cooperation with God insofar as it is a selfish hope and it lacks the integrity that accepts God as the personal Source of all that is good in its integral wholeness and directiveness. It could be said, in line with the analysis of Grisez, Boyle and Finnis, that false religion, insofar as it is a morally bad cooperation with God, involves a kind of idolatry in which the human person or community creates ‘god’ in our own image, so that our immoral desires and choices will be supported or rationalised by this created ‘god’.

⁴⁸ It is important to bear in mind that knowledge is a basic human good, and it forms part of the integral directiveness of practical truth, and so one is immoral whenever one chooses in a manner that slights, overlooks, ignores or damages the good of knowledge. Therefore, Grisez’s practical approach does not ignore the need for one to have accurate knowledge of God and his purposes; he is not saying that subjectively good intentions are sufficient or that ignorance is acceptable. One should also bear in mind Grisez’s acknowledgement of the value of, and need for, dialectical arguments in defence of the basic goods: see *ibid.*, 111-113.

⁴⁹ See *ibid.*, 128. This point is not affected substantially by Grisez’s recent development of his moral theory: see s. 6.3 above.

True religion is the opposite of false religion. Practically considered, true religion involves morally good willing. This is willing that respects the first principle of morality, willing “toward integral human fulfillment”, willing that is open to the integral directiveness of all the first principles of practical knowledge. True religion involves right reason, unfettered practical reason that seeks the good with a heart open to all that is good and true and beautiful.⁵⁰ True religion involves morally good cooperation with God. This kind of cooperation is fully open to the fact that God is a person independent of us, who has purposes of his own, which our cooperation with him ought to respect. In our religious quest for knowledge of God’s will, we ought to seek, accept and live by God’s purposes. True religion involves the rejection of idolatry and the acceptance of God’s independent existence and objectively real purposes. True religion involves the avoidance of using “God” or “religion” to support or rationalise our immoral desires and choices.

4.5.5 Religion as a virtue

The authors do not explicitly list “religion” as a virtue. In fact, they deal with religion as a basic human good, and they distinguish between virtues and basic human goods. They see the basic human goods as the objects of the truly *primary* practical principles that form the first principles of moral truth.⁵¹ As a basic human good, religion can be pursued and instantiated in an immoral way: whenever it is pursued or instantiated in deliberately chosen or unfairly accepted isolation from the other basic human goods, or, in other

⁵⁰ This language (the good, the true, and the beautiful) is not that used by Grisez, Boyle and Finnis in this article. Notice however that morally good religion is necessarily open to, and not closed to, accurate theoretical knowledge of God and his will. Morally good religion, true religion, is not purely subjectivistic.

⁵¹ See *ibid.*, 130.

words, in a way that lacks the integrity of moral truth. However, whenever religion is pursued or instantiated in a morally good way, respecting the integral directiveness of all practical truth, then, although the authors do not say this explicitly, their argument supports the idea that religion is a kind of virtue. “Virtues are aspects of the fully integrated personality of a good person. Such a personality concretely realizes the reflexive goods in accord with moral truth.”⁵² So, a person who pursues religion, which is one of the reflexive goods, in accord with moral truth, does so in a way that integrates his or her personality, thus forming virtue. Although “religion” as a basic human good can be (mis)understood as merely “pre-moral”, as a fragment of the integral whole set of basic human goods, and so pursued in an immoral way, it can also be understood as a virtue whenever it is seen and pursued as an integral part of a whole set of basic human goods.

4.5.6 The objective content of our religious beliefs and practices matters

Grisez and his fellow authors deal with religion from a practical point of view, emphasising the practical intellect and the will, looking at things mainly from within the moral agent’s perspective. However, the natural theology argument that the authors develop, which was outlined above, implies several truths about the content of religious beliefs and the specificity of religious practices. The natural theology they present seems to imply that the only adequate way of understanding the transcendent Source is as a personal reality that directs us towards moral truth and human fulfillment. Therefore, as well as a theoretical argument from contingency (a kind of cosmological argument), they present an argument from practical rationality, which provides some religious content and

⁵² Ibid.

specificity. This content and specificity are knowable by reason, insofar as it is open to the truth of the argument from contingency and the argument from practical rationality.⁵³ Knowledge is one of the basic human goods, and one who loves the good of knowledge will be open to learn the truth about God and religion, and will never settle for ignorance or mere guesswork or human projection, insofar as one is able individually or socially to avoid religious ignorance, guesswork and projection. Also, one who is morally good can learn from this moral goodness itself, insofar as it is a reflexive goodness that points to its Source, some naturally knowable religious content.

One can know philosophically at least the following natural truths about God and religion: there is a transcendent Source of meaning and value; this Source is non-contingent and thus mysterious; this Source is what all contingent realities depend on ultimately; this Source is adequately understood only as personal; this Source is singular; this Source is the intelligent source of all meaning; this Source is the good source of value; this Source is the condition of all our hopes; religion, or harmony with this Source, is to be pursued and instantiated; we must individually and socially seek the truth about this Source and how to realise harmony with it; we must avoid any kind of immoral pursuit and instantiation of religion.

⁵³ It is not necessary for one to be explicitly aware of these arguments in any detail for one to be aware of their implications for religious belief and practice. Even those who are not philosophers can grasp the idea and at least the probability of God's existence, his mystery, his singularity, his personality, his power, his intelligence, and his goodness. – all of which are implied by the argument from contingency that Grisez put forward in *Beyond the New Theism* and the argument from practical rationality and that Grisez, Boyle and Finnis present in this article.

The authors make it clear several times in this article that accurate knowledge is important in our pursuit of, and instantiation of, the basic human goods.⁵⁴ To be practically rational one needs both practical knowledge and theoretical knowledge. One needs “sound metaphysics and experience in practicing authentic religious faith” if one is to understand the good of religion.⁵⁵ We can achieve some accurate natural knowledge of religious truth. We can even be naturally aware of sin and the need to avoid it.⁵⁶ At the same time, Grisez and his fellow authors clearly understand that what is naturally knowable about religion is limited. There are “commitments of faith with far richer purposes than the negative one of remaining blameless before God”.⁵⁷ At the end of the article, the authors make it clear that Christian faith offers much in this respect.⁵⁸

4.6 Religion as the integrating overall commitment of one’s life

4.6.1 Reflexive basic human goods have a natural moral priority

There is another important aspect of religion as a basic good that is developed in this article. The authors emphasise, as in previous works, that the basic human goods do not form a hierarchy amongst themselves.⁵⁹ Taking each one singly, no one of them is prior

⁵⁴ See “Practical Principles,” 109, 111 and 118.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 109.

⁵⁶ See *ibid.*, 146. See s. 3.4.8 above for Grisez’s treatment of sin in *Christian Moral Principles*.

⁵⁷ “Practical Principles,” 146.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 146-147. The details of this focus on Christianity will be examined below. Clearly, Grisez does not confine our need for religious content to what can be known philosophically.

⁵⁹ See *ibid.*, 139-140.

in every circumstance, in every choice. Religion in itself is not the most important basic good.

Still, the authors make it clear that there are natural priorities among the basic goods.⁶⁰ These natural priorities are specified by moral truth, rather than by (more general) practical truth. When we understand the reflexive goods in a moral way, grasping their particular directiveness in the context of the integral directiveness of all the basic goods, we can see how each of the reflexive goods can have priority in particular choices. Whenever one has a choice between harmonising feelings with choices by either choosing in accord with (unreasonable) feelings or harmonising feelings with choice by “bringing one’s feelings into line with one’s reasonable choice”, one must choose the latter. Thus, the reflexive basic human good of inner peace, when understood morally, takes priority whenever it is at stake.⁶¹ So too with the good of harmony among judgment, choice and performance – it takes priority whenever it is at stake and it is understood virtuously. In other words: “Whenever one must choose between doing what is morally right and what is morally wrong, one must act according to one’s conscience.”⁶² Harmony with one’s fellow human beings can take priority too, whenever it is at stake in some particular way and it is understood morally.

⁶⁰ See *ibid.*, 137-139.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 137-138.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 137.

Following on from these points about these three reflexive goods, Grisez and his fellow authors focus on religion and show how it too can have a kind of natural priority, when understood morally.

4.6.2 Religion as a virtue has priority over the other basic goods

We have seen above what is meant by understanding religion morally. It means understanding religion as a true cooperation with God, respectful of God as a person, open to God as the Source of practical and moral truth, open to God's objective reality and will. Religion as a virtue has a particular importance,⁶³ which gives it a priority over the other basic goods, whilst not denying the basic goodness of the other goods or reducing them to religion.

Grisez, Boyle and Finnis want to make the point that the basic human goods are not an unordered crowd of goods, and the moral life is not an incoherent set of choices for incommensurable goods, with no shape or overall structure to it. They do not see the moral life as made up of isolated choices. Commitments are an important part of the moral life. Grisez, Boyle and Finnis argue that each human person should pursue an overall commitment that integrates his or her whole life.⁶⁴ This unity of life is part of the happiness that one is prepared to settle for as the ultimate natural end of one's life.⁶⁵

⁶³ Again, it is worth noting that the authors do not explicitly write about religion as "a virtue", but their arguments imply that it is right to speak of religion as a virtue whenever it is specified morally.

⁶⁴ See *ibid.*, 136.

⁶⁵ See *ibid.* The authors point out that the happiness for which one is prepared to settle is not the exact same thing as 'integral human fulfilment', because the latter is beyond human realisation, even in principle, and so can function only as an ideal to rectify the will, whereas the former is realisable in principle through one's morally good choices. Grisez's recent development of his moral theory replaces *integral human*

Without such an integrating commitment unifying one's choices and lesser commitments, it is possible that one's choices and commitments will overlap wastefully or interfere with each other, and so one's practical purpose will be frustrated. Therefore, one is naturally bound to try to integrate one's choices into a coherent and practically effective whole. To fail to do so is to violate the very first principle of practical reasoning.⁶⁶

Grisez, Boyle and Finnis argue in this article, for the first time in any detailed way, that only a (virtuous) religious commitment can integrate one's life into a unified, satisfying whole.⁶⁷ As God is the Source of meaning and value, and thus of the directiveness of the practical principles of the natural law, every choice is a kind of participation in God's goodness. Every choice is a kind of cooperation with God, who is the ultimate condition of all our hopes. Only morally good choices embody a true cooperation with God; only such choices participate as fully as possible in God's goodness. The good of religion is instantiated (at least implicitly) in every morally good choice, and is violated (at least implicitly) in every immoral choice. Even choices between two good options can be understood to be religious insofar as one is necessarily choosing between options conditioned by the ultimate Source of all reality, meaning and value. Thus, it is religion that is the most appropriate basic human good for unifying a human life, coordinating one's choices into a coherent whole that is adequate to both the first principle of practical knowledge and the first principle of morality. Even when religion is not explicitly at

fulfillment and the happiness for which people settle with integral communal fulfillment as the ultimate natural end of one's life: see s. 6.3 below.

⁶⁶ See *ibid.*, 119-120.

⁶⁷ See *ibid.*, 141. We saw hints of this argument in earlier works of Grisez: see ss. 2.1.8, 2.1.9, 2.2.8, 2.4.6a-b, 2.5.5d, 3.4.5, and 3.4.8.

stake in a choice, and often it is not,⁶⁸ it is always at stake implicitly simply because we face a choice.

4.6.3 Religion is the best good for providing one's overall orientation

The most suitable basic orientation of a human life, therefore, is that of seeking to avoid conflict with the transcendent Source of meaning and value, and seeking harmony with this Source, in all our choices. Put negatively, this means that it is right for us to see all of our choices as conditioned and shaped by the intention of avoiding sin.⁶⁹ Seeing all of our choices as conditioned and shaped by any one of the other basic human goods, even one of the other three reflexive goods, is not as adequate. Religion is held by Grisez and his fellow authors to have an architectonic role that is “greater” than any other good. It is not confined to one area of life, as the substantive goods are. Nor is it only at stake in choices between right and wrong, as the other reflexive goods are. It has to be admitted, however, that the reason why religion is better than the other three reflexive goods in its architectonic role is not fully explained or justified in this article.⁷⁰ It would seem that perhaps the main justification for their claim is that when religion is morally specified, and only then, it is able to serve as a unifying good for all the other goods insofar as

⁶⁸ Clearly, the authors are not claiming that all choices must be explicitly religious, or even explicitly for the sake of a reflexive good. They give an example: a girl chooses to help an old man purely for the sake of his safety, unaware of any other basic good at stake in the choice: see *ibid.*, 139.

⁶⁹ See *ibid.*, 146.

⁷⁰ It is worth noting, for example, how Finnis in his writings before this article gave the overall architectonic role to the basic good of ‘practical reasonableness’, which is synonymous with what the authors here call the good of harmony between one’s judgements, choices and performances, when morally understood. It is not explained fully in this article why he has now moved away from such a position. See ss. 7.2.3-5 above.

religion seeks harmony with the ultimate Source of each of the other goods, and of all of them as an integral whole.

4.7 Christian faith and religion

4.7.1 Christian faith specifies a rich integrating religious commitment

The final part of the article is devoted to the Christian faith and forms a kind of theological epilogue to the mainly philosophical article.⁷¹ The Christian faith is seen as a religious view that specifies an integrating religious commitment. During the course of the article, the authors have presented religion as a basic human good, the good of harmony with the transcendent source of meaning and value, towards which we are naturally directed by a first principle of practical knowledge. This initial simple directive leads us to make efforts to develop and deepen our knowledge of this transcendent source and how to pursue and instantiate harmony with it (and avoid conflict with it). We do this individually and socially, in each individual's life and culturally in the life of society, and so religions develop and help us on our religious quest for the goods of knowledge and religion. Thus, we are helped towards making a virtuous religious commitment that unifies our life.

Christian faith is seen by the authors (and they seem to say that others will see this easily too) as offering a richer understanding of "religion" and the ultimate purpose of life than

⁷¹ Ibid., 146-147.

a merely general religious commitment.⁷² Examined philosophically, Christian faith exemplifies and epitomises clearly how a virtuous religious commitment can integrate a human life in a way that contributes to the closest approximation to integral human fulfillment. Understood theologically, Christian faith presents a true vision of life understood as cooperation with God in the completion of “his work of creating, redeeming, and sanctifying humankind.”⁷³ Life is seen as a commitment to seek first the Kingdom of God. This Kingdom “will include every sort of benefit intended by morally good will.”⁷⁴ Christian faith involves entering into human cooperation with Jesus.⁷⁵ This cooperation involves “willing one’s own fulfillment in communion with Jesus”, but also, in willing one’s own fulfillment, simultaneously willing “the fulfillment of the divine person of the Word, according to his human nature.”⁷⁶

Grisez and his fellow authors are here applying to Christian faith what they earlier said about religion in general: understood and instantiated virtuously, that is in the light of the full integrity of moral truth, religion involves a morally good cooperation with the Source of meaning and value, and this cooperation is the best kind of commitment to unify one’s life practically and morally. What the authors are doing in this short final section of the article is a kind of summary of some major points already developed by Grisez in

⁷² See *ibid.*, 146. This final part of the article does not set out to examine or defend the truth of the Christian faith, but to present briefly its meaning, and to show how it exemplifies what has been said in the article about religion’s role in shaping an overall commitment unifying one’s life.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 147.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

Christian Moral Principles, and examined in the previous chapter of this present work, but developing what was said by Grisez there by focussing on how religion as a basic human good, especially when specified by Christian faith, is eminently suited to play an architectonic role in unifying the moral life.

4.7.2 Religion mediates our fulfillment in divine goodness

Grisez, Boyle and Finnis end by referring to something we saw in our examination of the theology in *Christian Moral Principles*. Religion, even when specified by divine revelation and embodied in Christian faith, is only a basic *human* good. It denotes a form of human fulfillment, a kind of human love of God leading to human happiness. Even though this human happiness, according to Christian faith, will be fulfilled by God in the Kingdom after our death, it is still specifically *human* fulfillment.

However, there is a further kind of fulfillment that God offers to humankind through Jesus: “fulfillment in divine goodness”.⁷⁷ This fulfillment is a gift, received by us, not instantiated by (or in) any of our choices, as the human good of religion is. It is a fulfillment that we can have even as we continue to be human, because, whilst remaining human, we can share in the divine nature (in a manner similar to Jesus sharing in our human nature) by our receiving “a second birth by water and the Spirit or a second nature by divine adoption”.⁷⁸ This gift of divine fulfillment is not a substitute for human

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

fulfillment in the Kingdom (i.e. heaven): it is a compliment to it. We are to be fulfilled in both a human way and a divine way.

Still, the authors present Christian life as having *one* overall purpose: to live for the sake of the kingdom of God.⁷⁹

The happiness for which those who live such a life are prepared to settle embraces every human fulfillment for which they hope. Moreover, *mediated by their human solidarity with Jesus* but beyond the limits of merely human peace with God [i.e. the basic human good of religion], they hope for intimate communion in divine joy.⁸⁰

We note here the importance of living in friendship with Jesus, which is a specified form of religion: this friendship is a bridge, to speak metaphorically, that links our human acts and fulfillment to the gift of our divine fulfillment. Our joy in the divine fulfillment is mediated by our human solidarity with Jesus, and therefore we are able to hope for it.⁸¹

4.8 Conclusion: Various levels of meaning of the term “religion”

It is clear from this article that, as in *Christian Moral Principles*, the basic good of religion is seen to have various ‘levels’ of meaning.⁸² At its most basic, religion functions as the object of a simple insight (or practical directive) into the value of pursuing

⁷⁹ This article marks the beginning of Grisez’s emphasis on the kingdom of God (or simply “the kingdom” as he often refer to it) as the unifying theme of Christian life, as our ultimate end.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, emphasis added. Both the emphasis and the added insert seek to emphasise the role of religion.

⁸¹ Grisez develops this idea later: see s. 6.1.9c below.

⁸² Again, as in our analysis of *Christian Moral Principles*, we acknowledge that Grisez and his co-authors do not treat religion or the basic goods in terms of levels.

harmony and avoiding conflict with whatever is the transcendent source of reality, meaning and value. The basic level of “religion” can be developed as one develops one’s understanding of what the transcendent source is and how one is to pursue and instantiate harmony with it (and avoid conflict with it). At the level of natural theology, much can be learned about what the transcendent source is and about how to pursue the good of religion. Much of what is found in various religions can be understood as the unfolding of what can be learned, and what can be guessed at, often erroneously, as part of our quest for the basic goods of knowledge and religion (which are seen as an interrelated pair, each specifying the other). Various things can help or hinder us in our religious quest.

Immorality especially can hinder us from correctly understanding the good of religion and participating in its goodness, and morally bad will can twist the good of religion into an evil version of the true good of religion, into a manipulative form of relationship with God, an idolatrous form of cooperation with God. Understood morally, the good of religion can open out into a true form of friendship with God, one where we are willing to accept God as he truly is, especially in his being the Source of the natural law, the integral directiveness of practical principles. At this level, religion is a virtue.

Christian faith is seen as giving such good will or such virtue specific and integrating shape, true and rich knowledge, and inspiring and transcendent vision. The basic good of religion finds its fulfillment in Christian faith. And it finds its most perfect fulfillment in the heavenly kingdom.

Finally, “mediated” by the “solidarity” with Jesus that Christian faith makes possible, “but beyond the limits of merely human peace with God”, which is the basic good of religion, we find the special gift of sharing the divine life.⁸³ So, although religion is a wonderful human good in itself, in its specification in Christian belief and practice, and in its architectonic role as the overall commitment of a good life, it is not the highest good, not the most transcendent sharing in communion with God. That is a gift beyond the basic good of religion, although our way to being given this great gift is through the good of religion.

4.9 Appendix: “A Contemporary Natural Law Ethics” [1989]⁸⁴

4.9.1 Religion and the environment

In a chapter-length outline by Grisez of his natural law theory, covering much the same ground as the article just examined above, and written shortly after it, Grisez mentions a new point concerning the meaning of “religion” as a basic human good. The range of reference of the basic human good that we are calling “religion” is expressed in terms that seem wider in scope in this article than in other works:

⁸³ Ibid. Note that the gift of sharing the divine life is not an instantiation of religion realised by or through or in our action; it is a pure gift. Nevertheless, it is “mediated” by our human solidarity with Jesus, which is an instantiation of the good of religion specified in Christian faith. This point is suggested clearly by the final sentences of this article.

⁸⁴ Grisez’s “A Contemporary Natural Law Ethics” was published in *Moral Philosophy: Historical and Contemporary Essays*, ed. William C. Starr and Richard C. Taylor (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1989), 125-43. It would seem that commentators and critics have overlooked this article. William E. May, *Introduction to Moral Theology*, for example, which presents a detailed summary of Grisez’s thought, with copious references, does not mention it. Grisez’s 1989 presentation of his natural law theory is very similar to the chapter length presentation of it in the better known *Nuclear Deterrence, Morality and Realism*, co-authored with John Finnis and Joseph M. Boyle, Jr. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). Grisez acknowledges Finnis and Boyle as major contributors and co-owners of their natural law theory in “A Contemporary Natural Law Ethics,” 125.

And beyond human relationships, there can be harmony between humans and the wider reaches of reality and its principles. Concern for this last good underlies such diverse activities as believers' worship and environmentalists' work to save endangered species.⁸⁵

This way of referring to the basic good of religion is very broad. It can be understood to refer to a theistic view, but it also allows very clearly for a non-theistic view. This much was expressed in the 'Practical Principles' article too, and previous work, but one of the examples that Grisez gives here is new and interesting: environmentalists' work to save endangered species.⁸⁶ This example of an activity instantiating the good of religion suggests that it can be understood very broadly in Grisez's moral theory. We might put it like this: For some people, the earth and/or its life forms can be a kind of "god". Or, perhaps, we could say that work for the sake of the good of the environment, including the good of the survival of non-human species, can be accounted for by reference to the human good of harmony between humans and "the wider reaches of reality and its principles".

Grisez's broad description of what the basic human good of religion can involve can allow for an environmentalist religion of sorts, in which nature itself will fulfil the role of "god" in the practical thinking of such people, and will render their choices intelligible to them and to others. But it could be also that human concern for the good of the earth and its species is accounted for within a theistic religious world-view. This article by Grisez does not elaborate on the matter, but the broadness of its brief treatment of the good of

⁸⁵ Ibid., 128.

⁸⁶ Actually, the example is not totally new as it appeared word for word in *Nuclear Deterrence, Morality and Realism*, 280. This is the first time that Grisez makes reference to this example in a work written by him alone.

religion is notable, and it seems to allow for human concern for the good of non-human species. In addition, of course, Grisez mentions a more obvious example of religion in action: the worship of believers.

4.9.2a Christian faith is necessary to participate richly in the human goods

Like “Practical Principles”, this article ends with a theological section. It is worth looking in a little detail at how Grisez makes the transition to this final theological section. In the penultimate section, Grisez made the point that living a good life entails having “an integrated set of upright commitments” that enables one to effectively and consistently participate in goods.⁸⁷ However, one requires more than just making commitments, even an integrated set of them, to live a fulfilled and good life. One requires virtues, which are aspects of character shaped by good choices: “a good person is one whose whole self is formed by a comprehensive set of upright commitments”.⁸⁸ Virtues enable us to make good free choices and commitments. However, this is not an easy task.

The final, theological section begins by outlining the difficulties of living a good and fulfilling human life. “The good we achieve and enjoy is mutilated and threatened by ineptitude, failure, breakdown, ignorance, error, misunderstanding, pain, sickness, and death.”⁸⁹ We seem to be faced with inevitable failure, both individually and socially. Our society suffers from immorality and compromise, and such morally imperfect society

⁸⁷ “A Contemporary Natural Law Ethics,” 137. See *ibid.*, 129-130, on the first moral principle.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 137.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

makes it harder for each of us to live a good life. We are all lacking in freedom in various ways. "All humankind lives in slavery, though some are always only slaves, while others sometimes play the role of master."⁹⁰ Added to immorality are other "repugnant aspects of the human condition", which are "epitomized by death, which seems natural and inevitable".⁹¹ Philosophical reflection is inadequate to explain our human predicament.

According to Grisez, the "Christian gospel ... offers a more adequate account of the situation."⁹² He outlines the gospel, emphasising the fact that God calls each of us to make the commitment of faith in Jesus. Grisez wants to make very clear that making the Christian commitment of faith is not to commit to something non-human, something narrowly spiritual or religious: "The gospel teaches Christians that if they live their lives to implement their faith in Jesus, they will live the best human lives possible in this broken world."⁹³ Here once again we see a central theme of Grisez's moral theory: commitment to religion, when specified by Christian faith, is not a commitment that takes one away from the other human goods, and from natural human fulfillment. Rather, commitment to Jesus and to his cause, the Kingdom, is a commitment in which humans can seek and find true, integral fulfillment. True, such fulfillment is not possible simply by making and keeping one's commitment of faith; such commitment is only the first stage of human liberation from all the negative aspects of the fallen human condition. A second, final stage is necessary too, in which God recreates by his own act earth and

⁹⁰ Ibid., 138.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

heaven, including the resurrection of the body, a divine act of recreation begun in Jesus' resurrection.⁹⁴

4.9.2b Christian faith and natural law ethics

None of this means that the natural law ethics developed by Grisez is superseded or no longer applicable:

If the Christian gospel is true, the normative ethical theory outlined in the previous sections remains adequate. The basic human goods remain, though they unfold in unexpected ways.⁹⁵

This quote does not mention religion specifically, but it implies that the basic good of religion, along with the other six basic human goods, remains relevant to the commitment of Christian faith and its fulfillment in the Kingdom, the “unending divine-human fellowship”⁹⁶ of heaven.

It is clear that Grisez sees Christian faith as supporting and developing the natural law ethics he outlines in this article. An important element of this view is his rejection of what he calls “an Augustinian or Thomistic version of neo-Platonism”,⁹⁷ in which the good of religion plays too strong a role, drowning out the full range of human goods and their fulfillment in the Kingdom. Grisez insists at the end of this article, as he has done in

⁹⁴ See *ibid.*, 138-139.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 139. Grisez also mentions that “the modes of responsibility remain, though they generate many specifically Christian norms”.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* What he means by this phrase is not explained in any detail in “A Contemporary Natural Law Ethics”, but see ss. 6.1.9d and 6.2.2a below.

Christian Moral Principles and continues to do in later works, that “faith does not substitute a supreme instantiation of a supernatural good for integral human fulfillment”.⁹⁸ Grisez wants to be clear that Christian faith does not aim at the Beatific Vision as our natural and comprehensive fulfillment. The goods of religion and knowledge, which might (falsely) be thought of as being supremely fulfilled by the Beatific Vision, are not the only basic human goods; they are not the only important aspects of our human nature. Grisez’s view is that *all* the human goods will be found in heaven, which is to be seen as “an unending marriage feast”, a “communion of divine and human persons [in which] all the basic human goods will be instantiated without the defects imposed by death.”⁹⁹ So, religion is only one of a range of human goods to be perfected in heaven, although it is obviously an important one insofar as it refers to our harmony with God, which is an integral part of heaven’s happiness. However, Grisez ends his article with a sentence referring to what we have already seen him deal with in detail in *Christian Moral Principles*, the fact that God offers us a more-than-human fulfillment, a special gift of sharing in his divine life, a gift that goes beyond any merely human good that we can instantiate in or through our choices and actions: “And the more-than-human fulfillment which is naturally proper to God alone also will be enjoyed by his adopted sons and daughters”.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ “A Contemporary Natural Law Ethics,” 139.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

CHAPTER FIVE

VOLUMES TWO AND THREE [1993/1997]

5.1 *Living a Christian Life*, volume 2 of *The Way of the Lord Jesus* [1993]

We turn now to analyse the second and third volumes of Grisez's moral theology project, *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, beginning with the second.¹ We look mainly at the parts of this book that indicate or suggest how the good of religion finds its place in a Christian life shaped by natural law specified by Christian faith.

5.1.1a The basic goods in Grisez's moral theory in this volume

It is not easy to find clearly in this volume where the basic human good of religion is treated. It does not appear in the contents page; nor does it appear in the index.² In fact, several of the other basic human goods are difficult, or even impossible, to find in the contents page or index. True, life and marriage are very easy to find as each has a full chapter devoted to it (chapters 8 and 9 respectively). Also, work is treated in part of chapter 10.³ There is very little on the good of play, however, and although the good of knowledge is treated in the chapter about "Seeking Moral Truth" (chapter 5), it is treated

¹ G. Grisez, *Living a Christian Life*, volume 2 of *The Way of the Lord Jesus* (Quincy, Ill.: Franciscan Press, 1993). Though written with the help of Joseph Boyle, Jeannette Grisez, Russell Shaw, and others, this work is substantially Grisez's. This volume deals with "the specific moral responsibilities" common to all Christians, both lay and clerical (see xi).

² There are entries in the index for "religious assent", "religious liberty" and "religious life" (meaning, the "religious state of life, or the religious vocation): see *ibid.*, 946.

³ Only two pages of the 950 deal with the good of play, looking at the immorality of prize-fighting and at how the norm governing this matter can be generalised to cover other sports: see *ibid.*, 550-551.

only with reference to moral knowledge. It is certainly easy to find references to the good of interpersonal harmony, specified morally: there is plenty about this good in chapter 6 (“Love, Justice, Mercy, and Social Responsibility”) and in other chapters dealing with the interpersonal aspects of Christian life. It is difficult, however, to find any reference to the reflexive goods to do with harmony within the self: inner peace and good conscience.⁴ In summary, it would seem that this book lacks a clear presentation concerning the place of the substantive goods of knowledge/aesthetic appreciation, the good of play, and three of the reflexive goods (i.e. all except interpersonal harmony) in the Christian life.⁵

In previous works, Grisez clearly says that Christian morality does not abrogate the natural law, or substitute for it, or supersede it: rather, Christian morality specifies and perfects the natural law.⁶ So, we can expect any treatment of living a Christian life to include all the principles of the natural law, specified and perfected by divine revelation accepted by living faith. The problem is that *Living a Christian Life* does not seem to indicate clearly where some of the primary principles find their place in the Christian life. This includes the good of religion. However, this chapter will show that the good of religion pervades the whole of *Living a Christian Life*, even though it is not often referred to as “the good of religion”.

⁴ These two goods are dealt with in chapter five, however: see especially, 249, 273-284, and 291-296.

⁵ It is also worth noting that the index does have a brief set of references under the heading “basic goods”, but these refer only to the goods of life, marriage and work, as mentioned above. There are several important (albeit brief) sections of the book that, although they deal with the basic goods and their place in the Christian life, are not mentioned under the heading of “basic goods” in the index (nor are they obvious from the contents page either): see *ibid.*, 30, 85-86, 100, 102, 333-334, 340, 468, and 513. This suggests strongly that the index is inadequate for finding out how volume two follows on from volume one of *The Way of the Lord Jesus*.

⁶ See ss. 3.7.1 – 3.7.4 and 4.9.2b above.

5.1.1b The good of religion can and should be specified theologically

Arguably, one ought not to expect to see harmony with God described exclusively or even mainly as “religion” once one is treating it as an element of a *Christian* life. For the Christian, the good of religion is now seen in a specific way rather than a general way, a specific way shaped by divine revelation and grace. The Christian identifies “religion” with the Christian faith, (at least for himself and other Christians). Unsurprisingly, therefore, religion is treated theologically in *Living a Christian Life*. This is one reason why it is difficult to find mention therein of “the good of religion”.

5.1.1c Two aspects of the good of religion: its specific role and its

Another reason is that religion operates in two ways, as a specific good and as an architectonic good, and the latter is often implicitly rather than explicitly religious. Therefore it can be more difficult to notice the good of religion as an architectonic good.

The good of religion can be a specific motive for specifically religious acts, which are acts focussed explicitly on pursuing and instantiating harmony with God. This is religion in its distinctiveness, different from the other basic human goods. According to this *specific* role of religion in the Christian life, sometimes the good of religion, specified by faith, is at stake explicitly in a choice or action, even though other goods are operative too, either instrumentally or as basic. We can call this “the explicit-specific role of religion”.

Religion also can play an “architectonic role” in life. Religion can and ought to have a role in organising all of our choices, commitments, relationships and actions.⁷ It can do this because, although it is a specific human good in its own right, and although there are some other diverse and irreducible goods in their own right, the good offered by religion can be at stake in all choices, commitments, relationships and actions.⁸

Both the “explicit-specific” and the “architectonic” roles of the basic good of religion can be seen in *Living a Christian Life*. In both cases the good of religion is not called “the good of religion” but it is presented in specifically Christian terms. What we are looking for is not the term “religion”, but those places in *Living a Christian Life* where the good of *harmony with God* is a primary motivating factor in assessing choices and commitments. When we put it this way, we can find plenty of reference to the good of religion and its role in Christian life. With regard to the “explicit-specific” role of religion, we are looking in *Living a Christian Life* for areas of Christian life in which the Christian seeks to do actions specifically for the sake of being in harmony with God. With regard to the “architectonic” role of religion, we are looking for any references to how the good of harmony with God has a primary role in shaping Christian life as a whole, including those choices and actions in which the good of religion is not explicitly at stake as a motivating factor.

⁷ See s. 4.6 above.

⁸ The term “architectonic” is not used here by Grisez, who tends to use “overarching” and other terms. However, one of his collaborators, Patrick Lee, in his “Germain Grisez’s Christian Humanism,” *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 46 (2001): 137-151, at 140-141, uses “architectonic” and it seems slightly more suitable than “overarching” to express how religion can shape and organise one’s life as a whole, providing the underlying architecture for it, so to speak.

The “explicit-specific” role of religion is treated in the first quarter or so of *Living a Christian Life*, in the chapters dealing with faith, hope, charity, and penance, and related matters.⁹ These chapters deal with specifically and explicitly religious choices and actions. The rest of *Living a Christian Life* deals with choices and actions in which religion is not necessarily an explicit factor, but in which it is always at least implicitly at stake, and in which an explicit awareness of its being at stake can help to motivate a Christian to act morally, and so instantiate the good of religion and other goods integrally.

5.1.2a Religion provides reasons for faith

The first chapter of *Living a Christian Life* is called “Faith, Religious Assent, and Reverence for God”. Even though faith is God’s gift, it is also our own act. These two aspects are not mutually exclusive. Grisez states that

a Christian’s acts are not replaced by grace; rather grace takes shape in acts: ‘For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life’ (Eph 2.10). The first of these good works is the act of faith itself.¹⁰

In *Living a Christian Life*, Grisez presents us with details regarding what it means to say that the act of faith is made for the sake of the basic goods of religion and knowledge.

⁹ The first four chapters deal with these matters: faith (ch. 1), hope (ch. 2), love/charity (ch. 3), and penance (ch. 4). In each case, however, related matters are dealt with too, matters such as religious assent (related to faith) and personal vocation (related to hope). The sections in this present chapter are numbered here in a way that highlights the themes of faith, hope, love, and penance. All the sections under 5.1.2 concern faith, for example (5.1.2a, 5.1.2b, and so on).

¹⁰ Ibid., 2. This is the one reference to this text from Ephesians in *Living a Christian Life*, but it is referred to frequently in *Christian Moral Principles*. It is a text that supports and encapsulates Grisez’s thought on how both God’s grace and human free choice are simultaneously operative in all human good acts. The supernatural does not replace or negate or supersede the natural; rather, it includes, supports and perfects the natural.

Several questions in this chapter deal with the reasons why someone could reasonably choose to make the act of faith and be baptised.

Question C looks at the reasons pointing to the credibility of Catholic faith. Firstly, an outline is given of the cosmological argument for God's existence.¹¹ It could be said that this argument shows that the act of faith is made only for the sake of the good of knowledge. Next, however, Grisez mentions some reasons for believing in God that appeal more to the good of religion than to the good of knowledge: "Human beings are aware that they are at odds with God".¹² Grisez notes how we are naturally aware of our moral failings, which are failures to follow the direction that God has given us in "the starting points of practical reasoning".¹³ Thus, people become aware "that they are sinful and need [God's] forgiveness, guidance, and strength to overcome their sins."¹⁴ Grisez makes the further point that we humans also are aware of our need for help in coping with the evil of others and the evil of natural disasters, which leads us to desire aid from a transcendent source that can cope with these large-scale, inevitable difficulties, which surpass our abilities to surmount them.¹⁵ Finally, Grisez points to the virtually universal wonder that human beings feel about life after death. We wonder how morality can make

¹¹ See ss. 2.5.2, 3.3.3, and 4.2 above. The frequent appearance of the cosmological argument in Grisez's work suggests its importance in his moral theory.

¹² *Ibid.*, 12. As with the treatment of *Christian Moral Principles* above, emphasis in the original is generally left out for stylistic reasons. Many of the quotations from *Living a Christian Life* here are taken from headings, all of which are in bold font in the original.

¹³ *Ibid.* Grisez does not go into any detail in *Living a Christian Life* about how we become aware of God as the source of the directiveness of practical reason. This matter was dealt with in "Practical Principles", 141-146, examined above in ss. 4.2 - 4.4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ See *ibid.*

sense when being good is not always rewarded in this life. We also find that our sense of others' value, and everyone's human abilities to understand and choose freely, are in conflict with the fact that our loved ones and indeed all people will die.¹⁶ Grisez is highlighting areas of conflict in human inclinations, awareness and understanding. People feel strongly aware of how we lack harmony with reality and its principles and so we are open to hope for God to reveal the truth and offer his help.

Grisez outlines several reasons why we should believe that God has spoken, among which is the fact that "Biblical religion responds to human hopes and expectations".¹⁷ The hopes and expectations mentioned here are those related to our awareness of our own sinfulness, others' evil, natural disasters, including death. These natural hopes are addressed in the Old Testament and the New, and they continue to be addressed in the tradition of the Church.¹⁸

5.1.2b Religion as a practical foundation for faith

It is our grasp of the good of religion that enable us to experience and understand the gospel as a practical opportunity, and not just a theoretical possibility. The good of religion, grasped as the object of one of the primary principles of *practical* reasoning, is required if we are not to view God's revelation as a mere fact, but as an opportunity calling for our personal free response of faith, thus offering us human fulfillment and,

¹⁶ See *ibid.*, 13. Such observations echo points made in *Christian Moral Principles*: see s. 3.3.3 above.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁸ See *ibid.*, 15-21. It is clear that faith is seen by Grisez as an ecclesial matter and not just a personal, individual decision. Right from the start, Grisez emphasises that the "faith" that he speaks of is a "baptismal faith": see *ibid.*, 3-4.

more, a share in the divine life itself.¹⁹ One of the advantages of seeing the good of religion as a foundation (though not the only one) of faith is that the essentially practical nature of faith is highlighted.

5.1.2c Faith serves the good of religion and all the other human goods too

In question E, Grisez answers briefly the practical challenges to faith, which claim that the gospel has failed and is a lost cause, that faith is close-minded and infringes on freedom, and that human suffering undermines faith. He also makes an important point about faith and human goods: Christian faith “serves not only the goods of religion and truth but the other goods as well.”²⁰ Faith can motivate us to pursue and instantiate the other goods too, especially in light of the eternal significance of our human choices and actions.²¹ In fact, faith *ought* to motivate us to serve the other goods. Grisez is firm in rejecting any theology that “disparages this-worldly goods”.²² Grisez does not see faith as concerned exclusively or narrowly with harmony with God.

¹⁹ These points about practical reasonableness and faith are not made explicitly by Grisez in *Living a Christian Life* but are implied by what he says there and in other works. What is explicitly made clear in *Living a Christian Life* is that, in making his self-revelation and in calling us into a relationship of love with him, God responds *practically* in love to real human needs and expectations, and thus, faith is to be understood practically.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

²¹ In *Living a Christian Life*, 30, Grisez refers to the Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes*, 38 and 39, in support of his constant theme that Christian faith is a true humanism that serves human fulfillment in the basic goods (as well as our supernatural fulfillment in sharing divine love). Part of *Gaudium et Spes*, 38 and 39, are given as the very first text in this book, thus showing their importance for the theological specification of Grisez’s moral theory.

²² *Living a Christian Life*, 30.

Grisez sees secular humanism as being the main alternative to Christian faith in the modern world.²³ Not surprisingly, Grisez considers secular humanism to be rationally unappealing,²⁴ and the reasons to believe in the gospel to be much stronger than the reasons against believing. He sums up the reasons to believe in the gospel by saying that “Faith in Jesus is in human persons’ ultimate self-interest” and “Faith in Jesus also serves every other human good”.²⁵ With regard to the first point, Grisez acknowledges that making the act of faith and living by it might not always be in one’s “temporal and earthly interest” but that it is always “in one’s true and everlasting interest”.²⁶ This self-interest is not a selfish interest because it is open to true human fulfillment in the goods of friendship with others and friendship with God. “Faith in Jesus reconciles human persons to God, enables them to be his children, and holds out the hope of everlasting joy in heaven (see 1 Jn 3.1-2).”²⁷ Faith “responds affirmatively to God’s will” that we should be thus fulfilled and blessed, “and this pleases [God]”. The good of religion, which faith pursues and instantiates, opens out towards the fullness of fulfillment that God wills for all his children and creation.

This theme of what is here called “opening out towards” other people and goods is central to Grisez’s thought. He emphasises it in his second point: “Faith in Jesus also

²³ It seems fair to point out that Grisez’s claim that secular humanism is the main alternative to Christian faith is more applicable to the Western world, and fails to take account of the huge popularity of Islam for many in Muslim countries and also increasingly in Western countries. *Living a Christian Life* was published in 1993, when the rise of Islam was not as prominent as it is now.

²⁴ See *ibid.*, 35-37.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 37.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

serves every other human good”.²⁸ He is constantly making the point that faith is not anti-human, or anti-humanism, but human and humanistic in the truest and most adequate senses of these words. Faith is positive and joyful and appealing: “faith promises the renewal and completion in heaven of every good which the blessed wished to protect and promote in this world”.²⁹ In seeking to be in harmony with God (i.e. to instantiate the good of religion), we seek also to serve the other goods with realism and hope.³⁰ Thus, Christian faith is a far more appealing worldview than secular humanism.

5.1.2d Religion motivates preparing for faith

Our awareness of our need to cope with moral and natural evils, which is a religious awareness, opens our minds and hearts to hear and accept the gospel. Grisez acknowledges that human persons find it difficult to make the act of faith, due to our pride, sinfulness, fear of change and self-renunciation, sadness and lethargy.³¹ This suggests that it is not adequate to see the human person as simply ready for faith because we naturally have a grasp of the goods of religion and knowledge. Our grasp of the goods of religion and knowledge can be masked and distorted and weakened by other factors, such as sin, misunderstanding, and rival conflicting accounts of life. It would seem therefore that before we make the act of faith we have moral responsibilities to prepare for the gift of faith (and after we make the act of faith we have responsibilities to

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 38, with reference to *Christian Moral Principles*, chapter 34, question E.

³⁰ See *Living a Christian Life*, 30.

³¹ See *ibid.*, 33-34. Thus faith is not just an intellectual matter, but a moral one too.

maintain and cultivate it).³² Noteworthy here is our responsibility to develop and strengthen our awareness of the basic goods of consistency, knowledge, and social harmony, as well as the good of religion.³³ However, it would seem from Grisez's approach to the act of faith that it is the good of religion that is the most important in this respect.

5.1.4e Religion motivates assent to Church teachings

Seeking to be in harmony with God includes believing what he reveals. Thus, Grisez includes several questions in this chapter about our responsibilities with regard to assent to Church teachings. Grisez is very firm and clear here. He makes the point, for example, that "absolute submission to God in faith is reasonable", and not excessive, because, to mention just one benefit, "faith in God's truth frees [Christians] from sin and death".³⁴ Grisez does not put forward as the main reason to believe that we should act consistently with our membership of the Church, which could be understood reductively as only a kind of social conformity to the group that one happens to belong to. Rather, he makes the point that assenting to all the Church's teachings is motivated by specifically *religious* reasons.³⁵ Even in matters that are not taught infallibly, which are not directly

³² See *ibid.*, 3 and 55-61. Grisez gives much more attention in this book to our responsibilities after we have made the act of faith than to our responsibilities before we make it. This is hardly surprising since this is a moral theology book addressed mainly to those who have already made the act of faith. Even though Grisez outlines various reasons for believing in chapter one, it is not really apologetics he is engaged in, but an attempt to understand the nature of the act of faith and its goodness and reasonableness.

³³ Grisez does not mention the importance of the good of consistency in respect to faith, but he does mention the good of Christian fellowship: see *ibid.*, 6-7, and 30.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.

³⁵ It should be noted here that this contrast between treating assent as a matter of inner consistency or religion is not Grisez's. Still, it seems that Grisez's emphasis on the *religious* reasons for assenting to Church teachings can be seen as quite different from approaches to the issues that stress following one's

“of faith”, Grisez makes the point that Catholics should assent to them for religious reasons. In Vatican II, this kind of assent was called “religious submission of mind and will”.³⁶ Grisez explains that this kind of submission of mind and will is reasonable because “God gives popes and bishops their teaching role, and the Holy Spirit helps them fulfil it”.³⁷ In other words, one is right to trust the teaching of the magisterium because of one’s trust in God and one’s intelligent desire to be in harmony with God.³⁸ Thus, both with regard to teachings strictly of the faith and those calling for religious assent it is a grave matter to dissent, or even in some circumstances to deliberately withhold assent.³⁹ This means that dissent or failure to assent, especially when expressed by heresy or schism, is something that interferes with one’s harmony with God, which is one’s participation in the good of religion, as well as interfering with one’s sharing in divine life through grace.⁴⁰

conscience or being consistent to one’s membership of the Church, such as one sometimes finds in treatments of assent. Grisez’s emphasis on the good of religion helps him to see that assent is not firstly a matter of inner consistency or social conformity, but a matter of seeking to be in harmony with God and his will. Of course, it is entirely consistent with Grisez’s moral theory to see assent as motivated by several goods simultaneously, each supportive of the others. Thus, religion, good conscience, and social harmony (and knowledge too) can all rightly motivate assent to Church teachings. But religion is rightly the main and prior motive.

³⁶ *Lumen Gentium*, 25, cited in *Living a Christian Life*, 46. Grisez dealt in detail with these issues in the final two chapters of *Christian Moral Principles*, but develops his thought in *Living a Christian Life*.

³⁷ *Living a Christian Life*, 48.

³⁸ Grisez deals with the reasonable limits to the trust one ought to have in such teachings of the popes and bishops in *Christian Moral Principles*, 853-854, and (adding an extra point) in *Living a Christian Life* 50-55.

³⁹ See *Living a Christian Life*, 43-46 and 53-55.

⁴⁰ These points are not made explicitly in *Living a Christian Life* but are based on what Grisez says in *Christian Moral Principles* regarding sin as essentially contrary to the good of religion (314), mortal sin as involving the loss of justifying grace (364), and the relationship between the natural and the supernatural in Christian life as dynamic (590). See ss. 3.4.8 and 3.7. See also *Living a Christian Life*, 137.

5.1.4f Religion motivates a Christian's living by faith and developing it

Once one has made the act of faith, it is not just something given in one's life and being, but something that one has to "cultivate and perfect".⁴¹ According to Grisez, this involves instruction and study, attention to prayer and scripture, and attention to one's situation and events in it. Failure to attend to these things is sinful, sometimes even mortally so. Therefore, failure in these areas is contrary to the good of religion, but faithfulness in religious study, scripture reading, prayer, and discernment enables one to participate in the good of religion. Thus, it is not only in preparation for the act of faith, and in making this act, that one acts for the sake of the good of religion; the good of harmony with God is at stake in one's life after one has made the commitment of faith, in one's failure or faithfulness in cultivating and perfecting one's faith, with God's help.

5.1.3a Hope is the interest that motivates every Christian act

Chapter two of *Living a Christian Life* is devoted in large part to hope. One of the most interesting things said there concerns hope as an "interest".⁴² This develops an idea put forward previously, in which an "interest" was defined as "a volition bearing on the intelligible aspect ... of some set of *potential* (or both potential and actual) purposes".⁴³

⁴¹ See *ibid.*, 55-61.

⁴² See *ibid.*, 86-87. It could be said that in *Living a Christian Life* Grisez develops his theology by focusing more on hope than he did in *Christian Moral Principles*, where he tended to focus mainly on faith and charity.

⁴³ G. Grisez, J. Finnis, and J. Boyle, "Practical Principles, Moral Truth, and Ultimate Ends," *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 32 (1987): 99-151, at 106. The phrase "or some set" has been changed here to "of some set", as the original is obviously a typo.

Interest is what comes in between general aliveness⁴⁴ to the basic goods and specific intention and choice for the sake of instantiating particular goods. Interest is not a choice but underlies choices.⁴⁵ Grisez says in *Living a Christian Life* that

hope is the volition of the ultimate end of Christian life, the kingdom and Christians' sharing in it, which underlies and motivates the choices shaping Christian life, lived for the sake of the kingdom.⁴⁶

Hope motivates the act of faith, and all Christian acts, insofar as they depend on God's action for their fruitfulness. Hope operates alongside other motives, not as a separate motive as such, but as an interest in the kingdom shaping all other motives *towards* the kingdom. Hope consists in our being open to, and expecting, God to do his part in bringing the kingdom to its fulfillment, with our own actions in union with Jesus as both contributions to this kingdom and participations in it.

5.1.3b Hope specifies the good of religion in the light of divine revelation

Grisez does not link hope and the good of religion explicitly in *Living a Christian Life*. Yet, he does say that hope is part of the single act of living faith (along with charity), that it motivates faith and all the acts implementing faith, and that it is the overall interest motivating Christian acts. When we bear in mind that Grisez also says that the good of

⁴⁴ This aliveness is a general openness and love of the basic human goods; it is a simple volition of these goods that all healthy people share. We should note that Grisez referred in *Christian Moral Principles* (144) to charity as a kind of simple volition (or aliveness) to divine goodness, given to Christians in living faith: see s. 3.7.3 above. What Grisez says of hope as interest could be integrated with what he said about charity as simple volition – it is as if charity is a general disposition to divine life and all that goes with it, and hope is a more specified interest in the kingdom. However, Grisez does not note or develop this relationship between, or integration of, charity and hope.

⁴⁵ Still, one has some voluntary responsibility for one's interests insofar as they are influenced by one's choices. One can cultivate or fail to cultivate one's interests. Grisez clearly recommends several ways in which the Christian is called to nurture and specify hope in *Living a Christian Life*, 87-97.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 86.

religion motivates faith⁴⁷ and that the good of religion is the most suitable of the basic human goods for organising a whole life,⁴⁸ especially when it is a Christian life,⁴⁹ then it would seem that hope and religion must be linked closely. Both hope and religion seem to operate in the same areas and do the same job, so to speak. However, what the relationship is between hope and the good of religion is not made clear in *Living a Christian Life*. We can only suggest a few ideas here.

Grisez says of hope: “Relying on God to be faithful in keeping his promises, his people hope in him for the salvation and better life they otherwise could not anticipate.”⁵⁰ It would seem from this, and other things he says about hope, that Grisez’s understanding of this virtue tells us something about the kind of “harmony” that is involved in the good of religion in the Christian life. The harmony with God that constitutes the benefit of religion as a basic good, especially when specified by Christian faith, is a harmony that essentially involves trusting God to keep his promises. This trust is a principle of action⁵¹ because it motivates us to make good choices we would otherwise not be motivated to make. We hope for “everything that contributes to eternal life”⁵² and for “heaven as a reward for doing God’s will”.⁵³ Hope in God’s providence enables us always to make

⁴⁷ See s 3.4 above.

⁴⁸ See ss. 4.6 and 4.9.2 above.

⁴⁹ See ss. 4.7 and 4.9.2 above.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁵¹ See *ibid.*, 90.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 80.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 81.

good efforts to do the will of God when things are very tough, and even gives us courage to face martyrdom.⁵⁴ Thus, hope, which is itself a kind of harmony with God, motivates us to be more and more in harmony with God through doing good acts. Perhaps it might be said that hope is the good of religion specified by divine revelation in a particular way. This specification concerns our looking forward to the kingdom and our trusting in God's providence and faithfulness. Hope is a kind of harmony with God, just as faith is a kind of harmony with God. Both are gifts of God, but both are affected by our own free choices and actions, and our dispositions shaped by choices and actions. In fact, faith is a free choice, whilst hope is a kind of disposition to act (i.e. what Grisez calls an "interest") in accordance with faith.

5.1.3c Hope, inclusive religion and the mission of the Church

Chapter two of *Living a Christian Life* deals also with the mission of the Church. Grisez says that this mission is the same mission that Jesus had: "to establish a new human communion with God".⁵⁵ This mission "is limited to what pertains to the kingdom".⁵⁶ However, even though the Church's mission, like that of Jesus, in which the Church participates, is "exclusively" concerned with serving "the heavenly kingdom",⁵⁷ it is not concerned with a narrowly understood basic good of "religion". Once again, Grisez is careful to distinguish between what could be called two meanings of "religion". One is narrowly focussed on heaven, the soul, and God to the exclusion of all other human

⁵⁴ See *ibid.*, 93.

⁵⁵ See *ibid.*, 98.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 101.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 99.

goods and earthly realities; the other is what Grisez understands by religion, and, more generally, by Christian morality, and it is concerned with the kingdom of God as inclusive of all human goods, including the specifically and explicitly religious good of harmony with God, and all that goes with this, but also the goods of life, knowledge, work/play, and so on. Thus, following the lead of Vatican II, Grisez writes:

Gaudium et Spes 42 and its n.11 ... says that Jesus assigns the Church a 'strictly religious end'. But *Gaudium et Spes* 76, at the end, includes in the Church's mission the uncovering, cherishing, and ennobling of everything true, good, and beautiful in the human community. The apparent contradiction dissolves if one takes into account that God's kingdom and righteousness – the strictly religious object of hope – includes the renewal of the entire fallen world, which embraces not only religion itself but every human good.⁵⁸

Thus, the hope that motivates and shapes the Church's mission is both strictly religious and inclusive of all human goods. This suggests strongly that the basic good of religion is a good that is both distinct in itself, and so irreducible to any other good, but also inclusive of all the other goods too, insofar as God's will is that all human beings would flourish in all the basic human goods and so manifest his glory.⁵⁹ The Church's mission is therefore both religious and humanistic, actively working in hope (in Jesus Christ) for human fulfillment in this life and the next. This means that the Church's support of healthcare and education, justice and peace, is part of her strictly religious mission, not a distraction from it. Not only that, but these things, action for health, education, justice and peace, are not even to be seen as mere means to the end that is the kingdom; rather,

⁵⁸ Ibid., 100-101, footnote 34, with reference at the end to *Christian Moral Principles*, chapter twenty-five, question E and chapter 34, questions D-G. Grisez also refers to *Gaudium et Spes*, 39, and *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 7, in support of his Christian humanism.

⁵⁹ Thus we have the two roles of religion noted above in s. 5.1.1c: the specific and the architectonic.

they are to be seen as constitutive elements of that kingdom.⁶⁰ In Grisez's moral theory, our morally good acts and commitments are already God's gift to us, part of "the way of the Lord Jesus", our cooperation with God's establishment of the kingdom in Jesus and through the Church.

Grisez links the sacrament of confirmation with hope.⁶¹ This sacrament gives us the assurance of the Holy Spirit, and his strength, light and gifts, especially courage, which enable us to fulfil our part in the mission of the Church by witnessing to the gospel.

5.1.3d Personal vocation and religion

After a section on apostolate, chapter two of *Living a Christian Life* treats another central theme of Grisez's moral theory: personal vocation.⁶² Again, Grisez does not explain explicitly how this concept is related to the good of religion, but what he does say suggests that there is a close connection. The concept of personal vocation is simple enough. God calls each one of us to organise and lead our lives in a way that fulfils his will and in a way that suits, and flows from, our particular circumstances and gifts.⁶³ Personal vocation pertains to the whole of one's life, understood as a whole united

⁶⁰ See *ibid.*, 101.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 94-95. He says that baptism may be considered the sacrament of faith, and Eucharist the sacrament of charity, and confirmation the sacrament of hope: *ibid.*, 94.

⁶² A quick glance at the index of *Christian Moral Principles* (942) shows how central this concept is to Grisez's moral theory. Grisez, along with Russell Shaw, has written a short popular style book devoted to this concept: *Personal Vocation: God Calls Everyone by Name* (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, 2003), again showing how important he thinks the topic is. At this stage of his theory's development, Grisez considered personal vocation to be a theological concept, but later he seems to allow it a place in the natural law as a philosophical concept: see s. 6.1.6a below.

⁶³ See *Living a Christian Life*, 113-129.

around the faithful doing of God's will, cooperating in the apostolate insofar as one can in one's own circumstances. We have already seen Grisez (along with Finnis and Boyle) speak of the good of religion as the most suitable basic good around which to organise one's life as a whole,⁶⁴ so it would seem that personal vocation and religion are similar.

Personal vocation is my obedient response to God's call to me to be an apostle in my unique and individual life. Grisez calls it a "dynamic submission to God's plan and will".⁶⁵ It calls for faithfulness, courage, not counting the cost, abstinence from sin, making the best of bad situations, morally good creativity and careful discernment. Not to respond to God's call can be sinful.⁶⁶ It seems clear then that personal vocation embodies and promotes harmony with God. "Fulfilling one's personal vocation" is another way of saying "being holy", which is a morally specified way of understanding the good of religion. (This could be one reason why Grisez called the good of religion "holiness" in some of his earlier works.)

Personal vocation is all about serving the needs of others (and thus serving God).⁶⁷ This reminds us that religion as a basic good, when it is morally specified, is concerned with serving the needs of others. It is only when we are willing to respond to God's call, when we are willing to obey his will to love our neighbour, that we are truly in harmony with him.

⁶⁴ See s. 4.6 above.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁶⁶ See *ibid.*, 125.

⁶⁷ See *ibid.*, 119-120.

5.1.4a Charity and religion

One of the first things Grisez says in chapter three of *Living a Christian Life* about its central theme, charity, is this:

God's love is a gift which makes its recipients his intimate friends. One's proper responsibility with respect to charity is to strive to deepen this unique friendship and to abide in the communion of love.⁶⁸

This encapsulates his thought about charity and the Christian life, which this chapter and indeed the whole book develops and illustrates. All of Christian life is seen as abiding in God's love, living out of our friendship with God and thus deepening this friendship. When we think of charity, we think especially of how this friendship is first and foremost God's special gift to us, not something we have accomplished by our own acts or efforts.⁶⁹ However, this pure gift of God has, or should have, an effect on our own actions as

one begins to fulfil the command to love God with one's whole heart, mind, soul, and strength by doing out of charity those human acts – first of all, the act of faith – which integrate one's entire self and all one's interpersonal relationships with the love of God in one's heart (see 1 Jn 2.3-6). And one abides in the love with which the Father, Son, and Spirit love one another by remaining in Jesus' body, the Church, as a living member.⁷⁰

We have already seen Grisez speak of the act of faith being motivated by the goods of religion and knowledge, and this motivation being transformed by charity.⁷¹ It seems to

⁶⁸ Ibid., 132-133.

⁶⁹ See *ibid.*, 133.

⁷⁰ Ibid. with a reference after the first sentence to St Thomas, *De perfectione vitae spiritualis*, 5. Grisez also makes clear in this footnote (4) the parallel between charity and following one's personal vocation.

⁷¹ See *Christian Moral Principles*, 485, treated above in ss. 3.4.3 and 3.4.4.

be the case that God transforms our understanding and experience of “harmony with God” (religion) and “knowledge of God” by his making us his sons or daughters through union with Jesus in the Spirit. Our new status as children of God, which is God’s pure gift, can dynamically motivate us to live lives of love, living as the new creations that God has made us.

Charity, and acts of charity, are therefore closely related to the good of religion, just as faith, hope, and personal vocation are. Charity enriches and perfects the good of religion. We are talking here of the good of religion as morally specified, understood and pursued integrally and inclusively, but also as specified by divine revelation and grace, and understood theologically and supernaturally.⁷²

5.1.4b Charity and religious acts

This is why Grisez can speak of “religious acts” as essential elements of living a life of charity.⁷³ The central religious act of a Christian life is participating in the Eucharist. Grisez devotes a question to this,⁷⁴ after noting how one’s whole life “should complete one’s offering of the Eucharist”.⁷⁵ We have already seen how Grisez associates worship and sacrifice with the good of religion;⁷⁶ worship and sacrifice were central to Jesus’ life

⁷² Grisez does not explicitly link the good of religion and charity in *Living a Christian Life*.

⁷³ See *ibid.*, 136.

⁷⁴ See *ibid.*, 139-159.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁷⁶ See *Christian Moral Principles*, 468, and above ss. 3.5.3 and 3.7.7.

and death, and to the Last Supper, and they are central to the Christian life, which is Eucharistic, too. This suggests that the good of religion is central to the Christian life, when religion is specified by Christian faith. So perhaps we might say this: One's whole life as a Christian can be understood under different headings, one of which is abiding in God's love, another of which is living the Eucharist, and another of which is living religiously, and all of which are synonymous, although each one picks out a particular emphasis or insight that the others lack.

If this is a true interpretation of Grisez's thought, then everything he writes about in chapter three of *Living a Christian Life*, and indeed everything he writes about in the whole book, can be understood under the heading of the basic good of religion, though only when this basic good is specified morally and theologically. Thus, participating consciously and actively in the Eucharist, receiving communion worthily, keeping the Sunday and holyday obligation, receiving the other sacraments when necessary or appropriate, engaging in Eucharistic adoration, devotion to the Sacred Heart and/or veneration of Mary and the saints, meditating on the rosary – all these are religious acts,⁷⁷ acts which embody the good of harmony with God, acts which deepen the friendship with God which he has given us as his gift. Abiding in God's love involves us living up to our responsibilities of faith, hope and penance,⁷⁸ as well as our specific responsibilities as members of the Church, among which are building up the unity of the Church, avoiding

⁷⁷ All these acts are dealt with as acts of charity in chapter three of *Living a Christian Life*.

⁷⁸ See *ibid.*, 136-137.

dissent and schism, and fostering ecumenism correctly.⁷⁹ All such actions can be understood as fostering our harmony with God, who wills that we should do all these things, and who presents all these opportunities and their fulfillment as his gifts to us.

5.1.5a Penance

Chapter four is mainly about penance, both the sacrament (including its essential place in a Christian's following the way of the Lord Jesus) and its practical implications for the Christian life. In *Christian Moral Principles* Grisez defined sin in terms of any action contrary to the good of religion, particularly insofar as immoral actions offend God because they are contrary to his wise and loving plan for humankind and creation.⁸⁰ Grisez reiterates these points here, but without mentioning explicitly the good of religion.

Basically ... sins explicitly or implicitly violate God's wisdom and love, and so alienate sinners from him. For those who have entered into a covenant with God, sin is unfaithfulness, as adultery is unfaithfulness to a spouse. Thus, although sins cannot harm God, they truly offend him insofar as they are against the good he wills.⁸¹

Sin as alienation and unfaithfulness easily call to mind sin as a violation of the good of religion, which is harmony with God. This is not to say that Grisez sees sin as exclusively concerned with the good of religion; he also mentions that sin harms the good of truth, and that "every sin is contrary to some human good".⁸² In the rest of the book, Grisez

⁷⁹ See *ibid.*, chapter three, question D.

⁸⁰ See *Christian Moral Principles*, chapter 13, questions A-C, and above s. 3.4.8.

⁸¹ *Living a Christian Life*, 186, with a reference to *Christian Moral Principles*, chapter 13, questions B and C.

⁸² *Living a Christian Life*, 220. Grisez argues in chapter four of this book not just that we should avoid all sin, but that we should repent of any sins we commit and seek forgiveness in the sacrament of penance. This sacrament is therefore a sacrament of religion, as it restores us to harmony with God.

gives copious examples of how the various human goods are violated by various types of sins. So it seems clear that Grisez is not trying to reduce sin, and the Christian struggle against sin, to the good of religion in itself. Rather, his approach is based on an understanding of the good of religion that opens out towards and includes, without reducing them, the diverse goods at stake in human choices and actions.

5.1.5b Sin and religion: grave matter explicitly or implicitly against religion

Grisez's interest in the good of religion is not confined, therefore, to the first four chapters of *Living a Christian Life*, in which he treats matters that would conventionally be termed "religious" under the headings of the three theological virtues of faith, hope and love, as well as under the heading of penance. Throughout the rest of the book, Grisez is concerned with a wide variety of choices and actions that might not always be done explicitly for the sake of religion or against the good of religion, but which can be viewed as at least implicitly for the sake of religion or against it. One sign of this is the fact that frequently Grisez makes explicit reference to whether this or that choice or behaviour is "grave matter". In doing this, Grisez draws attention to the fact that it is of the utmost importance that we understand how particular kinds of behaviour can be damaging or even destructive of our relationship with God, or, in other words, how particular acts can harm or destroy our harmony with God.⁸³

⁸³ Sin harms or destroys our natural harmony with God, but sin also harms or destroys our supernatural unity with God too. Strictly speaking, "religion" in Grisez's theory refers directly to the former, not the latter. However, although the two relationships are distinct, they are related too, as was analysed in ss. 3.6 and 3.7 above. Insofar as religion mediates our supernatural union with God (see s. 4.7.2 above), sin harms that union by harming the good of religion.

A list of the references to grave matter in *specifically* religious acts⁸⁴ in the first four chapters contains the following (with page references after each):

- apostasy (43)
- heresy (45)
- deliberate non-assent and sinful dissent (53)
- idolatry (63)
- divination (65)
- denial of faith and failure to profess it (66)
- blasphemy (67)
- attempting to put God to the test (68)
- sacrilege, including simony (69)
- perjury (75)
- presumption and despair (97)
- receiving Holy Communion sacrilegiously (144)
- falsifying Catholic worship (145)
- missing Mass without a reasonable excuse (148)
- failure to receive Communion when required (150)
- superstition (156)
- sharing in worship at odds with faith (156)
- disobedience to Church authority and contestation (167)
- failure to support the Church (173)
- thwarting authentic ecumenism (177)
- neglecting to examine one's conscience (203)
- the responsibility to admonish sinners regarding grave matters (231)
- giving scandal (235)

A list of references to grave matter regarding behaviour that is *not usually considered explicitly* religious includes the following (from chapters five to eleven):

- violating others' personal dignity (385)
- hypocrisy (399)
- flattery and ingratiation (400)
- contention and quarrelling (400)
- detraction (401)
- insult (404)
- Lying and other deceptions in communication (410)
- breaking a promise (414)
- responsibilities concerning secrecy (417)
- disobedience (439)
- abuse and abdication of authority (439)

⁸⁴ In some cases in the lists presented here, the treatment in *Living a Christian Life* explains that the particular behaviour can be either grave or light matter, depending on circumstances.

- intentionally killing the innocent (479)
- wrongly accepting risks to life or choosing to risk death (487)
- choosing to use contraception (517)
- drug abuse (539)
- sexual assault (545)
- intentionally harmful bodily contact (550)
- unreasonable refusal of marital intercourse (640)
- adultery in deed or desire (643)
- incestuous adultery (644)
- all intentional sexual acts violating the marital good (657)
- children's disobedience (715)
- injustices to property (799)
- irresponsibility in voting (872)
- disobedience towards the law (882)
- non-cooperation with the criminal justice system (887-890).

These two lists give some idea of the range of behaviours treated as gravely wrong in *Living a Christian Life*. More importantly, they give a good idea of how many “non-religious” types of action Grisez considers to be grave matter, matters of mortal sin. And when we bear in mind that mortal sin is primarily a violation of our relationship with God, immoral acts against the good of religion, as Grisez describes all sin,⁸⁵ then it is clear that Grisez does not consider only the first four chapters of *Living a Christian Life* and the various acts treated therein to be concerned with the good of religion. Grisez considers *all* morality to be concerned with the good of religion, at least implicitly and sometimes explicitly.

⁸⁵ See *Christian Moral Principles*, 314.

5.1.6a The religious significance of acts for the sake of the other goods: truth

Occasionally in *Living a Christian Life*, Grisez goes into some detail about how a particular “non-religious” act, or a “non-explicitly-religious” act, can be understood more adequately to have religious significance.⁸⁶ We will look at three examples.

The first concerns our responsibility to seek moral truth, which is the central theme of chapter five. Grisez indicates how our search for moral truth should be part of our spirituality. We should ask God for the gift of prudence, which no-one can have without God’s help.⁸⁷ Also, the quest for moral truth and wisdom is equated with seeking to know and do God’s will.⁸⁸ So we should ask for the Spirit’s guidance, imitate the example of Jesus and the saints, repent and ask for healing, and avoid false “ideologies that sustain sin”.⁸⁹ Obviously, a commitment to grow in moral knowledge and wisdom can be motivated by the good of religion insofar as seeking moral truth is, especially for the Christian, seeking to be in harmony with the God who wishes us to know his wise and loving will.⁹⁰

5.1.6b The religious significance of acts for the sake of marriage

Another example of what could be called an element of the natural law that can be seen in the light of faith to have specifically Christian religious significance is sexual ethics,

⁸⁶ Grisez does not treat these matters precisely as “non-religious”.

⁸⁷ See *Living a Christian Life*, 247.

⁸⁸ See *ibid.*, 251.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 252. See also *ibid.*, 260-261.

⁹⁰ This goes beyond what is stated explicitly by Grisez.

which is dealt with in the very substantial ninth chapter.⁹¹ When looking at the gravity of sexual sins, Grisez deals with the “human values” that are at stake, values such as the promotion of psychological health, social stability, the good rearing of children for happy, stable relationships, and so on.⁹² However, Grisez goes on to highlight also the “Christian values” at stake in sexual ethics too.⁹³ These values make explicit how our sexual behaviour either promotes or damages (or destroys) our harmonious relationship with God, in other words, the good of religion (specified morally and theologically):

The sacramentality of marriage foreshadows the ultimate fulfillment of the human body as a capacity for self-giving: communion in the one-flesh reality of Jesus’ risen life. Since this is the human body’s ultimate end, every abuse of human sexuality violates not only the natural marital good but an infinitely greater good: the body of Christ.⁹⁴

When people act immorally sexually, they harm themselves and the rest of the Church very seriously, and harm their relationship with Jesus Christ. When people treat their bodies, and others’ bodies, as objects and instruments of satisfaction, this has effects on how they view their own bodies and how they view others; it even has an effect on how they view the incarnate Jesus and the resurrection of the body. It is clear that sexual sins are not just acts of disobedience to the Church, but acts that violate several of the basic goods, always including the good of harmony with God.

⁹¹ Ibid., 553-752.

⁹² See *ibid.*, 661-662.

⁹³ See *ibid.*, 662-664.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 663, one note omitted. Grisez follows this with a quotation from St Paul, (1 Cor 6.13-20) and a reference to Pope John Paul II’s thought on these matters.

5.1.6c *The religious significance of acts for the sake of nature*

A section of *Living a Christian Life* concerns how we are to act towards nature.⁹⁵ In this present work, we treat only the importance of religion in Grisez's analysis (although Grisez does not explicitly draw attention to the "good of religion"). One of his headings is: "In dealing with nature, people must cooperate with its creator",⁹⁶ thus highlighting implicitly the theme of religion as a good at stake in our dealings with nature. He also calls on us to treat sub-personal things "as God's good creatures".⁹⁷ Grisez explicitly recognises that people can rightly contemplate the beauty of nature, and are fulfilled by this, but he goes even further when he says that our appreciation of nature's beauty as God's creation can be a way of fulfilling nature's destiny to praise and worship God. Thus, our appreciation of nature can be a form of religion for us and for nature itself.⁹⁸ Grisez notes that people should use nature and enjoy it only in such a way that they "revere its creator".⁹⁹ This includes how we treat animals. He makes the point that even keeping a pet without a good reason is wrong because of its "irreverence toward God".¹⁰⁰ Clearly, along with other goods such as harmony in social relations with our fellow men, the good of religion is at stake in our dealings with nature.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 771-788.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 774.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 775.

⁹⁸ See *ibid.*, 776-777.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 780.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 788.

5.2 Preliminary conclusion to the chapter

We can see then that for Grisez the good of religion is central to Christian morality, even to those areas of life that might not be considered specifically religious. God's will is that we cherish and promote and pursue the whole range of human goods, including the good of life and health (dealt with in chapter eight of *Living a Christian Life*), the good of knowledge (dealt with in part in chapter seven), the good of work/play (dealt with in part of chapter ten), the good of marriage (chapter nine), the good of justice and good social relationships (dealt with in chapter six, but also in several other chapters). In pursuing the good of religion, one is concerned with choosing in a way that is shaped by God's will. Thus, one's concern for the good of religion is simultaneously a concern for the other goods too.

Certainly in the perspective of *Living a Christian Life* we are not thinking of the good of religion as a general, minimally initial grasp of the benefit of being in harmony with the transcendent source of meaning and value, grasped with little or no knowledge of that transcendent source or how to pursue harmony with it. We are talking about the good of religion specified by natural knowledge of God and revealed knowledge of him, religion understood and pursued in the light of reason and faith. We are also talking about religion specified morally, religion understood integrally and inclusively, with no negation or neglect of the other human goods, but with an openness to all that is good, true and beautiful. Finally, we are talking about religion specified by charity, by which all our acts are seen as religious acts of charity, acts in harmony with God's will that deepen and perfect our supernatural friendship with God and strengthen our abiding in his love.

5.3 *Difficult Moral Questions*, volume 3 of *The Way of the Lord Jesus* [1997]¹⁰¹

We turn now to examine the place of religion in the third volume of Grisez's moral theology project. This book is addressed to Christians and written from a theological perspective. So we should not expect to find a philosophical or exclusively natural law approach. In a substantial appendix, however, "Human acts and moral judgments", Grisez presents an outline of his philosophical theory, and he makes the point that he hopes that

readers with a theoretical interest in these matters will find that the proposed responses to questions in this volume illuminate, by exemplifying, the elements of the treatment offered [in this appendix], and that it, in turn, will clarify the reasoning in the proposed responses.¹⁰²

It is clear from these remarks, and others already mentioned,¹⁰³ that Grisez considers his natural law theory to be part of Christian ethics. So we can expect his understanding of the good of religion and its place in morality to inform his theological approach to answering the various difficult questions treated in this book.

However, as with *Living a Christian Life*, but even more so, it is very difficult to analyse this book and to find exactly where it includes the good of religion.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ G. Grisez, *Difficult Moral Questions*, volume 3 of *The Way of the Lord Jesus* (Quincy, Ill.: Franciscan Press, 1997), written with the help of Joseph Boyle, John Finnis, Jeannette Grisez, Russell Shaw, and others

¹⁰² See *ibid.*, 849-850.

¹⁰³ See ss. 3.7 and 4.9.2b above.

¹⁰⁴ The book consists of two hundred questions and answers, all of which are substantial in length, but with no obvious overall structure. It is not as systematic as volumes one or two. Its index is of no use in

5.3.1 Religion in Grisez's moral theory

The first appendix outlines Grisez's philosophical moral theory. It refers to the basic good of religion in its list of the basic human goods in this way:

[P]eople experience tension with the very source and end of their reality – tension explained by faith as alienation from God due to sin. Attempts to overcome sin and gain peace with God are the concern of religion. Thus, another category of reflexive good is the reconciliation and friendship with God that religion seeks.¹⁰⁵

Grisez does not insist here in using morally neutral language to talk about religion (or the other basic goods either),¹⁰⁶ but is happy to use morally specified language such as “reconciliation and friendship with God”. It could be that he is happy to use morally specified language in *Difficult Moral Questions* because his primary audience is people of faith who are interested in virtuous living, and so his style is more theological and moral than strictly philosophical and basic. We can see both philosophical and theological language in the short passage just quoted. Philosophically understood, religion is concerned with “tension with the very source and end of [people’s] reality”; theologically, this tension is “explained by faith as alienation from God due to sin”.¹⁰⁷

analyzing the book as a whole with regard to the good of religion, as it mentions only one definite reference. The one reference to religion is to the appendix we are now going to analyse.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 854. Grisez notes that John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor* (1993), supports the idea that one is to act morally for the sake of people’s goods: see *ibid.*, 13, 48, 50, 67, and 79 (cited in *Difficult Moral Questions*, 851, n. 440).

¹⁰⁶ Perhaps the main example of this is that Grisez uses the term “practical reasonableness” in *Difficult Moral Questions*, 854, whereas in previous philosophical works he had avoided this term as too morally specified to be used of a primary practical principle at the first level of practical reasonableness, the level prior to moral reflection and specification.

¹⁰⁷ Consistent with his previous works, Grisez does not say that it is *only* in light of Christian faith that one can know that the tension we experience between ourselves and the source and end of our reality is due to sin. The possibility is left open that we can know what sin is, at least to some extent, by other means than

There is perhaps a new element in the addition of the term “end” to the term “source” in Grisez’s description of the transcendent reality that we seek harmony with in the good of religion. Its inclusion here suggests clearly that human awareness of and concern with death and destiny play a large role in our grasp of the point of seeking harmony with the transcendent.

5.3.2 Religion and the expansion of our feelings

The appendix outlining Grisez’s moral theory also gives us some more pointers regarding what we should be looking for in our analysis of *Difficult Moral Questions* and the place of the good of religion in it. Grisez treats the issue of how we are to educate our feelings to make them more supportive of good choices. In the course of doing this, he mentions the importance of faith and its specification of our understanding and emotions.

In the first practice for morally educating/expanding our feelings,¹⁰⁸ Grisez highlights Jesus’ teaching of the Golden Rule, a moral principle that features hugely in the answers to the difficult moral questions in the main text.¹⁰⁹ Not only does Grisez explain the meaning and use of the Rule, which directs us to go beyond our often partial but unreasonable feelings, but he makes it clear that Jesus taught it. Implicit in this point is

Christian faith, for example, by natural knowledge (such as Paul indicates in Romans chapters 1 and 2), or by means of some other religious tradition.

¹⁰⁸ It is worth noting how positive Grisez is towards feelings/emotions. He does not speak of suppressing or ignoring them, in order to be morally good, but of “expanding” them. The good Christian is not an emotionless being, in Grisez’s account, but an emotional one, a person with emotions that have been expanded beyond the selfish and narrow confines of immorality.

¹⁰⁹ See *ibid.*, 865-867.

the idea that people who value and follow this Rule are following Jesus and acting in a way that is harmonious with him and his teaching. The Golden Rule is not a principle that is exclusive to faith, of course; it is available to all people of intelligence and good will. But it is particularly appropriate for Christians: “Christians who want to grow in the virtue of justice can do so by regularly using the Golden Rule in making moral judgements”.¹¹⁰

This much he had already mentioned in previous works, (though perhaps without stressing the value of the Golden Rule *as a practice* for developing moral virtue), but he adds some new ideas about how we can and ought to “expand” our feelings to make us more virtuous.¹¹¹

The second practice he recommends is “an imaginative exercise” to “educate feelings to respond to goods whose enjoyment presupposes developed abilities one lacks.”¹¹² We are invited here to identify with moral exemplars who “embody the prior modes of responsibility”, such as the Golden Rule. The first and most important exemplar is Jesus.¹¹³ We are directed not only to imaginatively identify with Jesus as we would with any moral exemplar, even a fictitious one, but to go further: to “enter into a personal

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 866. It should be noted that Grisez does not explicitly emphasise the fact that Jesus taught this principle, nor does he argue exclusively or even mainly from Jesus’ authority for the truth and value of this principle. Rather, he relies on its intrinsic reasonableness.

¹¹¹ See *ibid.*, 867-870.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 867.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 868.

relationship with Jesus and cooperate with him in carrying on his work”.¹¹⁴ Here we see a natural law principle combined with Christian faith and grace, with the two realities dynamically supporting each other. The natural law principle indicates the reasonableness of identifying with moral exemplars to expand our feelings to instantiate the goods more and more effectively and virtuously; the faith dimension shows us how to do this most effectively and realistically, by our friendship with Jesus. Our “friendship” with Jesus is a gift from God to us, which we receive in faith and baptism, but it also is a reality that we can choose to cooperate with and live by in and through our choices and actions. The good of religion, morally and theologically specified, involves our identifying with Jesus as our morally perfect brother and friend, and thus participating more and more in the good of harmony with God. Grisez includes also the saints and those holy people who we meet in our lives as other moral exemplars that can help us in a similar way (though not as strongly or directly as Jesus), particularly if there is some aspect of their lives that we can identify with as the individuals we are.

A third way of expanding our feelings is to educate them “to engage fully with concrete things that implement our commitments, to disengage readily from those same things when they no longer do so, and to respond powerfully to the hazy images that beckon us to be creative”.¹¹⁵ We can do this by placing ourselves and our choices and commitments into the proper long-range perspective. A secular way of doing this is to think about how history will judge one’s life, but Grisez emphasizes a better way, the Christian way.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., with a cross-reference to *Christian Moral Principles*, 663-664.

¹¹⁵ *Difficult Moral Questions*, 868. Note the positive character of how Grisez understands the moral life.

The Christian solution is to consider life as the set of good deeds that God has prepared in advance to one to walk in, as one's unique part in his all-inclusive plan. One seeks the kingdom first, trusts providence, organizes life by the commitments of personal vocation, and constantly tries to carry them out.¹¹⁶

This quote sums up several of the central themes of Grisez's theological moral theory, already seen in our analysis of *Christian Moral Principles* and *Living a Christian Life*. Grisez's moral theory sees every choice and action religiously, at least implicitly, insofar as every choice and action can be made for the sake of harmony with God's will, a will that includes every aspect of human fulfillment and thus every aspect of human motivation and life. This implies that explicit attention to the good of religion at stake in all our choices, commitments and actions is of the first importance in developing virtue. In particular, we need to develop our awareness of the kingdom of God as the end of our lives, an end that includes rich fulfillment in all the human goods.¹¹⁷

The fourth way to expand our feelings to make them more virtuous is closely related to the previous one. It has to do with a narrow tendency to focus only "on the things that can be realized in this life". Again, we need to expand our horizons by focusing on the kingdom, which is "an invisible, permanent world already coming to be".¹¹⁸ Our engagement in specifically religious practices, such as liturgy, is helpful in expanding our feelings so that we do not "treat all goods as transient and ... regard difficult moral

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 869.

¹¹⁷ See *ibid.* Once again, Grisez refers to *Gaudium et Spes*, 38-39, as support for his approach. As with *Living a Christian Life*, these paragraphs from the Council document are the very first text given in the book, emphasising their importance in Grisez's moral theory.

¹¹⁸ *Difficult Moral Questions*, 869.

requirements as [mere] ideals".¹¹⁹ It is clear from this that Grisez sees a specifically, explicitly religious perspective on life as supportive of the natural law and as necessary for fallen and limited human beings.

5.3.3 Religion in the main text of Difficult Moral Questions

Does the good of religion feature in the main text of Volume 3? It does not feature in an explicit way, using the term "the good of religion" in the question titles or answers. But then, neither do many other aspects of Grisez's moral theory. Even though it is rather easy to spot the questions focusing on the good of life and health (for example, questions 43-50, 78-79, 83-86) , marriage and sexuality (19-20, 28-38, 51-56,) and work (102-152),¹²⁰ it is not always easy to see which questions are focused on other basic human goods. Within an answer, often several basic human goods are referred to, or are presupposed, as are various moral principles, especially the Golden Rule. It is clear that Grisez's whole moral theory underlies and shapes the explicit advice and comments he gives, but he does not give the advice and analysis in an artificial and schematic manner, so it is difficult to find out where he makes use of various elements of his theory until one reads the questions and answers in detail.¹²¹ What we can say with confidence with

¹¹⁹ Ibid. And see also *ibid.*, 870.

¹²⁰ As indicated, often the questions are grouped around a theme, and can be linked to a basic good. However, Grisez does not organise all 200 Questions around the basic goods, or around virtues (as several chapters of *Living a Christian Life* were structured). Rather, there is a loose kind of organisational scheme in operation, which groups Questions around the types of people involved in the question or issue: for example, families (questions 1-50 roughly), health care persons (questions 52-91), business people (102-152), college persons (questions 155-167), legal people (176-200). See *ibid.*, xxiii for a slightly different view. This book addresses moral questions of lay people only; moral issues specifically for clergy and religious are left for volume four.

¹²¹ One reviewer gently criticises Grisez's approach in this book for not building explicitly on the natural law arguments detailed in volumes one and two: H. Arkes, "The Lessons of the Master: In the Chambers of Germain Grisez," *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 43 (1998): 185-204, at 193. Although Arkes notes

regard to the good of religion in this book is that a concern with making choices that are in harmony with God's wise and loving plan for his people and creation is to be found explicitly in many of the answers that Grisez gives to the difficult moral questions treated here. For example, many of the answers he gives make explicit reference to the importance of "reconciliation and friendship with God" which is a central concern of the good of religion. We do not have the space here to look at all the questions, or even at some of them in great detail; all that can be done is to indicate some representative examples and make some brief comments.

5.3.4 Explicit references to religions concerns

A large number of the answers make reference to the kingdom of God as a strong motivating factor for our attitudes and behaviour. Some of these deal with issues where one might expect explicit reference to religion, matters such as liturgy, sacraments and faith; others are topics where perhaps one might not expect explicit reference to religion.

Often Grisez makes reference to the explicitly religious dimension at the very end of the answer. For example, in advising a woman asking for guidance regarding what she should do about rectifying a friend's fraud, Grisez ends by praising her forgiving and loving attitude so far, and says:

If you persist in that attitude and pray for her, perhaps your friendship will not be over. At least, if you both die in God's friendship, you will be friends again in heaven.¹²²

the place that Christian faith plays in Grisez's approach in this book, he does not mention the good of religion.

¹²² *Difficult Moral Questions*, 120, Question 26. Grisez has just advised the questioner to act to rectify her friend's fraud by reporting it to the police.

Here, Grisez makes reference to a faith dimension, in which our friendship with God is central and gives us hope that transcends a merely worldly perspective. Such an approach is frequently found in other answers, with a reference to the importance of hoping for the kingdom of God as one element that shapes our attitudes and choices.¹²³ The placing of these references to religious themes at the end of so many answers suggests that a religious perspective, focused on the value of our relationship with God, forms a kind of ultimate context for understanding the morality of many diverse issues.

Grisez does not place references to religious concerns only at the end of answers. In Question 43, for example, (“Is it wrong to wish for death?”), Grisez advises a volunteer on what perspective to take regarding the elderly people he visits, and he begins by saying:

Since nothing is more important than that they go to heaven, you can do nothing better for them than help them live well and prepare properly for death – for example, by receiving the sacraments, learning to join their suffering to Jesus’ passion, and making peace with enemies.¹²⁴

Grisez goes on in this answer to make reference to the words and attitudes of St Maximilian Kolbe, St Paul and Jesus regarding death. He makes the point too that wishing for death is ambiguous, and it can have a good sense: “When rooted in hope for

¹²³ See, for example, Questions 41 (page 192), 58 (271-272), 76 (345), 88 (405), 107 (485), 113 (510), 135 (583), 142 (610), 177 (762), 185 (795), and 191 (812).

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 198. It should be noted that the whole answer is quite long and detailed (five and a half pages) and that only parts of it are being mentioned here. In fact, it is worth making the point that in this whole analysis of *Difficult Moral Questions*, limitations of space and requirements of direct relevance make it impossible to do full justice to Grisez’s answers, which are detailed, sophisticated, related to specific details in the questions, often flexible, and sometimes tentative in places.

heaven and accompanied by docility to God's providential plan, the wish [for death] is good and in no way at odds with reverence for life".¹²⁵ Here, Grisez refers to another basic human good (life), noting how a correct attitude to God's will, and living in harmony with it ("docility"), which is the concern of the good of religion, enables us to avoid a negative will towards what is good.

5.3.5 Personal vocation

Once again, as in the previous two volumes of *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, Grisez puts a lot of emphasis on the concept of "personal vocation", many times using the term itself, but sometimes referring to it in other terms.¹²⁶ There are twenty nine questions in which Grisez makes reference to the moral requirement for people to discern, commit themselves to follow, and follow their unique personal vocations.¹²⁷ Here is what he says in one of these:

God calls every person to fulfill his or her personal vocation, which embraces not only a certain state of life and other appropriate upright commitments but [also] conditions beyond one's control, such as sickness, unemployment, and other forms of suffering. For God sometimes allows bad things to happen to us and calls on us to make the most of them for the sake of witness and service to the kingdom (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 309-314). Each of us should discover, accept, and faithfully fulfill all the elements of his or her vocation, weaving them together to form a seamless whole (see *Living a Christian Life*, 113-129).¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Ibid., 200.

¹²⁶ It should be noted that "personal vocation" as a theological, practical principle is even more dominant in the answers than the index would indicate: see *ibid.*, 926-927 (twenty two references in the index).

¹²⁷ See *ibid.*, Questions 5, 7, 8, 9, 15, 21, 30, 31, 33, 37, 40, 43, 44, 49, 57, 60, 74, 77, 82, 87, 94, 99, 101, 113, 131, 155, 159, 190, 200. It is interesting that the majority of these references are in the first hundred answers. Perhaps at that stage Grisez felt he had mentioned it enough.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 96.

It is easy to see how these ideas could apply to many diverse situations and moral issues, so it is not surprising to see the concept of personal vocation featuring so prominently in *Difficult Moral Questions*. This concept links to the good of religion because the idea of personal vocation views God's call to each of us (to do his particular will for our unique lives) as a practical organizing and inspirational principle for one's life as a whole, and as the path to peace. As Grisez says in another answer:

Ask yourself...: How can I use my gifts to serve others? What is God's will for me now? For in his will you will find your peace, not only in what remains to you of this life but in the endless life to come.¹²⁹

5.3.6 *What we owe God*

The notion that we have been given gifts by God and that it is good for us to develop them and use them well is central in several answers.¹³⁰ One element of why it is good to develop and use our God-given talents well is that we owe it to God: "Having received your talents from God so as to realize that good, you owe it to him to develop them (see Matthew 25. 14-30)."¹³¹

We also owe God obedience. If, for example, someone involved in healthcare were to be ordered to perform an abortion or some other act against the good of life, "that person would be obliged to refuse: 'We must obey God rather than any human authority' (Acts 5. 29)".¹³²

¹²⁹ Ibid., 507 (Question 113). Grisez is advising an elderly person in this answer.

¹³⁰ See for example, Questions 155, 156, and 158, all relating to students.

¹³¹ Ibid., 657 (Question 155).

¹³² Ibid., 331, n. 250 (Question 72). See also *ibid.*, 81 (Question 18) and 669 (Question 158).

We owe God assent too. Many times in his answers, Grisez makes reference to moral teachings in the scriptures and the teaching of the Church.¹³³ It would be possible to understand our obligation to follow these teachings in terms of personal consistency or social harmony. It is also possible to understand it in terms of our relationship with God and the benefit of thinking, choosing and acting in harmony with God's will, which is a *religious* understanding of our obligation to assent to and follow Church's teachings.¹³⁴ This religious way of understanding the place of the Church's teachings is found explicitly in several places in *Difficult Moral Questions*. For instance, in Question 2, Grisez advises the questioner to guide her son to seek religious truth and to accept her help in doing so, which "presupposes that God makes religious truth available to us and that his grace ensures that a sincere quest for it will not be in vain".¹³⁵ He advises especially that doubters or seekers should read the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the Bible too, "with readiness to hear what God wishes to tell [them]".¹³⁶ The emphasis here is not on being consistent with oneself (as a Catholic) or conforming to one's social group (which for Catholics is the Church), but on listening to God with an openness to accepting his truth and living by it as God's wise guidance for our fulfillment and

¹³³ See the substantial indexes, 900-904, which include references to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (which had been published since volume 2 of Grisez's moral theology project) as well as *The Code of Canon Law*. One should look also at the many references under the heading of "John Paul II" in the final index, 916. It should be noted that specific scriptural or magisterial moral norms are not always mentioned in every answer in *Difficult Moral Questions* because these are difficult moral questions that often involve issues not specifically covered or resolved by explicitly biblical or Church norms. See *ibid.*, xv.

¹³⁴ This was treated in *Christian Moral Principles*, chapter 23, Question G and chapter 35, and in *Living a Christian Life*, chapter 1, Questions H and I. See above s. 5.1.4e.

¹³⁵ *Difficult Moral Questions*, 6. The son is in doubt about the Church's teachings; the questioner is his mother.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

happiness. Thus, the good of religion is at stake here.¹³⁷ In beginning one answer, Grisez says: “Moral norms guide us in carrying out God’s wise and loving plan ...”¹³⁸ This tells us clearly that it is always appropriate to understand the moral guidance of the Church in a religious way, with our assent to that teaching and our effort to follow it instantiating harmony with God speaking through the Church.

Speaking of “owing” God, there are a couple of references in *Difficult Moral Questions* to the famous gospel passage about what we should render to Caesar and what we should render to God: Matt 22. 15-22.¹³⁹ Grisez’s comment:

[Jesus] told them to give back to the emperor the things that are his (coins stamped with his image and an idolatrous claim) and to give to God the things that are his (the obedience of faith, worship, and complete love: one’s whole life and very self).¹⁴⁰

The final words in brackets, referring to what we owe God, tell us succinctly how Grisez sees morality and life through a religious lens, so to speak. He says also (to a person who wishes to pay only the tax he owes):

Though,[*sic*] I do not blame you for wishing to give Caesar no more that is his, you also must give God what is his, and while what is Caesar’s is limited, what is God’s is not, for it includes what is Caesar’s and all else too.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ See also, *ibid.*, 59 (Question 12), and 198-200 (Question 43, on euthanasia).

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 536 (Question 121).

¹³⁹ See *ibid.*, 727 (Question 169) and 745 (Question 173). These Questions have to do with tax matters, unsurprisingly, but their insights can be applied more widely.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 727. Following this is a footnote referring to the gospel passages parallel to Matt 22.15-22 and to a commentary by Joseph Fitzmyer supporting Grisez’s reading.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 745.

Here, we see the all-inclusive nature of the religious perspective, which is not a narrow and exclusive focus on conventionally religious things, such as prayer and sacraments, but a view that sees God as the Creator, Redeemer and Lord of all things.¹⁴²

5.3.7 *The importance of the explicitly religious*

It should not be thought, however, that Grisez is in any way negative or negligent towards what might be termed “conventionally religious things”, as if he wanted to reduce religion to (secular) life, so to speak. He is not slow to point out the importance of what is explicitly Catholic. In discussing matters to do with education, for example, he clearly points out what it is that makes Catholic education distinctively Catholic.¹⁴³ The common good of a Catholic academic community has three elements. The first includes commitment to the truth and cultivating intellectual virtues, but, as Grisez points out, this is not a purely secular commitment but includes “the virtue of Catholic faith and faith’s truth”.¹⁴⁴ The second element is justice and charity. The third is one that Grisez explicitly calls “religious”: “the religious significance of the common enterprise considered as cooperation in a particular part of God’s creative, redemptive, and sanctifying work.”¹⁴⁵ This third element picks out central ideas in Grisez’s theological moral theory: cooperation with God’s plan and action, personal vocation. The very fact that a school or college commits itself to work with God, cooperating with him in his role as Creator,

¹⁴² Interestingly, Grisez does not refer to the opening chapters of Genesis in *Difficult Moral Questions*, even though it might seem appropriate to do so, and they are often relied on in Catholic ethical and social teaching.

¹⁴³ See *ibid.*, 691 (Question 163) and 703 (Question 165). See also Question 164.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 691.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

Redeemer, and Sanctifier, is itself of great value (what Grisez calls here “the common religious value” of the school). Also this religious value provides a criterion for working out, with other principles, the public policy and behaviour of a Catholic college (as detailed in Grisez’s lengthy answers to the pertinent questions in *Difficult Moral Questions*).

Grisez does not confine his comments on the importance of being Catholic to the educational sphere. He also discusses the religious value of Catholic healthcare.¹⁴⁶ The importance of prayer and the sacraments generally, and of explicitly Church matters, is evident in several parts of this book.¹⁴⁷ The example of Jesus is cited frequently, especially his attitude towards his passion and death.¹⁴⁸ Questioners are often exhorted to take up their cross and follow Jesus.¹⁴⁹ Mary and the saints are mentioned as exemplars for us to identify with.¹⁵⁰

5.3.8 Reverence and the environment

There is a strong emphasis on reverence towards God throughout the book, which features explicitly in some answers. A few are about matters to do with the natural

¹⁴⁶ See *ibid.*, 392-393 (Question 87).

¹⁴⁷ For example: on prayer, see Question 8; on sacraments, Questions 1, 4, 10-13; on supporting one’s parish, Questions 14 and 15.

¹⁴⁸ See Questions 18, 25, 43, 77, 81, 96, 108 and 170.

¹⁴⁹ See Questions 7, 9, 21, 23, 29, 38, 47, 58, and 136.

¹⁵⁰ See Questions 40 and 43. It should be said, however, that such references are relatively rare.

environment.¹⁵¹ Grisez mentioned environmental action as an example of instantiating the good of religion in two previous works,¹⁵² so it is interesting to see the good of religion featuring in his answers here regarding the environment. In his answer about how we should treat pets, Grisez makes the following point:

Reverence toward God requires us to respect [pets'] value. Just as it would be wrong wantonly to pollute a stream or crush a wild flower, so it is wrong wantonly to injure any animal (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2415-16). Indeed, since animals are creatures of a higher metaphysical order than streams and flowers, the wrong is greater, other things being equal.¹⁵³

In a footnote appended to this text, Grisez explicitly mentions the good of religion as one of the goods at stake in actions harming animals or the natural environment. (The other good he mentions is the good of fairness towards others, violated by wastefulness and depriving others of benefits.) Reverence towards God is mentioned also in Question 93, regarding treatment of whales. Grisez sums up his main point in Question 103:

Moral issues about environmental impact are reducible to questions about reverence toward God, the author of nature, and fairness toward fellow human beings.¹⁵⁴

Clearly, Grisez associates reverence towards God with the good of religion. It is only when we see God precisely as God, as the author of nature and Lord of all, that we can live realistically and therefore morally, in harmony with God's reality. It is also clear that

¹⁵¹ See Questions 92, 93, 102, and 103.

¹⁵² See Grisez, "A Contemporary Natural Law Ethic," in *Moral Philosophy: Historical and Contemporary Essays*, ed. W.C. Starr and R.C. Taylor (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1989): 125-43 at 128, and also J. Finnis, J. Boyle, and G. Grisez, *Nuclear Deterrence, Morality and Realism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1987) 280, analysed above in s. 4.9.1. See also s. 5.1.6c above for the treatment of the environment theme in *Living a Christian Life*.

¹⁵³ *Difficult Moral Questions*, 420 (Question 92), footnote omitted.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 468, with reference to the *Catechism of the Catholic*, 2414, and to *Living a Christian Life*, 771-82.

Grisez's moral theory allows for the mutually supportive combination of two or more basic human goods as motivations for actions, with the good of religion being combined here with the good of harmony with others.

5.3.9 *Why is religion not always mentioned or clearly implied?*

Although what has been said so far suggests that the good of religion is a major element in Grisez's approach in *Difficult Moral Questions*, it should be noted that many of his answers do not make any reference to the good of religion, either explicitly or implicitly. There are about sixty six answers (out of two hundred), a rather sizeable number, that seem to omit any reference to the good of religion.¹⁵⁵ The range of issues that Grisez treats without referring to the good of religion is wide, spanning the whole book. It would seem that the areas most lacking in religious reference are those to do with business ethics and legal ethics (the Questions in the second half of the book). Nevertheless, just about all areas have answers in which no reference to the good of harmony with God is mentioned or implied clearly. Does this mean that the good of religion is only sometimes at stake in our choices? Does it mean that this good is not at the centre of Grisez's moral theory, as argued in our analysis of his previous works?

In this book's "Preface and User's Guide", Grisez explains clearly that the book's selection of questions and its approach to answering them is limited. The book "treats

¹⁵⁵ It is not always easy to judge if an answer omits even an implied reference to religion, but bearing this in mind, here are the Questions in *Difficult Moral Questions* that, in my judgement, leave out any reference to religion: 17, 20, 24, 27, 29, 34, 50, 53, 54, 55, 60, 61, 62, 63, 66, 69, 70, 73, 84, 86, 90, 91, 98, 104, 106, 107, 111, 114, 115, 117, 118, 119, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 132, 136, 137, 139, 140, 141, 145, 146, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 154, 161, 162, 168, 176, 179, 182, 186, 187, 188, 189, 192, 193, 196, 198, 199.

only some difficult questions that are widespread, especially important, or usefully illustrative.”¹⁵⁶ However, “unlike the earlier volumes, which mainly present common Catholic teaching and reflect on it theologically, it deals with questions not yet the subject of explicit or clearly applicable Church teachings.”¹⁵⁷ So, we might expect such an approach to not always make reference to the good of religion, especially as theologically specified in Christian faith, but to make use sometimes of philosophical or legal arguments that are more secular in nature. Some answers are more secular in their style, therefore, because their subject matter is not the object of any Biblical or magisterial teaching or illustration. Some of the business matters treated in this book would seem to lack reference to the good of religion for this reason.

There is another element of Grisez’s approach that needs to be taken into consideration too. His approach is not presented as a systematic and comprehensive treatment of the issues and topics.¹⁵⁸ He makes the point that

in many replies, it would be appropriate to offer additional spiritual advice ... However, to avoid constant repetition, in this book I usually omit most such spiritual advice, though I would give it in replying to questioners separately.¹⁵⁹

Although “spiritual advice” does not refer exclusively to the good of religion, surely it includes it. We can find an illustration of this in the fact that Grisez sometimes makes reference to the good of religion specified by faith in answering a question in a particular

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, xv.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ See *ibid.*, xviii.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, xx.

area, such as sexual ethics, but then answers another question in this same area without mentioning religion, when he could have made the same basic points about religion in the second answer.¹⁶⁰ Also, Grisez's statement lets us know explicitly that he is aware that many of the answers he gives in the book are incomplete, and that he does not attempt to cover every aspect of an issue in every answer. So it is not surprising that he cautions readers to avoid drawing conclusions from what is *not* said in his answers.¹⁶¹ At the start of each question, Grisez says "The reply could be along the following lines". This indicates the somewhat tentative nature of Grisez's approach in this volume, his allowance for the fact that the questions he answers could be answered in various ways because they are genuinely difficult moral questions and moral life is rich and complex.¹⁶²

5.4 Final conclusion to the chapter

We cannot draw any conclusions from the fact that a large number of Grisez's answers in *Difficult Moral Questions* omit any reference to religion. We can conclude, however, from the book as a whole, that Grisez holds that the good of religion can and should play a very important role in the moral life of Catholics. It should be noted, however, that Grisez does not ever depend solely on the good of religion as the reason for the guidance

¹⁶⁰ Compare the answers to Question 22, which mentions specifically religious concerns, with Questions 20 and 69, which omit any reference to religion, but in which the religious points of Question 22 would have been appropriate to mention. It is interesting to note that many, though not all, of the answers omitting mention of religion are relatively short, suggesting that Grisez knowingly left out aspects of his moral theory in these answers.

¹⁶¹ See *ibid.*, xviii.

¹⁶² See also *ibid.*, xvii and xx.

he gives. His answers make reference to other basic goods, such as life and health, and truth, and, most often, human community of various sorts (hence the frequent reference to the Golden Rule), as well as the good of religion. Still he does say at the start:

The motive of hope – intending heaven and fearing hell – regularly overarches and undergirds every other motive proposed for living the truth of a well-informed conscience.¹⁶³

It is clear that what Grisez said about the suitability of religion as an architectonic good, shaping one's whole life as a good person, especially when specified by Christian faith, is well illustrated in this volume insofar as the good of harmony with God and his will features in a large number of answers arising out of a wide range of activity and human interest. It is also clear that the concept of personal vocation, as we have seen, features prominently in Grisez's moral theory and moral guidance, and it depends on the good of religion insofar as one is motivated to listen for God's call and guidance for one's life, and to accept and follow it, because one wishes to choose always in harmony with his wise and loving plan for one's life and for the good of others. Clearly, part of this willingness to be in harmony with God and his will includes giving him what we owe him: reverence, obedience, assent, trust, gratitude, and patient endurance of suffering – all of which feature prominently in *Difficult Moral Questions*. In this, the book follows on from, and develops, themes already found in *Living a Christian Life*.

¹⁶³ Ibid., xxii.

CHAPTER SIX

GRISEZ'S RECENT WORKS [2001-2008]

6.1 “Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment” [2001] ¹

In the first section of this article Grisez presents the basic human goods as the objects of the first principles of practical reasoning, and thus intelligible motives for options for choice that provide us with reasons for our choices.²

6.1.1 *Religion is a basic human good grounded in human nature*

Firstly, we note the by now familiar way in which Grisez refers to the good of religion:

Most people also experience tension with, or even alienation from, what they recognize as a more-than-human source of meaning and value: so, another reflexive good is the harmony with a more-than-human reality that people seek by religious activities.³

Secondly, we note a point about basic goods as *basic*. One view of basic goods is that they must be derived from prior theoretical knowledge of human nature. Grisez states clearly that this view is mistaken because it “confuses priority in reality with priority in knowledge”.⁴ Grisez’s moral theory does not in any way deny that “[h]uman nature is

¹ “Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment,” *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 46 (2001): 3-36. It should be noted that right at the beginning Grisez describes this article as only “a sketch”, dealing with matters that deserve book-length treatment.

² See *ibid.*, 5-6. Note that Grisez explicitly states that “basic human goods are not the only necessary motives for specifically human action. Emotional motives also are necessary ...”, *ibid.*, 6.

³ *Ibid.*, 8, note omitted.

⁴ *Ibid.*, followed by a footnote saying that the mistaken view also “overlooks the metaphysical irreducibility of (1) the *existential order of human acts*, which make up personal and interpersonal life, to (2) the *natural*

prior in reality to the basic human goods that fulfill it.”⁵ We come to know human nature by knowing the practical principles of the natural law. These principles pick out the objects of human acts, and these acts indicate to us the human capacities of our nature. At the same time, we would not engage in deliberate religious activities unless an inclination towards religion was already part of our nature. Grisez’s emphasis on the underivability from nature of our knowledge of the primary principles of the natural law is not a denial of the fact that the goodness of religion is ontologically grounded in the given order of nature.⁶

It follows that we can understand the goodness of religion not only practically but also theoretically: it functions not only as a practical principle directing practical knowledge and action, but also as part of moral theory and as part of theoretical knowledge of our nature (and as part of philosophical anthropology and other studies). Precisely as the object of a practical principle, religion functions as part of the moral order, directing us to choose and act, and, as such, it is a *primary* principle, underived from prior principles or knowledge, and irreducible to any other order of reality. On the other hand, as a part of a

order, including human beings” (emphasis in original). In this regard, Grisez makes reference to the sections of *Beyond the New Theism* dealing with the four orders of reality. See s. 2.6 above.

⁵ “Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment,” 8-9, followed by a footnote referring to work by John Finnis in which this point is made explicitly. Previously, Grisez had not made this point as explicitly.

⁶ On this see also a chapter written by Grisez and Boyle just prior to the article being analysed here: “Response to Our Critics and Our Collaborators,” in *Natural Law and Moral Inquiry: Ethics, Metaphysics, and Politics in the Work of Germain Grisez*, ed. Robert P. George (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1998), 213-37, at 214.

moral *theory*, religion is a reality whose nature can be contemplated and understood, whose logic can be judged, and whose technical/creative effectiveness can be evaluated.⁷

One implication of what Grisez says here is that the theoretical study and knowledge of religion as part of his (or any) moral theory is not prior to religion *as the object of a practical principle*. Rather, the principle exists first in the existential order, making possible choices to act in pursuit of the benefit of being in harmony with God, and only then can it be part of a moral theory that can be studied theoretically. This seems to be what Grisez has in mind when he says that the basic goods can be reflected on theoretically and “defended dialectically” by theoretical arguments, even though this theoretical reflection or argument is not sufficient to experience the goods as the objects of essentially *practical* principles.⁸ We first come to know the human goods *as human goods* in practical thinking, not theoretical reflection or argument, but the latter can illuminate the former (and vice versa).

6.1.2 God and the natural law

Once again, Grisez presents his cosmological argument for the objective existence and mysterious nature of God.⁹ Once again, too, Grisez extends his cosmological argument to include the natural law:

⁷ These points go somewhat beyond what Grisez says explicitly in this article, or elsewhere, especially in saying that religion, and/or any primary practical principle or basic good, can be understood from the perspective of the other three orders.

⁸ See “Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment,” 9-10.

⁹ See s. 2.5.2 above.

Natural law manifests providence and benevolence because nothing else can account for its guidance toward the intelligible goods of every individual and community.¹⁰

Grisez claims that the universality, objectivity and intelligibility of the natural law point clearly towards its divine source.¹¹ The objective reality and essential reasonableness and directiveness of morality cannot be accounted for sufficiently by evolution, by already existing benefits as natural givens, or by previous choices and commitments of oneself and/or others.

Also, the fact that the natural law guides all men towards what is good for them is a sign that the source of this guidance is intelligent, provident, and benevolent. Our good choices are seen to be a kind of cooperation with that source; our immoral actions are seen to be a failure to cooperate with it. Grisez does not claim that our awareness of any

¹⁰ "Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment," 13. See s. 4.2 above. Grisez highlights this new development of his cosmological argument for God's existence in the new preface to his republication of *Beyond the New Theism in 2005 as God? A Philosophical Preface to Faith* (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2005), xx-xxiv. One respondent to Grisez's 2001 paper in the *American Journal of Jurisprudence*, William H. Marshner, writing in the same issue, overlooks the fact that Grisez's cosmological argument is the context for the new 'natural law' extension of it. Thus, the argument from the natural law and its directiveness is convincing only insofar as one *already* has reason (from the cosmological argument, and/or from faith) to hold that a Creator exists whose creating we can partially but confidently understand by analogy with human persons' thinking and willing. See W.H. Marshner, "Implausible Diagnosis: A Response to Germain Grisez," *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 46 (2001): 91-112, at 96-103. Still, it is true that Grisez's presentation of the "natural law" extension of his argument for God's existence (both in his 1987 and 2001 articles and in his 2005 preface) is somewhat brief and in need of development.

¹¹ Grisez makes reference in this regard to the famous definition of Aquinas of the natural law: "that participation of the eternal law in the rational creature" in *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 91, a. 2. It is worth noting that Grisez relies here on three aspects of the natural law, and not only on its universality. Its intelligibility is perhaps the most important aspect, as it points most clearly towards an intelligent and provident Source.

of this will be explicit and detailed, but acknowledges that it is at least dim or implicit, and that it can and should be developed.¹²

6.1.3 Divine Command Theory rejected

Grisez goes on to make a point regarding one kind of moral theory: Divine Command Theory.¹³ One comes to know the prescriptivity (intelligible obligatory force) of the natural law *prior* to one's being aware of being bound to obey its source.¹⁴ What this means is that our natural grasp of the goods of religion, knowledge, and inner consistency (to mention the three that, arguably, are the most relevant here), as well as our moral awareness of all the basic human goods as *integrally* directive, ground our willingness to accept our obligation to believe in and obey God. We do not believe in God and only then become moral. Moral obligation does not depend entirely on God's commands being known and accepted *as divine commands*.¹⁵

¹² One way that this awareness can be developed is by identifying the Creator with the Source of the natural law: "Because one reasonably posits only as many causes as necessary to account for the facts and because the natural law comes with being human, it is reasonable to identify the more-than-human source of natural law with the creator. For people who draw that conclusion, identifying the two illuminates both", "Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment," 13. Marshner overlooks these points too: see n. 10 above.

¹³ See "Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment," 13, note 22. Grisez does not explicitly talk of "Divine Command Theory" as such, but it is a commonly found term for the position he distinguishes here from his own theory. For a treatment of several moral theories, including Divine Command Theory and Natural Law, see M. Timmons, *Moral Theory: An Introduction* (Lanham/Boulder /New York/ Toronto/ Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2002). Timmons mentions and briefly discusses Finnis and some of his books in his chapter on natural law theory, but he does not mention Grisez.

¹⁴ See "Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment," 13, n. 22.

¹⁵ Grisez does not deny that God's positive commands can clarify our awareness of moral norms and strengthen our willingness to live according to them. See ss 3.7 above and chapter 11, question C of *Christian Moral Principles*.

At the same time, Grisez acknowledges clearly that the natural law comes from God and that its prescriptivity is a sign of God's providence and benevolence. Grisez is not trying to put forward a purely secular version of the natural law; he is, however, making sure that the natural and essentially practical quality of the natural law is safeguarded from any reductionism, even one that emphasises God's authority. Morality is not a matter of brute facts, not even the facts of God's commands, combined with the force of authority, not even God's authority; it is a practical grasp of the opportunities offered for human fulfillment (of oneself and others) in various options for choice, and a moral grasp of the true fulfillment to be found in choices that fully respect the integral directiveness of all the primary principles of practical reason. These opportunities and this true fulfillment are God's gift, as is the natural law itself, but this gift is one that allows human persons to share in God's providence by their own rationality, thus coming to know the natural law as *law* in the sense of "intelligent and benevolent plan for our human good", rather than as arbitrary rules imposed by higher authority on lower beings.

6.1.4 The source of our awareness of the good of religion

Our grasp of the practical principle regarding religion "presupposes data that become available only by reflection both upon actions directed by *other* principles of the natural law and upon those principles' prescriptivity."¹⁶ We become aware of the good of religion only when we have data that comes from reflection on actions and reflection on

¹⁶ "Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment," 14, n. 23, emphasis added. This suggests that knowledge of religion, though still basic in that it is irreducible to any other practical principles, is less basic than the other practical principles, which are presupposed by one's grasp of religion as a good. One does not begin with a grasp of the principle directing us to pursue religion and then become aware of the other practical principles; one begins with grasping other practical principles, and then becomes aware of the principle concerning religion.

moral obligation. The principle directing us towards the good of religion is dependent on our prior awareness of the other basic goods, or at least some of them, as prescriptive and as instantiated, or, perhaps more pertinently, failing to be instantiated, in actions.

Grisez is developing what he said previously about how our awareness of the good of religion arises. In these works, he located the emergence of our awareness of reflexive goods, including religion, in our experience of conflict and frustration in pursuit of substantive goods (and perhaps other reflexive goods too), and our intelligent grasp of the possibility and opportunity offered in the pursuit of harmony with the transcendent source of meaning and value.¹⁷ Here, he emphasises the data provided by our awareness of the natural law *precisely as natural law* as a grounding for our awareness of religion as a basic human good. Even if we do not connect the source of the natural law with the Creator, we still can grasp the point of trying to choose in harmony with this source.¹⁸ Grisez allows for an understanding of religion in which one is not aware explicitly of a “creator” as such, but one is aware at least of some kind of more-than-human source of morality. Grisez says that once we have this data, which comes from our reflection on actions and prescriptivity (practical reasonableness/obligation), “the principle about harmony with God, like other principles of practical reason, is self-evident.”¹⁹

¹⁷ See ss. 3.3.3 and 4.4 above.

¹⁸ See “Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment,” 14, n. 23, first sentence.

¹⁹ Ibid. Grisez seems to be saying that we are aware of our need to choose in harmony with God (i.e. to instantiate the good of religion) because of our awareness of God as the source of the natural law. Grisez assumes that we are aware of our failures to follow the natural law, and of our need for forgiveness and healing. The source of our awareness of religion is not just our awareness of natural law but also of tension and alienation; see n. 3 above. On what Grisez has to say in this article about our initial grasp of the basic human goods in general, see s. 8.3.2 below.

Our natural grasp of the good of religion, then, does not come out of nowhere; it is not an intuition, or an innate idea, or necessarily or exclusively a special divine revelation. It is a natural awareness that presupposes certain data, particularly our awareness of natural law as a more-than-human law. Grisez does not make identifying the source of the natural law with the Creator a necessary condition for us becoming aware of the good of religion, but he does say that such identification develops insight into the good of religion.²⁰

6.1.5a Religion can integrate and motivate the whole of one's life

The third section of the article clarifies “the overarching religious commitment that can organize one’s entire life”.²¹ Grisez makes the point that one cannot organise one’s entire life in pursuit of any substantive good, as the basic human goods are incommensurable, irreducible, and diverse, and so no substantive good can be in itself the ultimate end for human life.²² The reflexive goods, however, which are more closely related to morality than the substantive goods, can always be rightly furthered in any action in which they are at stake. Still, only religion is fully suitable as a basic good for organising one’s whole life:

²⁰ See *ibid.* This reminds us that one’s initial insight into the good of religion is not necessarily an adequate insight into its goodness; it would be a flawed insight, for example, if it assumed that the source of the natural law was not the same as the Creator. But it would still be an insight, however flawed, into *the good of religion*, and it could be corrected if one came to have better understanding of the object of religion and how to instantiate it more adequately. Finding a more correct understanding of God could be motivated by one’s initial insight into the good of religion (along with one’s insight into the good of knowledge, or some other good).

²¹ Thus Grisez amends the earlier treatment of this issue in “Practical Principles”: see “Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment,” 3, n.1 and s. 4.6 above. In particular, he explains more clearly why religion is the best of the reflexive goods for integrating one’s whole life.

²² See *ibid.*, 14-15. This is one reason why Grisez rejects Aquinas’ understanding of the beatific vision as our ultimate end.

But harmony with other people is not at stake in every choice one makes, and harmony within oneself is at stake only when one or more appealing options is morally unacceptable; so, only the good of religion could be at stake in every choice. Therefore, only some prospective realization of that good could provide an overarching purpose to unify one's entire life.²³

Grisez clearly points out that the good of religion can be at stake even in choices between morally good options. Every time we make a choice to pursue any good we are following God's guidance for us in the natural law, at least to some extent. Following God's guidance in its fullest moral specification is of course to be preferred to following it only imperfectly by seeking a basic good in an exclusive and non-integral manner.

Consistently following [God's] guidance is likely to safeguard and promote not only harmony with him [which is a self-evident good in itself] but every other aspect of one's well-being and flourishing.²⁴

The good of religion is a good in its own right, and as such it can appeal to us, but it also is a good that opens out towards all the other goods, without diminishing their own character as specific goods, but supporting, promoting and defending them. Therefore, in organising one's life around the good of religion, one is not necessarily making it the one

²³ Ibid. Mark C. Murphy, *Natural Law and Practical Rationality* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Press, 2001) adds a basic good that he calls "happiness" to his list of goods (133-135), which involves one's being able to integrate one's life as a whole around a basic commitment or structure. He does not think that religion can play this role (see 190-198). However, his arguments to this effect are somewhat theoretical and do not advert in sufficient detail to the arguments presented by Grisez (and Finnis). Murphy overlooks the fact that Grisez's position on the suitability of religion as an overarching good allows for the fact that other reflexive goods can also play this role too to an extent, and that religion can be understood and instantiated more or less richly and effectively, and that it is only when religion is virtuous that it is considered by Grisez to be fully suitable as an overarching commitment for life. Boyle makes a more detailed and convincing argument for religion's superiority than Grisez does here: see s. 7.4.6 and 7.4.7 above.

²⁴ "Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment," 14-15. Grisez's phrasing here is somewhat unfortunate: it suggests that one is interested mainly, or even only, in "*one's* well-being and flourishing" in all the various basic human goods, but it is an important element of Grisez's understanding of the basic human goods that they are not goods for the self only, but goods for persons as human. Therefore, it would be more accurate to say that consistently following God's guidance is likely to safeguard and promote not only the good of religion for oneself *and others*, but also the other goods for oneself *and others*.

and only good; nor is one reducing any other good to be merely a means for pursuing the good of religion.

A further reason why we ought to make religion the organising principle of our whole life is that “one depends on [God] for everything and always must hope for his cooperation” to ensure success in one’s efforts to pursue and instantiate any good. “Mutuality requires that one consistently cooperate with him.”²⁵ The moral life is understood here as a cooperative friendship with God, a friendship that is open to a full range of goods that are distinct from, yet included in, that friendship.

6.1.6a Personal vocation is part of the natural law

At this point, Grisez develops a further idea that we have seen is central in his theological moral theory: personal vocation. Previously, Grisez put forward the idea of personal vocation from within the context of Christian faith.²⁶ Here, in a mainly philosophical article, Grisez allows it a place in natural law theory itself, even when unspecified by faith. He recognises God’s guidance not only in the generally applicable practical and moral principles of the natural law, but also in (discernment of God’s will in) one’s unique, individual situation:

But God not only guides all human beings by the principles of practical reason [i.e. the natural law]. He also guides each person by his or her unique gifts and situation. One’s gifts and situation indicate *which* morally acceptable options to choose.²⁷

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ See ss. 3.5.3, 3.5.5 and 5.1.3d above.

²⁷ Ibid. Note that this philosophical way of justifying the concept of personal vocation relies on the “natural law” extension of Grisez’s cosmological argument, by which we come to see the Creator as personal and provident, and on Grisez’s understanding of discernment as mandated and required by the natural law itself and not exclusively by faith.

Because God's will can be known not only in the general natural law, but also in the specific personal vocation that God calls each person to live by, each person should be open to God speaking through "providential signs" in his or her life's uniqueness and concreteness.²⁸ Discerning one's personal vocation is important for every person, not only Christians, in judging between morally good options, working out which option would best suit one's personality, circumstances, gifts, and responsibilities, so that one can do the will of God in each particular situation.

6.1.6b Religion and personal vocation can integrate one's life as a whole

Personal vocation does not help only in understanding *individual* choices in a particular way; it essentially consists of seeing one's *whole* life as a unified response to God's call through the natural law and the individual features of one's life, (and, ideally, through Christian faith too). This is why personal vocation is connected to the good of religion, which we have seen Grisez emphasise as the basic good most suitable for organising one's whole life as a unified whole:

A person's life would be in integrated whole if he or she consistently acted in accord with all the guidance God provides. Harmony with God would be the single

²⁸ See *Christian Moral Principles*, 559-567, where Grisez explains what he means by "personal vocation" and places it in the context of the natural law and the Church's authority. Clearly, he expects any morally good Christian to discern his or her personal vocation in a way that never violates the truths of the natural law or any Church teaching, and he states explicitly that all Christians should follow the same moral standards and conform their consciences to the Church's teachings. Grisez is not putting forward a moral theory or religious philosophy that privileges private revelation or bases itself on any kind of continuing revelation from God. See also *Living a Christian Life*, 43, 58-60 (in the context of 55-61), and 113-129 (especially at 121-125). Grisez has also written (with Russell Shaw) a popular-style book on the subject of personal vocation: *Personal Vocation: God Calls Everyone by Name* (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, 2003). A useful synthetic treatment of Grisez's concept of personal vocation: Nicholas C. Lund-Molfese, "The Christian Duty of Discerning, Accepting, and Faithfully Living a Personal Vocation," *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 46 (2001): 165-176.

ultimate end intended in every choice such a person made. Because God guides everyone toward fulfillment in human goods, that ultimate end would lead everyone committed to it to authentic self-fulfillment, including good interpersonal relationships.²⁹

This understanding of religion as integrating a human life leads Grisez to emphasise the fact that people's willingness to act in accordance with God's will (his guidance in the natural law, our own life's providential signs, and also divine revelation) leads to a great variety of ways of organising our lives. Major commitments play an important role in unifying a life, and in helping individuals to discern among morally good options. Communities too can make commitments that organise their communal lives. So communities can and do organise their lives around an overarching religious commitment. The good of religion is not just something for individuals.

6.1.7a Bad religion: rationalizations of sin, sinful religious structures

When people are only dimly aware of being guided by an unseen power and yet they are unwilling to cooperate consistently with it, they rationalize to try to overcome guilt feelings.³⁰ They try to manipulate God, indulging in anthropomorphizing him, thus making use of him and neglecting to treat him as an objective personal reality in his own right. This rationalizing

eventually leads to polytheism, human sacrifice, and much else at odds with metaphysical truth, sound morality, or both. Wanting to know what to do, people practice divination rather than attending to available, God-given guidance. With groups of sinful people divided from and conflicting with one another, each group

²⁹ "Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment," 17. Note, however, that Grisez moves modifies this understanding of our natural ultimate end in his 2008 article: see s. 6.3 below.

³⁰ See *ibid.*

tends to fashion its own God, elaborate its own religion, and develop its own moral code.³¹

Grisez is very critical of religion and religions here. His moral theory does not present a simplistic idea that religion is straightforwardly, self-evidently good, and that all who grasp this basic human good are therefore aware clearly and consistently of the entire truth about God and his will. No, the good of religion is the object of a primary practical principle that helps each of us, and our communities, to search for knowledge of God's will with a view to choosing in accord with it. It is possible that we can go wrong in our search for God's will and in our efforts to live according to what we believe is his will. Rationalization of our sin is one of the reasons why our search to know God's will can go wrong. Grisez acknowledges the development of what we might call sinful religious structures³² and institutions that embody and promote rationalizations and errors.

6.1.7b Theoretical mistakes can block our practical grasp of religion

Grisez also acknowledges the reality of "theoretical mistakes" with regard to the good of religion.³³ He acknowledges that there are "truths presupposed by a sound religious commitment", presumably including theoretical truths, and that these truths are not obvious, self-evident, or easy to discover and understand. One such theoretical mistake is monism,³⁴ which holds that all reality is one, human selves being "fragments whose

³¹ Ibid., 17-18.

³² This term is not used by Grisez here.

³³ See *ibid.* 18. Grisez in this article is clearer here on this point than he was in previous works.

³⁴ This term is not used by Grisez here.

salvation lies in merging back into that [ultimate] One.”³⁵ This way of thinking “has no place for harmony with God and precludes authentic religion”, because it does not allow for the proper distinction between Creator and creature, or for cooperation between God and man. Grisez’s criticism of monism, albeit brief, implies clearly that there might be some people who simply cannot grasp the good of religion as he has defined it. They cannot grasp its self-evidence because their philosophical worldview prevents them from understanding the terms “harmony with”, “God”, “choice” and even “the human person”, which are the essential terms of the concept “the good of religion” in Grisez’s moral theory. It is not just that monists will not develop deep insight into the good of religion; they will not be able even to begin to grasp the practical principle directing us to pursue and instantiate the good of religion.

Grisez also criticizes Aristotle’s philosophy, “key aspects” of which “are equally disastrous for religion and moral life”.³⁶ According to Grisez, Aristotle’s view

simply has no place for God, the creator and more-than-human guide to human fulfillment. Aristotle’s highest God is not utterly mysterious; we can understand it well enough to know that we can have no personal relationship with it. It provides no guidance; we cannot cooperate with it. The very idea of harmony with it is meaningless.³⁷

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid. Scott McDonald, “Aquinas’s Ultimate Ends: A Reply to Grisez,” *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 46 (2001): 37-49, at 75-80, argues that Grisez’s interpretation of Aristotle is too harsh in some respects, and that Aristotle was more agnostic regarding the divine than Grisez thinks. Marshner, “Implausible Diagnosis,” 103, n. 17, also argues briefly that Grisez is too critical of Aristotle. We do not enter into matters of the exegesis of Aristotle here, but simply say that, understood according to Grisez’s interpretation, Aristotle’s philosophy can have a detrimental affect on our understanding of religion and its place in the moral life.

³⁷ “Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment,” 18-19, one note omitted.

Also, “Aristotle does not recognize *freedom* of choice.”³⁸ And so his understanding of virtue, especially moral virtue, is deeply flawed:

Aristotle has no conception of genuine *moral* virtues: aspects of a person whose feelings, spontaneous mental functions, thoughts, and skills are integrated with a set of freely chosen and faithfully fulfilled upright commitments that organize his or her life.³⁹

Grisez’s understanding of moral virtue emphasises the place that *free* choices and commitments have in shaping the character of the chooser and integrating the various elements of the person around the goodness of these free choices. Aristotle reduces virtue to the orders of already given nature and technical/creative excellence, neglecting the specifically *moral* order of free choices and commitments. Aristotle also sees human goods as “commensurable and ordered hierarchically”, and so “one’s priorities [are] determined by nature, nurture, and good fortune”.⁴⁰ Grisez’s makes these criticisms to show how Aristotle’s philosophy has no place for the good of religion. This makes it clear that Grisez’s understanding of religion emphasises those things that Aristotle’s view denies or overlooks: the importance of free choice and commitment, the true nature of moral virtue, the personal quality of God, God’s choosing to create freely, God’s choice to give us moral guidance, our ability to cooperate with God, the value of this cooperation.

³⁸ Ibid., 19, note omitted. Emphasis in original.

³⁹ Ibid., 20, (emphasis added), with reference to *Christian Moral Principles*, 50-59, and “Practical Principles,” 129-130, for a more detailed account of Grisez’s understanding of moral virtue.

⁴⁰ “Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment,” 19.

Once again, as with monism, it seems that a person or persons holding beliefs like those of Aristotle will be unable to grasp the good of religion. So, although Grisez is clear that our grasp of the good of religion is not derived from any prior theoretical knowledge, but is properly basic and practical, he is also clear that certain theoretical beliefs can block our grasp of the good of religion. We have already seen that certain kinds of experience are presupposed before one can grasp the good of religion, experiences such as wonder at the existence of things, sorrow at one's moral failures, frustration at one's inability to achieve what one hopes to achieve, sadness at one's own and others' mortality, and so on. To these we can now add that correct theoretical beliefs are presupposed before one can grasp the good of religion, correct beliefs about free choice, God, reality, the human person. Not having correct beliefs about such things, or even having very flawed beliefs about them, can disable one not only from developing an effective understanding of how to instantiate the good of religion, but even from grasping the good of religion dimly in the first place.⁴¹

6.1.8 The biblical worldview and the good of religion

The fourth and final section of this article begins by outlining the biblical story and noting how it supports and develops "what can be known by rational inquiry about God

⁴¹ Patrick Lee, "Comment on John Finnis's 'Foundations of Practical Reason Revisited,'" *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 50 (2005): 138, makes two interesting points concerning this aspect of the Grisez-Finnis-Boyle natural law theory: "Firstly, although materialistic-naturalism is a *defeater* of many of our moral theses, nevertheless, epistemologically, one is not required to disprove all of the defeaters of a proposition before one is epistemically entitled to believe or affirm it. And, secondly, the knowledge that materialistic-naturalism is false is, in some way, implicit in, or perhaps implied by, the practical and moral principles themselves at the basis of our moral knowledge." Therefore, one does not have to be a good philosopher to grasp the primary practical principles of the natural law.

and humankind”.⁴² Looking first at the Old Testament, Grisez says: “[Its] worldview makes clear both the primacy of harmony with God and the intrinsic and irreducible goodness of other basic human goods.”⁴³ Here, Grisez seems to be emphasizing both that religion is first in importance in a way, but also one of a set of incommensurable basic human goods. But how can religion be both first and yet not commensurable with other basic goods? The resolution to the apparent conflict is that religion has priority *only in a certain sense*: as an architectonic good for organising all of life as a unified whole that is lived in pursuit of the good in all its various, irreducible forms, which is simultaneously a life lived according to God’s will expressed in the natural law, one’s discernment of one’s personal vocation, and divine revelation. The good of religion has priority in this specific role, but its priority does not mean that every action must be done primarily for the good of religion itself and not for any other good. It is possible, and preferable, to pursue the good of religion *along with* other goods, and to pursue other goods *along with* religion. Loving God first is not incompatible with loving all the human goods in all people, or, in other words, with willing integral human fulfillment.

Looking at the New Testament, Grisez sees Jesus further developing the religious, covenantal worldview of the Old. “Harmony with God and neighbor are to be instantiated by fulfilling the new covenant’s primary stipulation: to love God with one’s whole heart, soul, and strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself.”⁴⁴ What the good of religion

⁴² “Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment,” 20.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, with a footnote giving some biblical references and brief commentary.

means for Christians is summarised by this statement: “The specifically Christian overarching religious commitment is the act of faith in Jesus and his teaching.”⁴⁵ One who makes this act of faith, which is both a divine gift and a free human act, accepts the specifically Christian understanding of perfect love, and understands that we are called to live our faith commitment by abiding in God’s love, which is a pure gift of grace that can shape all human choices that intend the kingdom of God in hope.⁴⁶ Again, loving God and loving one’s neighbour are not seen as being incompatible with each other, but as two sides of the one coin, so to speak.

6.1.9a Seeking the kingdom of God first

Grisez is critical of the place of (philosophically understood) virtue in the context of the covenantal worldview of the Bible. According to him, the cardinal virtues are hardly mentioned in the Old Testament, for example. While the “errors and manipulative practices of religions corrupted by self-deception are strictly excluded” from the covenant, it calls on God’s people not to develop what was understood by philosophers as virtue, but to have “contrite and obedient hearts”, depending on God’s help and our religious fidelity and not on our perfecting our natural capacities.⁴⁷ In the new covenant,

⁴⁵ Ibid., n. 35.

⁴⁶ See *ibid.*, 21. Once more Grisez deals with the theological specification of religion in the final section of an article that is primarily philosophical in approach, thus emphasising in the structure of his writing the idea that faith specifies the natural law: compare ss. 4.7, and 4.9.2 above to the present article being analysed here.

⁴⁷ See *ibid.*, 21. However, in the final page of the article (36), Grisez says: “Of course, having and exercising the virtues is important in Christian life. But for Christian ethics, theoretical reflection on the virtues is far less helpful than practical reflection about how sinners, cooperating with grace, can find God’s plan for their lives, accept that plan, live according to it, and thus become the unique saints God wishes them to be.” Grisez sees “personal vocation” as far more central and practical than “virtue” in the Christian life. Personal vocation can be understood, in my opinion, as a specification of the good of religion in both its narrower and wider meanings simultaneously (as a specific good and as an architectonic good).

we are called to love and to live by the Holy Spirit's gifts, taking up our crosses and following Jesus, accepting our vocations and faithfully fulfilling them.⁴⁸ Grisez seems to put religion at the centre of living a truly good life, especially when our understanding of the good of religion, that is, harmony with God, is specified by a Christian understanding of grace. Grisez understands the Christian life to be one in which a faith perspective pervades one's dispositions, deliberations, choices, commitments, relationships, and actions. He certainly is not putting forward a view in which a philosophical system of morality, a pure natural law theory, so to speak, is sufficient or appropriate for the Christian.⁴⁹

In attacking virtue ethics, perhaps Grisez wishes to emphasise the pure gratuity and supernatural nature of God's gift to us of divine love and the beatific vision and the essentially religious nature of our response to God's invitation to live in the covenant. What is to come first in the Christian life is not seeking to develop virtue, especially if virtue is understood as some kind of human skill or aptitude, or to develop our philosophical understanding of goodness and human nature as such: what comes first is to seek the kingdom of God.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ See *ibid.*, 22. This summarises what is in the original already a very concise summary of Grisez's theological moral theory, so inevitably much of its richness is missing. In the footnotes to the pages being analysed here, Grisez outlines what he developed in much greater detail in the first four chapters of *Living a Christian Life*, and in the theological chapters of *Christian Moral Principles*.

⁴⁹ See especially "Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment," 22, n. 36, where Grisez cites with approval St Paul's dismissal of the Stoic philosophers' wisdom and his recommendation that Christians depend on "God's grace and Jesus' redemptive death and resurrection".

⁵⁰ See *ibid.*, 22., especially n. 37. Marshner, "Implausible Diagnosis," 105, makes the point that Grisez is too harsh here on virtue and its place in how we understand the moral life generally and the Christian life in particular. Marshner points out that Aquinas inherited his understanding of virtues not only from Aristotle, as Grisez seems to think, but also from the Church Fathers. Also, it is not to be expected that truly *Catholic*

6.1.9b The kingdom of God includes the beatific vision but goes beyond it

At the same time, Grisez wants to criticise any reduction of the kingdom of God to the beatific vision. He completely rejects the idea that the ultimate end of human life is the beatific vision as a complete fulfillment of our human nature and its desires for happiness. Certainly, the happiness of heaven includes seeing God as he is. We will share, by God's gift, in his divine nature, and so will be able to see him as he really is, because we will be like him.⁵¹ Grisez wants to distance his position from the position that holds that we are naturally oriented towards the beatific vision and that our only true happiness lies in this natural desire and potential being fulfilled by our human act of seeing God in heaven (even if such an act needs God's supernatural help in order to come about).⁵² This is the position held by Augustine and Aquinas. Grisez holds, by contrast, the position that the

enjoyment of divine goodness naturally pertains to divine persons as divine. ... human persons can enjoy divine goodness *only* by sharing in the divine nature and the intimate life proper to that nature; and that sharing cannot be a human act fulfilling a person as human.⁵³

How can we as humans be interested in the beatific vision, if it is not a fulfillment of our human nature? Grisez refers here to the Incarnation, which makes possible grace's

theology will be narrowly scriptural, eschewing any Hellenistic influences for example. It is possible and beneficial to use our philosophical knowledge of natural things such as virtues to illuminate our knowledge of grace and its workings, as Aquinas did. Marshner seems to have a point. It should be admitted that Grisez is attacking a very narrow version of virtue ethics, perhaps even a caricature of it.

⁵¹ See "Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment," 22, n. 37, where Grisez makes reference to 1 Jn 3:2 and 1 Cor 13: 11-12 and some commentaries on them. Grisez also cites 2 Pt 1:4 and Jn 1: 12 and 3: 3-8.

⁵² See *ibid.*, 25, n. 46.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 25.

building upon nature.⁵⁴ We can share, by God's grace, a *human* relationship with Jesus, and this relationship fulfills us as human beings. Jesus offers us through our relationship with him an intimate relationship with the Father, a relationship that includes not only total human fulfillment, but also our sharing in the divine nature, by our becoming children of God in Christ. We can enjoy, through union with Jesus, "the intimacy he enjoys with the Father and the Holy Spirit", and

[t]hough that gift itself cannot fulfill human nature, human persons *committed to cooperating with God in all things* have good reason to accept it, since they not only receive the offer from Jesus, their human Lord, but can recognize it as a gift God wishes them to accept.⁵⁵

The good of religion lies at the heart of a Christian life committed to seeking the kingdom above all other things. Those who organise their lives around the good of religion are committed to cooperating with God in all things, and therefore they have a good reason to accept Jesus' teaching and covenant, which includes the offer of sharing in the divine nature that union with Jesus makes possible. In other words, people who are committed to the good of religion as the overall organising principle of their lives, and who allow this principle to be specified by the gospel and hope for the kingdom, will be humanly friends with Jesus and will be interested in the beatific vision that Jesus as God-made-Man can share with us in the kingdom. Not only will such people be interested in the beatific vision, but they will be able to share in it by their sharing in God's nature through grace.

⁵⁴ See *ibid.*, 26. When Jesus' disciples saw him, (Grisez refers here to Jn 14: 9-10), they saw the Father, but this vision was not the beatific vision, but human vision of the Word of God made man.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

It is important to notice that Grisez' understanding of the kingdom's benefits includes *both* the beatific vision *and* rich, multi-faceted human fulfillment, which will fulfill our supernatural divine and natural human natures respectively.⁵⁶ Part of this integral human fulfillment will be fulfillment in the good of religion, in other words, harmony with God instantiated through human action. We as humans can be interested in, and hope for, this rich human fulfillment, that begins in this life and will be ours perfectly in the kingdom. Hoping for this human fulfillment in the kingdom includes hoping for the fulfillment of our *human* relationship with Jesus, the Incarnate Lord. This fulfillment is our fulfillment in the good of religion specified by the gospel. And this brings with it a further, special divine gift, transcending our human potential and fulfillment, which is divine fulfillment, our sharing in the beatific vision. So, it is possible for us to be humanly interested in sharing in the beatific vision, even though it is not possible for us to share humanly in it, or for us to comprehend humanly what that vision will be.

6.1.9c The good of religion mediates the divine good of the beatific vision

Grisez sees our divine and human fulfillments as distinct but not separate. Our hope for human fulfillment can include interest in and hope for divine fulfillment given as pure gift to us in Jesus. At the same time, the beatific vision *indirectly* though really, fulfills us as human:

In sum, though the beatific vision cannot *per se* fulfill the blessed as human, they are so [i.e. as humans] fulfilled by their friendship with God, and that friendship, perfected by their union with Jesus, involves all the gifts God gives through Jesus.

⁵⁶ Grisez mentions, for example, that scripture presents a picture of heaven as including not only vision of God as he is, but also, more often, as involving our bodily resurrection and living in a perfect community with the saints: see, *ibid.*, 23.

Among them are the blessed's share in God's very nature and their joy as his children in seeing him as he is.⁵⁷

Grisez here distinguishes between "friendship with God" as a human good (the good of religion specified by the gospel, and so union with Jesus as human) and our "share in God's very nature and ... seeing him as he is", which is divine good. The human good "involves all the gifts God gives through Jesus"; in other words, the human good involves the divine good, not as a part of the human good, which is impossible, but as a divine gift *mediated by* the human good. Insofar as one shares in the divine good, one does so only because one shares in the human good, which is the human good of religion specified by union with Jesus, and the rich fulfillment in all the human goods that goes along with fulfillment in the human good of religion specified by union with Jesus.

This is why one can, as human, hope for divine fulfillment in the beatific vision, and act for it. One's hope is directly for human fulfillment in the kingdom, which includes human fulfillment in a cooperative friendship with Jesus as Incarnate Lord:

The kingdom can be one's overarching reason for choices because, as Jesus described it, the kingdom clearly includes *human* fulfillment: harmony with God unmarred by even the slightest sin, resurrection life, intimate friendship with Jesus, and the joy of living together in a perfect human community.⁵⁸

However, one's hope is *indirectly* for the beatific vision insofar as it is promised by Jesus as a gift given to his friends, a gift that is part of the kingdom's benefit, though one that

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 27, emphasis in original.

transcends our human potential. One's direct choices for the kingdom are indirect choices for the beatific vision, so to speak.

We can see from what Grisez says that the term "kingdom" can be used as another way to speak of the good of religion specified by the gospel: making all one's choices for the sake of the kingdom ought to be one's overarching commitment unifying one's life as a Christian. One can do this because the kingdom is not a single good, but encompasses both divine good *and* human goods. Therefore, one can make choices in every department of life, so to speak, with a view to the kingdom, because the kingdom will include rich fulfillment in "all the good fruits of our nature and effort",⁵⁹ and so every department of human life can be relevant to our seeking the kingdom.

6.1.9d Disagreement with Aquinas on man's ultimate end

The final pages of this article outline Grisez's disagreement with Aquinas on the issue of the ultimate end of man.⁶⁰ Aquinas attempted to synthesise the insights of Aristotle and Augustine. In doing so, Aquinas held that the human person has and *can* have only one ultimate end, which is the beatific vision. This means that Aquinas reduces man's ultimate end to "an instantiation after death of one substantive good, namely, the human

⁵⁹ This is a phrase from the Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes*, 39, which is often quoted by Grisez and forms one of the most important sources for his approach. See, for example, "Natural Law, God, Religion and Human Fulfillment," 34, n. 64.

⁶⁰ See *ibid.*, 27-37. Grisez revisits a set of questions he analysed earlier in "Man, Ultimate End of": see s. 2.2 above. Grisez mentions his earlier article in "Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment," 32, n. 65, making the new point that he now thinks that "the controversies generated by Aquinas' views on human persons' natural and supernatural ends" are due to logical inconsistency in Aquinas' "attempts to express these views", and not merely to their "complexity and incompleteness", as he had assumed in his earlier article.

good of knowledge.”⁶¹ This has the effect of downgrading “most of the specifically human goods for which Christians hope.”⁶² Because Aquinas sees the ultimate end of human life as embodied in the human intellect knowing God (albeit only with God’s supernatural aid),⁶³ he has no coherent place in his Christian ethics for the other human goods. What necessary place is there in salvation for the resurrection of the body and the communion of saints, to mention two examples that are clearly established in scripture and Church teaching as integral to the gospel, (and which even Aquinas himself recognizes),⁶⁴ if one’s soul’s contemplation of God is sufficient to satisfy all one’s desires, fulfill all one’s human potential, and thus be the ultimate end of one’s whole life? None, it seems. Thus, Aquinas’ Christian ethics is incoherent and insufficient.

A further criticism, arising from this, is that Aquinas’ position about there being only one ultimate end for all human willing, and that that end is an intellectual, single, substantive good, doesn’t allow one’s whole life to be integrated around one’s act of faith in Jesus, as a specification of the reflexive good of religion.⁶⁵ If Aquinas’ view is correct, then it seems that only intellectual fulfillment, and individual intellectual fulfillment at that, is really important, and all other goods are merely means to this end. However, much of human life is not directly relevant to this end. Also, many if not most human choices, which are made for ultimate ends, are made for diverse goods, the basic human goods,

⁶¹ Ibid., 34.

⁶² Ibid., with a note referring to Vatican II’s teaching in *Gaudium et Spes*, 39, about the nature of the kingdom.

⁶³ See “Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment,” 27, n. 52.

⁶⁴ See *ibid.*, 35, n.71.

⁶⁵ See *ibid.*, 34-37, but also 30-33.

which are understood to be intrinsically good, and not mere means to another good. Grisez argues against Aquinas' position by pointing out that sometimes people do have, and therefore can have, more than one ultimate end in view when they make choices.

Grisez's position on the ultimate end is that there is not one ultimate end that fulfills the human person completely, such that all his desires are satisfied and all his potential reached.

On my view, human persons as human do have a natural 'desire' for rich fulfillment ... [As explained in the first part of the article], their capacities are naturally inclined toward the basic human goods – friendship with God, knowledge of truth and aesthetic experience, and so on. But no single instantiation of any of these goods – not even friendship with God – can utterly fulfill anyone.⁶⁶

Human fulfillment is not to be understood as a definite state of affairs in which people's desires and potential are finally and completely fulfilled or ended. Rather, "the richest possible fulfillment for a human being is not something definite; it is opened and indeterminate."⁶⁷

6.1.10 The role of the good of religion in Christian life

The basic good of religion, specified by Christian faith,⁶⁸ can form an organising principle of one's whole life, thus providing one with *a kind of* ultimate end for all one's

⁶⁶ Ibid., 28. Note that Grisez refers to the good of religion as "friendship with God", thus assuming that the good is pursued in a morally specified way (i.e. integrally), and not as an isolated or fragmentary primary practical principle.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 29.

⁶⁸ See *ibid.*, 34, n. 69, where Grisez makes the point that the commitment of Christian faith does not "displace" the commitment "to act in accordance with all the guidance God provides in order to maintain and promote harmony with him in an ongoing cooperative relationship." Rather, the commitment of faith "subsumes" the commitment specified by the good of religion "by further specifying it".

choices and commitments.⁶⁹ It does this not by replacing all the other ultimate ends, specified by the whole range of basic human goods, but by including them as distinct and irreducible goods in their own right, precisely as goods *that God wills* and that one wills in harmony with God, thus instantiating religion. Therefore, although one can have a single ultimate end for one's whole life, the good of harmony with God, this is not an exclusive ultimate end for one's life, but an architectonic ultimate end/good that includes, promotes, protects, and respects all the other ends/goods, which form ultimate ends in their own right.⁷⁰ As well as this, the good of religion can mediate one's sharing in the divine nature, which in its turn enables one to share the beatific vision (which is itself a kind of indirect ultimate end, capable to some extent of motivating human interest and good actions).

Another criticism of Aquinas that Grisez makes is that his Christian ethics does not deal adequately, if at all, with the issue of one's deliberately organising one's *whole* life as an integrated whole in which all one's choices implement one's commitment of faith.⁷¹

⁶⁹ It is worth remembering in this regard how Grisez, Boyle and Finnis, dealt with the notion of ultimate ends under *three* headings in "Practical Principles," 131-136: "Ends ultimate in three diverse ways". The three types of ultimate human end treated there were: integral human fulfillment (an ultimate end rectifying the will); the basic goods (ultimate reasons for acting); and, an integrated life organised by an overarching commitment (in pursuit of the ultimate end of the happiness for which people settle).

⁷⁰ J.L.A. Garcia, "Topics in the New Natural Law Theory," *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 46 (2001): 51-73, at 72, makes the suggestion that it is better to see the good of religion, which he defines as total devotion to God (which loves all the goods fully), as *suffusing* one's whole life, and thus giving it a unity and richness, rather than using the term *integrating* one's whole life. The term *suffusion* gets across the idea that devotion to God thus becomes internal to one's pursuit and instantiation of all the various goods for all the various persons in one's life, whereas the term *integration* might be too extrinsic. It is not clear that Garcia is correct in assuming an extrinsic understanding of "integration" in Grisez's theory; the good of religion is seen by Grisez to permeate and shape all one's pursuit of the goods *from within*. This is particularly the case when the good of religion is perfected by charity, by which one's own will is united in a special way with God's will.

⁷¹ See "Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment," 35-36.

Aquinas does not recognize the proper place and importance of the good of religion in the Christian life, as an architectonic basic human good, specified by faith and the gospel, that provides one with a practical principle to organise and integrate and motivate *all* one's good actions, in every department of life, without reducing all goods to religion or intellect or contemplation, or even the beatific vision, and which thus enables one to live a truly *human* life, open to all the gifts that God offers and makes possible.⁷² The key to living a good Christian life, according to Grisez, is not found in a purely natural law morality, nor in a virtue ethics that makes developing human abilities or attitudes paramount. Rather, the key to living a good life as a Christian is to develop, with God's grace, our friendship with Jesus: "to know Jesus well, to undertake to follow him, and to organize one's entire life as cooperation with him and thereby with God."⁷³ Grisez emphasises that this friendship with Jesus is a *human* friendship. It involves us

becoming *acquainted* with Jesus by knowing his friends and hearing/or reading his story (the Bible, particularly the New Testament, and especially the Gospels). For those who cooperate with Jesus, that acquaintance, once begun, grows into a human friendship with him. That cooperation takes many forms: seeking and enjoying Jesus' help in overcoming all deliberate sin, participating in his actions in the liturgy, and playing one's part in the Church's apostolate, which continues to carry on his mission. One's part in the apostolate is not limited to specifically religious practices. Secular activities – that is, all those done to instantiate basic human goods other than religion – must be integrated with living faith and hope. That integration is not brought about by one's commitment to the true ultimate end. It depends on discerning, accepting, and faithfully fulfilling one's personal vocation, while shaping all of one's activities by conscious and active participation in the sacraments.⁷⁴

⁷² It is not surprising therefore that Patrick Lee in his essay responding to Grisez's article in the same issue of *American Journal of Jurisprudence* characterises Grisez's approach as a "Christian Humanism": see "Germain Grisez's Christian Humanism," 137-151.

⁷³ "Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment," 35.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 35, n. 72. Immediately following this passage is a reference to *Christian Moral Principles*, 459-830, which forms a substantial part of that book, whose central theological moral theory is summarised in the passage quoted here. Grisez's use here of the phrase "the true ultimate end" is pejorative, referring to its use in the theory of Aquinas he is criticising, which held that there was one true ultimate end, which was a

6.2 “The Doctrine of God and the Ultimate Meaning of Life” [2006]⁷⁵

This short, densely written and biblically rich piece reiterates, clarifies and develops some of the topics seen in the previous article. Grisez presents hope for the kingdom of God (which Grisez mostly refers to simply as “the kingdom”) as the overarching principle of all one’s choices and commitments. According to Grisez’s theological ethical theory, hope for the kingdom specifies (in light of faith) the good of religion as the architectonic principle of one’s life as a whole. An adequate and accurate theological understanding of God and the kingdom allows us to

intend the kingdom as the ultimate purpose for whose sake one chooses whatever one chooses, and thus seek it first and in seeking everything else.⁷⁶

Inadequate or inaccurate understanding makes this more difficult, or even prevents it.

6.2.1 *How we come to know about God and religion*

Once again, Grisez writes about a central feature of his development of his cosmological argument since *Christian Moral Principles*: how the natural law itself points to the existence of God.⁷⁷

Knowing the first principles of practical reasoning ... people are aware of being directed toward what is good for them and their communities, and so are aware of a quasi-intelligent director. Aware too that their own efforts never suffice to realize

human act of contemplating God in himself, thus completely satisfying our natural desire to know and love God and our natural potential to do this, and, indeed, all our potential.

⁷⁵ “The Doctrine of God and the Ultimate Meaning of Life” in *The Doctrine of God and Theological Ethics*, ed. A. J. Torrance and M. Banner (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 125-37. This piece is not written in a way that makes its focus on religion explicit, in that the phrase “the good of religion” hardly features at all. Clearly, however, it is about a theological specification of religion: hope for the kingdom of God.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 126.

⁷⁷ See *ibid.* Grisez does not use the term “natural law”, but he does refer to the classic biblical reference for it: Rom 2.15-16.

intelligible benefits such as survival and offspring, people pursuing such benefits find themselves depending on an unseen, powerful agent. Recognizing their dependence, they wish to be on good terms with that agent. God is identified and worshipped.⁷⁸

Our grasp of the good of religion is grounded in our awareness of objective more-than-merely-human morality directing us towards our good, and our awareness of our inevitable dependency on a more-than-human helper if we are to instantiate the happiness we hope for in all our actions.

Grisez acknowledges that “rationalizations of unreasonable choices”⁷⁹ can prevent us from grasping the existence of God, and especially his being the source of the natural law and our helper in pursuing and instantiating human fulfillment in its various forms. Rationalization can lead to the generation of idols, false religion. But he also thinks that if we can avoid this⁸⁰ we will most reasonably identify the creator with the source of practical rationality and the one who makes fulfillment possible – what Grisez calls the “guiding and helping power”.⁸¹

⁷⁸ “Ultimate Meaning of Life,” 126. The first principles of practical reasoning referred to here are the principles directing us to pursue and instantiate the basic human goods.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Grisez does not explain how in this piece. It could be said, however, that the whole piece is concerned with showing what is involved in avoiding idolatry, or any false understanding of God, insofar as it emphasises the importance of seeing with the eyes of faith, in the light of adequate and accurate philosophical and theological understandings of faith’s teachings. Perhaps most important in this regard is the acknowledgement of God’s objective personality along with his utter mysteriousness: God is not to be used by us or ‘captured’ in any reductive idol or false image. Grisez also mentions that parsimony is one of the principles that would point us towards identifying the source of the natural law with the creator of all things: One ought not to multiply entities or causal explanations unnecessarily.

⁸¹ Ibid., 127.

Grisez is at pains once again to emphasise that God is utterly mysterious because he is self-existent: “we do not understand what God is, and whatever we do understand must be denied of God”.⁸² We can understand how God is related to us, and how we should relate to him, especially in the light of divine revelation, but we cannot understand, either by human reflection or divine revelation, what God is *in himself*.⁸³

6.2.2a Criticism of Aquinas regarding religion’s place in the moral life

Grisez reiterates and develops points he made in the previous article criticizing Aquinas. Aquinas went too far in his philosophical arguments for God’s existence, thinking he could apply positive attributes to God, arriving at the idea that God is “an unchanging and all-knowing mind to which the human spirit is *naturally* akin.”⁸⁴ Aquinas rightly accepted scripture’s revelation that the kingdom of God will have as its “foremost blessing” seeing God,⁸⁵ but he went beyond the bible in his development of what this means. In Aquinas’ theory, this vision of God is “transformed” into “a theological construct according to which supreme human good and fulfillment is in God *attained by an act of the human intellect* gazing steadily forever at mind’s perfect object: divine truth.”⁸⁶ Because of this, “other aspects of the heavenly kingdom became incidental”,

⁸² Ibid., 126.

⁸³ See *ibid.*, 126-127.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 127, emphasis in original. Grisez sees Aquinas as heavily influenced by Aristotle, Augustine and neo-Platonism in this regard.

⁸⁵ Grisez mentions four biblical sources in this regard: Mt 5.8; 1 Cor 13.12; 1 Jn 3.2; Rev 22.4: see “Ultimate Meaning of Life,” 128, n. 10.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 128, emphasis in original.

aspects such as the resurrection of the body. This led to a narrow view of the ideal life, which was seen to require us

to set aside all other goods as much as possible and *concentrate on religious activity* with the goal of nurturing union with God and, as it were, seeing him even now.⁸⁷

Grisez seems to be accusing Aquinas of making religion the only important good, the ultimate goal of human life. This leads to a reduction in one's understanding of morality, which is seen to be focused mainly on avoiding mortal sin. This is due to the fact that, although we cannot do anything to achieve the beatific vision, we can lose it by mortal sin. The kingdom gives ultimate meaning to human lives, in Aquinas' perspective, by giving us a motivation to avoid moral sin and to repent whenever we sin. The avoidance of hell, rather than the pursuit of heaven, becomes our strongest motivation to be a good person.⁸⁸ Thus, the good of religion is narrowed and mutilated, losing its full positive meaning and significance, and its inherent openness towards the other human goods.

6.2.2b Voluntarism misunderstands the good of religion

Grisez does not think Aquinas' view was totally wrong, especially as it acknowledged the links between keeping the commandments, abiding in God's love, and willing the well-being of others. So, Aquinas' view in itself did not encourage legalism. But soon after Aquinas, the views of William of Ockham and others led to a serious theological

⁸⁷ Ibid., emphasis added. Grisez is talking here of religious activity understood narrowly, not inclusively.

⁸⁸ See *ibid.* Grisez makes the interesting point that the alternative to heaven, hell, "repels many people more intensely than the beatific vision attracts them". This is probably an accurate point about people in the recent past, when Aquinas' view was held to be true. Many people now are influenced by a view of the kingdom that Grisez looks at later in this chapter, in which everyone goes to heaven and there is no hell to worry about or avoid.

reductionism, by which legalism flourished.⁸⁹ This voluntarist approach, which thought God could be understood to be absolutely free, influenced “[m]any subsequent Catholic theologians and pastors” to see in the commandments only a kind of arbitrary test set by the all-powerful God to be passed in order to get to heaven and avoid hell.⁹⁰ Thus, people lost sight of any *intrinsic* link between keeping the commandments and being united with God in heaven (and sharing in rich human fulfillment with others). Morality was reduced to a narrow “Divine Command Theory”.⁹¹ The human goods as motivations for free choice were denied or overlooked. The voluntarism of William of Ockham misunderstands the good of religion and its place in the moral life.

6.2.2c The Reformers misunderstood the good of religion

Grisez offers a somewhat tentative criticism of the Reformers’ views on the ultimate meaning of life.⁹² Their view of God as absolutely sovereign, (a view that was influenced by William of Ockham to some extent), and of man as incapable of freely choosing to do good or of our good works as in any way effective towards salvation, meant that the Reformers had no place for our “seeking the kingdom in the sense of intending it in every

⁸⁹ Grisez relies on the work of Servais Pinckaers with regard to this point: see “Ultimate Meaning of Life,” 128, n. 16. Grisez had criticised William and nominalism in previous work: see, for example, *Christian Moral Principles*, 12-13. In this part of the chapter, Grisez goes beyond what he said in his 2001 article, which focussed on criticising Aquinas and did not go further historically: see s. 6.1 above.

⁹⁰ See “Ultimate Meaning of Life,” 128-129.

⁹¹ Grisez does not use this phrase in this piece in relation to William of Ockham or those influenced by him, but it seems useful to describe the kind of understanding of morality that voluntarism and nominalism leads to as a narrow Divine Command Theory of morality. This is also a way of describing a narrow view of the good of religion, which is the central good at stake in such a moral theory. Religion here is reduced to obeying a powerful God, mainly out of fear of being punished, without really understanding why he commands what he commands, or how our obedience is for our good and thus manifests God’s glory.

⁹² This tentativeness is due to his not being totally confident that he knows and understands their theology fully.

other good for whose sake one makes a choice”.⁹³ In other words, they too misunderstood the good of religion, theologically specified as hope for the kingdom. For the Reformers, the kingdom was totally God’s gift, and man’s good works were a kind of witness to God and a way of showing gratitude for salvation. However, life was to be organised with this-worldly benefits in view. As with the narrow views of Aquinas and especially Ockham, any positive, intrinsic connection between our actions here and our life in the kingdom tended to be overlooked by the Reformers.

6.2.2d Modern approaches reduce religion to feelings and subjectivity

More recent theologies have developed that offer support to modern ideas of human rights and morality, thus rendering secularism appealing. These theologies amputate “parts of the body of Christian faith – always including hell – that seem ugly”,⁹⁴ and over-emphasise religious feeling and experience. The woolly “faith” that results, which, strictly speaking, is no faith at all, leaves people supposing “that everyone will enter the kingdom no matter what anyone does”.⁹⁵ This view of the kingdom leaves it with no motivating power for human choice and action; to the contrary, the view that all will be saved no matter what they do only leads to the relativising of absolute moral norms.

Grace becomes so cheap that discipleship is subsidized: one may affirm oneself, evade one’s cross, and follow the crowd in pursuing comfort: ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die – and go straight to heaven.’⁹⁶

⁹³ Ibid., 129.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

One can ignore one's own sinfulness and concentrate on taking the moral high ground, even invoking God as the source of human rights, in supporting good causes that involve no real self-sacrifice.⁹⁷ Once again, the good of religion is misunderstood: it is cheapened and rendered powerless to motivate specific choices and actions or to integrate one's whole life in pursuit of any significant opportunity (significant because it can be lost). There is no need to pursue and make efforts to instantiate a good that is inevitably going to be handed to you anyway, no matter what you do or choose.

6.2.3a Grisez's view of God and the ultimate meaning of human life

Grisez outlines his view, which he considers to be more adequately grounded in scripture, more suited to fight against secularism, and better able to motivate a good Christian life, compared to the previous inadequate theories. Grisez's view tries to do justice to both God's all-pervasive causality, especially his grace, and our human free choice, by which we can really cooperate with the God on whom we are totally dependent, even for our free choices.⁹⁸ Human choices and actions matter in Grisez's moral theory; they are effective with regard to our being in God's kingdom. However, our choosing to do good Christian actions is not a matter of our bringing about the kingdom, but of our sharing in receiving it as God's gift.⁹⁹ It is not a matter of either God's action or our actions being effective and necessary; no, in Grisez's moral theory, our actions are never an alternative to God's actions. God's essentially mysterious nature allows his primary causality to

⁹⁷ See *ibid.*

⁹⁸ See *ibid.*, 131.

⁹⁹ See *ibid.* Grisez is speaking specifically about the choices of a catechumen to make the act of faith, but what he says applies clearly to all Christians and all their choices.

operate, so to speak, along with our own secondary causality, making it possible, and shaping it specifically and fully when it is morally good.¹⁰⁰ Our good works are always done with God's guidance and help. Therefore, our intention in making the act of faith and in carrying out the implications of being a member of the Church, and thus being in the new covenant community with its intrinsic "stipulations", is that of "hope in God for the kingdom".¹⁰¹

Thus, hope for the kingdom can be the ultimate meaning of our human lives, the overarching purpose of all our choices: "Christians implicitly intend the kingdom whenever they choose to do the truth of faith in love."¹⁰² Even if one's theological position is inadequate or incomplete with regard to this understanding of the ultimate end of human life, if one is living out an authentic Christian faith, then one will inevitably intend the kingdom in one's choices. Still, it is better to do so with a clear understanding, which helps one to be stronger in one's motivation to love and more intense in one's hope in God.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Grisez does not speak in terms of primary and secondary causality in this piece.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. Our hope is not therefore in our own goodness or our own actions or abilities, seen as somehow independent of God.

¹⁰² Ibid., 132. In all probability, Grisez here means "at least implicitly" rather than "implicitly", as it is clear from what he writes in the following paragraphs that he acknowledges the possibility, and recommends it, of *explicitly* intending the kingdom in all one's choices.

¹⁰³ See *ibid.*

6.2.3b *The beatific vision as the consummation of the good of religion*

Should one hope (in a practical way) for seeing God in the kingdom? Grisez denies that seeing God is the ultimate *human* fulfillment. It is beyond human capacities and human nature. However, he does suggest that we should pray and hope for seeing God in the kingdom.

The ultimate fulfillment of the blessed will be in God himself. But while seeing God will be *the consummation of friendship with him*, which *is* a sublime human good, seeing God will not be an act of the human intellect, or, indeed, a human act of any sort. Instead, it will be unimaginably intimate communion with the divine persons, a sharing in their own incomprehensible family life, enjoyed by human persons not by any capacity or elevation of their human nature, but by the very uncreated divine love, poured forth at baptism by the Holy Spirit into their hearts in such a way that it really is their own.¹⁰⁴

This passage mentions something new in Grisez's understanding of the good of religion, or at least clarifies what he has said in earlier works. In this passage, Grisez mentions a connection between the good of religion and the vision of God shared by the blessed as a pure gift in heaven. He describes the vision of God, the beatific vision, as "the consummation" of friendship with God, or, in other words, as a consummation of the good of religion, (when this human good is morally and theologically specified).¹⁰⁵ This suggests that the good of religion is in some way, though without denying the sheer gratuitousness of the beatific vision or its purely supernatural character, a preparation for the beatific vision, which completes it in some satisfying way (i.e. it *consummates* the good of religion). At the same time, this vision of God transcends the good of religion,

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 133, one note omitted. The first emphasis ("*the consummation of friendship with him*") is added.

¹⁰⁵ Grisez mentions explicitly, indeed, he stresses the fact, that "friendship with him [God]" is "a sublime human good", thus indicating clearly that it is the good of religion that is meant here. Obviously, Grisez assumes here that the good of religion, fulfilled in the kingdom, will be virtuous and fully specified by the truth about God.

being a special gift beyond human capacities, whilst not replacing or reducing the good of religion.

6.2.3c *The Way of the Lord Jesus*

If this interpretation of Grisez' moral theory is accurate, our choices to pursue and instantiate the good of harmony with God, specified by moral goodness and religious truth, are a kind of *way* towards the ultimate, beyond-human fulfillment of our sharing in God's very life and love in heaven. This *way* is not of our own doing or making, but a gift of God's, and we depend on God all along this way, creating, directing and helping us (and redeeming us too). It is *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, which is the title of Grisez's four-volume moral theology.¹⁰⁶ This way is specified by

the good works that God provides to be the way of life of those who, in being justified by his grace through faith, have been recreated in the Lord Jesus.¹⁰⁷

What place do the basic human goods have on this way? Grisez writes briefly about personal vocation in its penultimate paragraph in a way that suggests part of the answer. "Genuine human needs ... are marked out by intelligible human goods".¹⁰⁸ Our good works, prepared by God as the way for us to follow Jesus and cooperate in our salvation

¹⁰⁶ Grisez does not make this explicit connection in the chapter under discussion, but it seems reasonable to see it suggested in the passage we are analysing at this point, and indeed in the final two pages of the chapter in full.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 134, followed by a footnote giving numerous New Testament references about the way of the Lord Jesus. These references do not include Eph 2.10 ("For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them"), which Grisez often quotes elsewhere, and which his words here echo.

¹⁰⁸ "Ultimate Meaning of Life," 134.

and the salvation of the world by working with and in Jesus, are done to meet the genuine needs of others (and ourselves).

Bearing in mind the stipulations of the new covenant and prayerfully discerning, not once but repeatedly throughout life, how to use gifts and resources to meet genuine needs, each Christian can find the particular life of good deeds to which God calls him or her.¹⁰⁹

One's grasp of and understanding of the basic human goods, and indeed all human goods insofar as they are intelligible,¹¹⁰ is an important part of one's grasp of one's personal vocation, which marks out the way of the Lord Jesus in one's own unique life. Personal vocation can be seen as a specification of the good of religion, which includes the pursuit and instantiation of all the human goods, insofar as they are willed by God and part of his providential and wise plan for us.¹¹¹ Personal vocation can be seen also as a specification of what hoping for the kingdom means for each individual Christian precisely as individual and unique (even though still part of an ecclesial body with a shared faith and morality).

6.2.3d The richness of the good of religion

The kingdom is the ultimate good of life, though a good that includes a range of human goods making up integral human fulfillment, as well as a divine good that is our sharing in God's very nature and joy. We can hope directly for the kingdom insofar as it is a fulfillment of our human potential; and we can hope indirectly for the kingdom for its

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Grisez's use of the term "intelligible human goods" (n. 108 above) suggests that instrumental goods are included as well as basic goods.

¹¹¹ See ss. 3.5.2-3, 5.1.3d, 5.3.5 and 6.1.6b above.

divine fulfillment insofar as this divine fulfillment is mediated by our fulfillment in human friendship with God (the good of religion). Grisez finishes the chapter by outlining three ways that we can hope for the kingdom, intending it as our ultimate good.

First, we should intend “to bear credible witness to the faith” by our good deeds, thus occasioning others’ “accepting the grace of faith and entering the kingdom”.¹¹² So, our pursuit of the good of religion (specified by hoping for the kingdom), is not a selfish concern for our own individual harmony with God, but a concern for the good of harmony with God for all others too. A proper pursuit of the good of religion, therefore, is expansive and loving, not selfish: it intends a communal kingdom not a private bliss.

Second, for Christians, intending the kingdom includes intending their own participation in their salvation:

[F]or though justified by grace through faith, [Christians] cannot become the glorified members of the risen Jesus into which God plans to transform them unless they accept and do the good works he gives them so as to prepare them as stuff to be transformed.¹¹³

So, intending the good of religion (specified by hoping for the kingdom) includes our intending our acts of love to be cooperative acts in union with the acts of Jesus, thus effecting our own salvation through, with, and in Jesus. This means that all our good works, not just those that are obviously religious, are religious in their ultimate

¹¹² Ibid, with reference to Mt 5.13-16, Rom 10.8-15, and 1 Pet 2.12.

¹¹³ “Ultimate Meaning of Life,” with reference to Rom 2.6-7; 1 Cor 3.8; and 2 Tim 4.8, as well as the *Decree on Justification* of the Council of Trent.

significance. Our pursuit and instantiation of all the human goods can be and should be shaped and motivated by the good of religion.

Third, there is a sacramental aspect to our pursuit of the good of religion (specified by hoping for the kingdom). All our good deeds are seen to be a part of Jesus' preparation of

a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to the Father, that Jesus' disciples join with him in offering each time they gather as his Church to do the Lord's Supper as he commanded.¹¹⁴

All Christian life is Eucharistic, in other words, a sacrifice through Jesus and with Jesus and in Jesus, offered to the Father. Again, the good of religion is to the fore, particularly in the language of sacrifice, which is natural and specific to the good of religion.¹¹⁵ All of Christian life is shaped by a perspective that sees life as essentially religious, though in a way that includes all the human goods without reducing them to one good, but allowing them to be themselves, so to speak. In this way, we can offer up all aspects of our human lives to the Father in union with Jesus' offering of himself and his human life to the Father. This includes avoiding sin, of course, especially mortal sin, and it includes remembering that all is God's gift and grace, but it also allows our own choices, commitments and actions to have ultimate significance, religious significance as well as moral significance.

¹¹⁴ "Ultimate Meaning of Life," 134.

¹¹⁵ See above s. 3.5.3.

6.3 “The True Ultimate End of Human Beings: The Kingdom, Not God Alone”

[2008]¹¹⁶

Grisez’s most recent publication contains a very important development in his moral theory, a development in his understanding of religion linked his new understanding of man’s ultimate end. Much of the first part of this article concerns exegesis of Aquinas in response to some criticisms of an earlier paper by Grisez in 2001 (which was examined above at 6.1).¹¹⁷ Arising out of this, Grisez seems to acknowledge more clearly than hitherto that one can have *a set* of goods as one’s ultimate end, and that this set can include God and his goodness in some way.¹¹⁸ Grisez continues to argue (against Aquinas) that people can have more than one ultimate end in view when they make a choice, which is demonstrated in particular by any choice to commit a venial sin.¹¹⁹ However, Grisez agrees with Aquinas “that there is something that all human beings *should* take as their sole ultimate end”.¹²⁰ Whereas the sole ultimate end according to Aquinas is God alone, Grisez argues that the kingdom of God should be our sole ultimate end. The final part of his article outlines what Grisez himself thinks about man’s “sole

¹¹⁶ G. Grisez, “The True Ultimate End of Human Beings: The Kingdom, Not God Alone,” *Theological Studies* Vol. 69, no. 1 (March 2008): 38-61.

¹¹⁷ We do not look at this aspect of Grisez’s paper here, but simply note a point that is relevant to our direct concern. Also, we do not look in any detail at Grisez’s five arguments against Aquinas’s position on the beatific vision as man’s true ultimate end, which develop aspects of Grisez’s arguments in his 2001 paper. We take note of how certain insights from these arguments are taken up in his new position on man’s ultimate end.

¹¹⁸ See *ibid.*, 44.

¹¹⁹ See *ibid.*, 44-46.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 53., emphasis added.

ultimate end”, first of all by natural reason only, and then in the light of divine revelation.¹²¹

6.3.1 *The sole ultimate end as naturally known: preliminary aspects*

Grisez understands man’s true ultimate end to be openended and developing, not static and finished.¹²² This ultimate end includes the good of all persons, not just one’s own individual good, because we humans are social by nature, we need others, and we need to cooperate with others as persons (and not use them as things) if we are to pursue our fulfillment. One’s own integral fulfillment is not an exclusively individual good, but a good that necessarily includes the good of others as a constitutive aspect of one’s own good (even whilst remaining distinctly good for other persons in their own right). In other words, one’s own integral fulfillment is necessarily part of the common good of all persons.¹²³ The primary practical principles of the natural law direct us “indiscriminately”

¹²¹ See *ibid.*, 53-57 and 57-61 respectively.

¹²² See *ibid.*, 53. Here Grisez rejects Aquinas’s position that one’s ultimate end must be so totally satisfying that one cannot desire anything more, or be further fulfilled, once one has the beatific vision, once one has attained God, so to speak. Grisez argues, for example, that those who even now enjoy the beatific vision (i.e. Mary and the saints) can and do desire more in that they pray for us (see 46-47); he also argues that the blessed souls in heaven can be fulfilled further when their bodies are resurrected, and can desire this even whilst they enjoy the beatific vision. Thus, the beatific vision, though it is an “end”, does not totally satisfy and fulfil persons as human (see 49-53).

¹²³ See *ibid.*, 54. It is interesting that Grisez here makes reference to our being social “by nature”, thus showing that his moral theory takes account of what is naturally given. Grisez mentions the example of marriage, which requires one to be interested in the good of another and not just in one’s own good; marriage requires husband and wife to be interested in a common good that includes each of their own individual goods as constitutive aspects of the common good of the marriage. Friendship is similar (see s. 7.2.1 below). It should be noted that Grisez uses the term “common good” in this article in a way that is distinct from its usual use in Catholic Social Doctrine, where it tends to refer to a set of political conditions necessary for people to pursue and participate in their human fulfillment. This political common good is a very important *instrumental* good. In this article, Grisez uses the term to refer to a complex *intrinsic* good that can be shared by all persons as their ultimate end: integral communal fulfillment. For Grisez’s earlier thoughts on the term “common good” and its various meanings, see *Living a Christian Life*, 339-347. There, he defines the common good of the kingdom of God as the fulfillment of all things in Jesus (343), which is a specification in light of faith of what he now calls “integral communal fulfillment”.

toward the good of all. In addition, these principles direct us also towards the full range of goods.¹²⁴

6.3.2 *God*

Once again, Grisez acknowledges that we can know a lot about God by reason: that he is the “Creator and provident Lord” who offers us “divine guidance” through “the principles of practical reasoning” (i.e. the natural law) and through our “unique gifts and opportunities” (i.e. one’s personal vocation). Clearly, the natural law theory that Grisez presents does not exclude God or restrict our knowledge of God to faith in revelation.

6.3.3 *Religion*

When we intend the good of religion, even without divine revelation, “we can intend divine goodness in at least two ways.”¹²⁵ These two ways are: firstly, “to give God his due” by praising and thanking him; and secondly, to “cooperat[e] with God” in following natural law and one’s personal vocation.¹²⁶ Here, Grisez presents the good of religion in a way that clarifies certain aspects of it. It does not consist only of being morally good towards oneself and other people, but includes one’s praising God and acknowledging his Lordship. The good of religion includes both worship and a good moral life, both of which are good for God, so to speak, contributing towards “divine goodness” insofar as we can intend his goodness.

¹²⁴ See “The True Ultimate End”, 54. The idea that we should pursue the full range of goods, and not settle for any one of them as ultimate, is a central theme of this article, as it is in all Grisez’s work.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

Grisez does not mean by this that we can intend the ultimate end of the beatific vision – he argues strongly against this here as in his previous works. He means that we can intend God’s will for the sake of his own divine fulfillment as our friend, with whom we are in harmony, as part of the common good of our friendship that all our actions can intend as our true ultimate end.¹²⁷ Grisez seems to be developing his thought on the ultimate end of man by his use of this concept of “common good”. He says: “... in cooperating with God we will intend a common good that includes whatever divine good God intends in providing guidance.”¹²⁸ Our pursuit of religion involves us willing as God wills; what God wills is the ultimate common good of the universe; by willing this common good, we cooperate with God in friendship.

6.3.4 *A common good for a wide community of persons*

This common good, which we can and should intend as our ultimate end, can include more than human persons. This is a new development of Grisez’s moral theory. Up until now, he had always presented “integral *human* fulfillment” as the moral ideal we wish for in our morally good choosing. “Integral human fulfillment” was understood to be constituted by a community of human persons sharing richly and harmoniously in all the

¹²⁷ Grisez is developing an insight that he, along with Boyle and Finnis, presented in 1987 in “Practical Principles,” where he explained how one’s human life could be a kind of cooperation with God in which one respects God as a person in his own right and wills God’s good along with one’s own good: see “Practical Principles,” 143-146, which was examined above in s. 4.5. What Grisez adds in the present work is a more developed sense of our pursuing a *common* good that includes God’s good as our sole ultimate end. Of course, Grisez is not saying that we can literally give God something he lacks; rather, he is speaking of our relationship with God using *the analogy* of friendship, accepting the analogy’s necessity and value alongside its inherent limitations: see “Practical Principles,” 144. See also s. 7.2.1 below for Finnis’s analysis of friendship, which (implicitly) supports Grisez’s position.

¹²⁸ “The True Ultimate End”, 55.

human goods.¹²⁹ Now, Grisez states that we can and should intend the good of any and all “nonhuman, created persons” (who could include extraterrestrial persons, should they exist, and angels, insofar as we can cooperate with them and act for their good).¹³⁰

Grisez’s conclusion is that

[W]e reasonably take as our ultimate end an inclusive community of human persons along with other intelligent creatures and God – insofar as we know [them] and can cooperate with them and/or act for their good.¹³¹

Thus, Grisez seems to be moving away from “integral human fulfillment” as a central concept in his moral theory, which referred to a community of humans, to the concept of a wider, more inclusive community. It could be argued also that Grisez is moving away from a term that unwittingly might suggest individual fulfillment to a term and concept that emphasises more clearly the communal nature of true fulfillment.

6.3.5 Integral Communal Fulfillment

This new concept and term is “integral communal fulfillment”. It is new, and differs from “integral human fulfillment”, not just because it includes a wider range of types of person in the community, but also because it can be intended by us in choices. As it was seen purely as an ideal, “integral human fulfillment” could not be intended, but only wished for, in our choices, which, in order to be morally good, had to be compatible with it.

¹²⁹ See “Practical Principles,” 129-130.

¹³⁰ “The True Ultimate End”, 55. Grisez is not clear yet on how “to explain and defend” his view on this, so it would seem this development of his theory is still in its early stages, and needs further development. A key thought of his seems to be that we humans can share something in common with all *persons*, insofar as we are persons, and that this entails that we should respect all persons as persons.

¹³¹ *Ibid.* This is what the “communal” in “integral communal fulfillment” refers to.

Now, Grisez recognises that we can intend a sole ultimate end that is not an ideal to the extent that “integral human fulfillment” was.¹³² Whereas before now Grisez thought that we could intend only the instantiation of the basic human goods, and not integral human fulfillment, now he holds that we can intend an integral common good (though it is one that is not instantiated in an exclusively human community).

Although in one respect it is wider in scope than “integral human fulfillment”, in another respect integral communal fulfillment is narrower in scope. Integral communal fulfillment includes only those persons that we can realistically hope to benefit by our actions and “excludes created persons whom we can neither cooperate with nor affect by our actions”.¹³³ Thus, it is still acknowledged in Grisez’s moral theory that we cannot hope to affect all persons by our intended acts.

6.3.6a Integral communal fulfillment versus religion as our ultimate end

Another important thing about integral communal fulfillment is that in Grisez’s revised moral theory it replaces religion as our true ultimate end. Grisez seems to be reversing what he had said in his 2001 article, where he said that harmony with God (religion) should be our true ultimate end.¹³⁴ In 2008 he says:

¹³² It seems true, however, that integral communal fulfillment is still a moral ideal, insofar as it is not something that any one of us can achieve in our choices or commitments, but only something that we can hope for, and contribute towards in our actions. In principle, however, “integral communal fulfillment” is achievable, unlike “integral human fulfillment”. The former is more realistic than the latter.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 57, n. 58, a very important footnote as it summarises the new development in Grisez’s moral theory. However, neither it nor the main text explain fully how he came to change his thinking or what the full implications of the development are.

¹³⁴ See “Natural Law”, 17, which Grisez refers to in “The True Ultimate End”, 57, n. 58. Also see ss. 6.1.5 and 6.1.6a and 6.1.6b above.

I now propose that human persons and groups can and should take integral communal fulfillment ... as their concrete ultimate end.¹³⁵

Integral communal fulfillment includes the good of religion but it includes all the other basic human goods too. Here is how Grisez specifies the good involved in integral communal fulfillment:

[This fulfilment includes] divine good together with the well-being and flourishing of created persons in respect to all their fundamental goods.¹³⁶

The term “fundamental goods” does not here fully replace the term “human goods”, but it is a wider term: it includes the goods of non-human persons. At other points in the article, Grisez speaks of the fundamental goods of *humans* as human goods.¹³⁷ Why does Grisez continue to speak of the goods we can intend as human goods, if they include the goods of nonhumans? He does not address this question directly but it seems that insofar as we can intend these goods (of God and other nonhuman created persons) as part of our *common* good, they can be spoken of as *human* goods (when seen from our human perspective). They are goods that can interest us as humans, they are benefits for which we can hope as humans, they can be aspects of our happiness as humans – whilst still remaining goods for God and nonhuman persons in their own right and as members of the ultimate community sharing in the ultimate common good. Grisez now clearly states that we can intend as a concrete end (i.e. not as an ideal rectifying the will, as in “integral human fulfillment”) to affect positively, and avoid affecting negatively, integral

¹³⁵ “The True Ultimate End”, 57, n. 58. (The ellipsis takes the place of the term in capitals.)

¹³⁶ Ibid., 57. The term “divine good” here refers to God’s fulfillment or flourishing as our Creator and friend. Grisez is speaking using analogy: see n. 127 above.

¹³⁷ See the first complete sentence on page 59, for example, where Grisez speaks of “fundamental human goods”.

communal fulfillment. For each one of us, this, rather than the good of religion, is to be the focus of our life as a whole. It ought to be the ultimate end intended in every choice we make.

6.3.6b Why the change in Grisez's theory?

Why has Grisez moved away from seeing religion as our ultimate end? He does not fully address this question but we can work out an answer based on what little he does say. It is clear that Grisez wishes to avoid any impression that our true ultimate end is found in any one good. Much of this article is spent arguing against the reductive view of Aquinas (and some of his modern interpreters) that our true ultimate end is to be found in the fulfillment of our intellects, by our seeing God in the beatific vision. Grisez insists that the *full* range of basic human goods is constitutive of our human fulfillment, and this full range includes both our bodily reality and social harmony (which will be fulfilled in heaven in the resurrection of our bodies and the communion of saints, respectively). It could be that Grisez had second thoughts about presenting religion as the true ultimate end because he thought that such a view lends itself too easily to the mistaken idea that our true ultimate end is to be found exclusively or primarily in only one basic human good. It seems that Grisez is thinking here of the narrow, specific meaning of "religion" as a particular basic human good, distinct and separate from the other basic human goods. Understood narrowly, the good of religion cannot be an adequate true ultimate end of all our choices and of our lives as wholes.

Perhaps Grisez is forgetting here about the *wider* meaning of “religion”, namely, as an architectonic or overarching good that can form the integrating focus of one’s whole life as cooperation with God in the pursuit of all the goods for all persons.¹³⁸ This wider meaning of “religion” was developed by Grisez in his work beginning with “Practical Principles” (1987), but it seems that now (in 2008) he wishes to move away from it, at least to some extent, and argue that something else is our true concrete ultimate end: integral communal fulfillment.

6.3.6c How different is Grisez’s theory now?

However, arguably Grisez’s new understanding of our ultimate end (integral communal fulfillment) is not completely different from the wider concept of religion (as an architectonic good, inclusive and supportive of all the other goods). That the two concepts are similar is supported both by the argument offered by Grisez in this article leading up to his introduction of the concept and by important remarks made by him at the very end of it.

Firstly, we look at the argument offered by Grisez that leads to his introduction of the concept of integral communal fulfillment as a concrete end that we can intend in choices. He focuses in particular on the fact that people can make choices to contribute to the common good (of a family, or of a larger group, and even of the whole human race). We can do so by making choices to make a limited but real contribution to a particular aspect

¹³⁸ There would be no difficulty in including a concern for the good of non-human persons in one’s cooperation with God, seeing as God is the Creator of these persons and he loves them.

of that particular common good.¹³⁹ We are able to make each of our choices intending either the specific limited end of that particular choice “or something ulterior to it as [our] ultimate end”.¹⁴⁰ The *most inclusive and extensive* ulterior motive we can have, which Grisez presents therefore as our true ultimate end, is integral communal fulfillment. This leads to an overall moral principle that, it would seem, is to replace the first principle of morality as previously found in Grisez’s writings since *Christian Moral Principles*.¹⁴¹ This new first principle of morality could be formulated as follows:

Persons and groups making choices can and should always play their part in the vast community of persons by making their contribution to integral communal well-being and flourishing, and they always can and should avoid intentionally impeding or detracting from integral communal fulfillment.¹⁴²

In other words, all morally good choices are morally good insofar as they make a contribution to integral communal fulfillment and avoid intentionally impeding or detracting from it.

Grisez has arrived at the concept of integral communal fulfillment by noticing that people can intend both in a narrow way and, simultaneously, and either implicitly or explicitly, in a wider way. The narrower intention is for the instantiation of the specific basic human

¹³⁹ See *ibid.*, 56-57. Again, it is important to note that the “common good” referred to here is not the instrumental good of a set of political conditions, which is what the phrase usually refers to in Catholic Social Doctrine. Here, the phrase “common good” is used in a wider sense to refer to intrinsic fulfillment or fulfillments shared by persons in community (of various sorts).

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁴¹ Grisez does not discuss the first principle of morality in this article, but it seems fair to say that it is going to have to be formulated differently now that integral communal fulfillment has replaced integral human fulfillment in Grisez’s moral theory.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 57, (first three words of the original are omitted: “In other words...”). It is this sentence to which the important footnote explaining the concept of integral communal fulfillment, footnote 58, is attached. Grisez does not present this sentence explicitly as a new formulation of “the first principle of morality”.

good that forms the object of that particular choice; the wider intention is the intention of an ulterior motive. At its most inclusive and extensive, our ulterior motive in all our choices can be integral communal fulfillment, which can thus be our ultimate end. This seems to be very similar to what Grisez said in previous writings about how we can intend to pursue the instantiation of a specific basic (non-religious) human good in any choice whilst simultaneously intending the good of religion as an architectonic good in that choice, inclusive of and motivating the specific (non-religious) good. An architectonic motive/good is much the same things as an ulterior motive/good. Further, religion has an “ultimate” character in that it is constituted by harmony with God, who is ultimate. It could be argued therefore that the wider meaning of “religion” is not totally dissimilar to integral communal fulfillment.

6.3.6d Integral communal fulfillment is not found apart from God

Grisez’s remarks in the final paragraph of the article make the similarity between the good of religion (in its wider sense) and integral communal fulfillment even clearer. We look at its context first. The last section of the article outlines what divine revelation tells us about integral communal fulfillment, namely that it is the kingdom of God.¹⁴³ Our rich fulfillment in the full range of human goods, in community with all other persons and with God, will be found in the kingdom.¹⁴⁴ Therefore we can and should make the kingdom the ultimate end of all our choices, our choices for the various human goods.

¹⁴³ See *ibid.*, 57-61.

¹⁴⁴ Grisez once again refers to *Gaudium et Spes*, especially 38 and 39, for his eschatological understanding of how heaven will be both continuous and discontinuous with this world: it will include “all the good fruits of our nature and enterprise” but “freed of stain, burnished and transfigured”: see “The True Ultimate End”, 58, nn. 60-64.

The kingdom can be this ultimate end for every human life “for it is not alien to integral communal fulfillment but is an unimaginably wonderful specification of it.”¹⁴⁵ People who are ignorant of divine revelation, but who intend integral communal fulfillment in their choices and commitments, can be understood to be preparing material for the kingdom unawares.¹⁴⁶

The kingdom includes the beatific vision as a special gift from God that will fulfil human persons (though not precisely their human nature).¹⁴⁷ Still, the kingdom is not to be identified with the beatific vision, as the kingdom includes rich and increasing fulfillment in the whole range of human goods, such as our bodily life and social life.¹⁴⁸ Grisez once again suggests the good of religion is a kind of link, or bridge (my term, not his), between our human fulfillment and the pure gift of divine fulfillment. By our faith and hope we are *humanly* fulfilled in the good of religion, but we are able also “to accept that gift [of a

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 59. In this article, Grisez writes only a few lines on the details of the theological specification of integral communal fulfillment as “the kingdom”. Clearly, it is Christocentric (see *ibid.*, 58, 60), but this aspect is not emphasised here.

¹⁴⁶ See *ibid.* Note, however, that Grisez denies that people who have no explicit awareness of God can have God as their implicit ultimate end. He holds that one’s ultimate end can be only what one understands, and such people do not have any understanding of God as their end. Still, they can have integral communal fulfillment as their ultimate end, insofar as they are morally good. Further, integral communal fulfillment, without their knowing it, is actually the kingdom of God. So a commitment to integral communal fulfillment, which consists in following one’s conscience to the best of one’s ability, can be seen as “an implicit act of faith”: see *ibid.*, 49. However, it is not clear how one can have an implicit awareness of integral communal fulfillment without some implicit awareness of God as an aspect of one’s ultimate end, considering that God *is included* in the concept of integral communal fulfillment. It would seem that Grisez will have to allow that one can have an implicit understanding of God to some extent in one’s understanding of one’s ultimate end, notwithstanding his apparent rejection of the concept of implicit understanding of God in this article and his rejection of the concept of implicit grasp of practical principles in “Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment,” 10, n. 17.

¹⁴⁷ See “The True Ultimate End”, 59.

¹⁴⁸ See *ibid.*, 59-60.

share in *divine* intimacy] and anticipate enjoying it”.¹⁴⁹ It is because we can be humanly interested in religion that we can be humanly interested in the beatific vision. It is clear that religion plays a crucial role here, in that, when fully specified by revelation and Christian faith and hope, the good of religion involves our friendship with Jesus (our love of him) and our membership in the new covenant community of the Church (our love of Jesus’ body), and thus it forms the focus of our human interest in the kingdom and all this kingdom offers, including the beatific vision. It is clear that religion is a very important aspect of integral communal fulfillment as specified in the kingdom. Grisez’s presents the kingdom as a complex reality, offering both integral human fulfillment and divine fulfillment for us human persons, fulfillment that increases continually.¹⁵⁰

Such is the context for Grisez’s final paragraph. Grisez makes it clear that our beatitude is not to be found in God alone, and so God is not to be our ultimate end. Our beatitude is to be found in the kingdom, which is not to be identified with God alone. Still, in the final paragraph, Grisez makes it clear that the kingdom is not a reality apart from God:

If the true ultimate end of human beings is the kingdom rather than God alone, it does not follow that human beatitude is to be found in something apart from God. Even now, it is in God that “we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28).¹⁵¹

Grisez is clear that the goods that constitute our true fulfillment in heaven are “and always will remain distinct from their Creator”, but he insists that this is not to say that they are somehow rivals to God or that their goodness in any way takes from God’s

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 60, emphasis added. Thus, we are humanly fulfilled not only by faith and hope, but by love too (which anticipates in this earthly life our sharing fully and intimately in God’s divine life in heaven).

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 60-61.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 61.

goodness or his infinite power. Grisez ends with the following assertion about the status of created goods in heaven (in other words, the basic human goods as fulfilled in Christ):

[T]hose goods will not be things apart from God, and it seems to me reasonable to suppose that blessed creatures' joy in created goods will somehow be *within*, *although distinct from*, their joyful intimacy with the divine Persons.¹⁵²

Our sharing in God's divine life, in the beatific vision, in some way *includes* our human fulfillment (with regard to the full range of basic human goods, which, we note, includes the good of religion). Grisez finishes with an understanding of the beatific vision that is *inclusive* of all goodness and all fulfillments, not in a way that negates or substitutes for the various human goods, but in a way that respects their distinct goodness and includes it within God's own goodness.¹⁵³

Grisez's final understanding of our beatitude is one in which God is central, even though he refuses to see God *alone* as our ultimate end. This might be one reason why he has moved away from presenting religion as the ultimate end of human life, as an architectonic good that can and should form the integrating focus of one's whole life commitment. To see religion as that important, as *the* ultimate end, might suggest that God alone is the end of human life, and that the other human goods and human persons are not essential, or that they can be reduced to God. And this is something that Grisez wants to avoid. Therefore, he now presents integral communal fulfillment as the ultimate

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, emphasis added (and note omitted). This is the very final sentence of the article; its importance is thereby emphasised.

¹⁵³ It could be argued, therefore, that Grisez has moved closer in this article to an aspect of Finnis' interpretation of Aquinas' position on the ultimate end as inclusive of all goods within the goodness of God. See Finnis, *Aquinas*, 313-319 and s. 7.3.6 below. Still, Grisez continues to disagree with Aquinas' claims that man's ultimate end is the beatific vision alone, that it is naturally desired, that it is totally satisfying, and that it is necessarily willed in every choice as its ultimate end.

end of human life, an end that can be specified by faith as the kingdom of God. Integral communal fulfillment is better able to perform the role of ultimate end because it allows clearly for the whole range of goods to be aspects of our fulfillment as persons: the various basic human goods, which fulfil us as human, and the good of our sharing in God's own life by the special gift of the Holy Spirit poured into our hearts (see Rom 5:5), which fulfils us insofar as God enables us to share his divine nature. However, the good of religion plays a very important role even still in Grisez's moral theory. It forms a kind of bridge between our human fulfillment in friendship with Jesus in the new covenant, and our subsequent acceptance and sharing in the gift of new divine life as God's children, the latter of which is to be fulfilled in heaven in the beatific vision.

Grisez acknowledges that all goods are from God and exist only within God's will. Nothing good is good apart from God. Therefore it seems right to see the good of harmony with God, which is a human good that is consummated in the divine good of our intimacy with God in the beatific vision,¹⁵⁴ as very similar to integral communal fulfillment, which includes God at its centre and as its ground, and which can be intended by us as our ultimate end in all our choices.

6.3.6e Which is a better understanding of our ultimate end?

Religion has the advantage (over integral communal fulfillment) of being a specific basic human good, instantiations of which a person or persons can intend in choices or commitments, or set of choices or commitments. Also, as it is God who directs us to our

¹⁵⁴ This is how Grisez puts it in "The Doctrine of God and the Ultimate Meaning of Life," 133, as examined above in s. 6.2.3b.

integral fulfillment, seeking harmony with him is equivalent to seeking our integral fulfillment, so it seems that religion is a good candidate for how we should understand and name the ultimate end for us to focus our whole life on, as the integrating motive for our whole life. The good of religion clearly keeps God as the ultimate focus.

However, integral communal fulfillment also has points in its favour as our ultimate end. It is an ultimate end that can include the good of religion as a specific, narrowly pursued good, and as an architectonic good. (Grisez has not completely forgotten or rejected the wider meaning of religion in this article, or the value of understanding one's whole life as a kind of cooperation with God.)¹⁵⁵ But it also goes beyond the good of religion, and the term "religion", to more explicitly include the full range of human goods as constitutive of our ultimate fulfillment. However, perhaps integral communal fulfilment, as a term, fails to acknowledge clearly enough the ultimate place of God, who is the Creator, the Redeemer, the Sanctifier, the Lord, the King of the kingdom that is the specification of integral communal fulfilment.

6.4 Conclusion to the chapter

The three articles analysed in this chapter show Grisez coming to emphasise more and more clearly the kingdom of God as the ultimate end of Christian life, an end which we are called to intend in all our choices and commitments. Hope for the kingdom should form the integrating focus of one's life as a follower of the way of the Lord Jesus. Grisez strongly criticises Aquinas' view which Grisez thinks makes the beatific vision,

¹⁵⁵ See s. 6.3.3 above.

understood narrowly as a human act fulfilling one's intellect (and thus a single substantive good) the sole ultimate end of human life. This position and other similarly inadequate theological positions overlook or deny the importance of non-religious human goods, especially bodily goods and community, and fail to recognise the significance of human free choices and the intrinsic connection between life in this world and life in the kingdom of heaven. Grisez's position is that all the basic human goods, including bodily goods and community, have their rightful place in this life and in the kingdom. A correct understanding of the good of religion will acknowledge the importance of all the human goods and the eternal significance of all our choices. Thus religion could be the focus of one's life as a whole, acting as an overarching or architectonic good that helps one to organise all one's life with a single end in mind: fulfillment in all the goods for all persons, precisely as willed by God.

However, recently Grisez has moved from seeing religion as one's ultimate end, the focus of one's life, to seeing integral communal fulfillment as this sole ultimate end. Perhaps more clearly than the term "religion", "integral communal fulfillment" speaks of the whole range of fundamental goods as intrinsic and integral aspects of our ultimate end. It also speaks clearly of the communal nature of the ultimate end, which includes the good of all persons. This good includes God's own good, understood by analogy with friendship, which is fulfilled by his creation's flourishing in goodness. Thus, integral communal fulfillment includes the good of religion, and is an essentially religious concept. The kingdom of God is a specification of integral communal fulfillment in the light of divine revelation and faith.

The question remains whether this recent development of Grisez's theory reverses completely the trajectory of his theory's development in previous works, as outlined and analysed in the present work. The present author tends to think it does not, but more discussion of this will have to wait until our final chapter. Before then, we look at the work of two of Grisez's collaborators (chapter seven) and some criticisms of his work (chapter eight).

CHAPTER SEVEN

GRISEZ'S COLLABORATORS

We analyse now some of the works of Grisez's two closest collaborators, John Finnis and Joseph Boyle. These works support, clarify, apply and extend what Grisez has to say about the basic human goods in general, and religion in particular, as well as clarifying Grisez's moral theory as a whole.

7.1 Finnis - *Natural Law and Natural Rights* [1980]¹

7.1.1 *Religion as a broad but distinct category of good*

Following the lead of Grisez, Finnis holds that basic goods are the objects of the primary principles of the natural law, and he includes religion as one such basic good.² He notes that a concern for religion is universal, but it is not the only human concern.³ Various universal human concerns are picked out by the basic values or goods that shape human choice and action: Life; Knowledge; Play; Aesthetic Experience; Sociability (Friendship); Practical Reasonableness; Religion.⁴

¹ J. Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (Oxford, UK; Oxford University Press, 1980).

² On p. vii of the preface of this book, Finnis explicitly acknowledges his debt to Grisez's "vigorous representation and very substantial development of the classical arguments on these [i.e. natural law] matters".

³ See *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, 84-85.

⁴ See *ibid.*, 86-90. Finnis acknowledges that his list is similar to that of Grisez, which Grisez developed initially, and presented with Shaw in their book, *Beyond the New Morality* (1st edition, 1974), which was examined above in s. 2.4. It should be noted that Finnis is not arguing from the universality of human

Religion as a basic value involves

the establishment and maintenance of proper relationships between oneself (and the orders one can create and maintain) and the divine.⁵

Religion involves the pursuit of the answer to the question of whether one's freedom, which is transcendent and truly free and intelligent,

is itself somehow subordinate to something which makes that human freedom, human intelligence, and human mastery possible (not just 'originally' but from moment to moment) and which is free, intelligent, and sovereign in a way (and over a range) no human being can be.⁶

Even if the answer one gives to these questions is an agnostic one, or perhaps even an atheistic one, it is still

peculiarly important to have thought reasonably and (where possible) correctly about these questions of the origins of human freedom and reason.⁷

This is so because if a "transcendent other and its lasting order" exists then it is of the highest value to each human person to bring his life and actions into "some sort of harmony with whatever can be known or surmised about that transcendent other and its lasting order".⁸ Not only has religion thus understood been a universal concern of virtually all cultures in history, but, the very fact of human responsibility, insofar as it

concern for religion that religion is therefore a basic human good. The universality of the concern is a matter of fact, which can be supported by empirical studies, but the prescriptive nature of the primary principles of the natural law are not facts, or deduced from facts, but grasped as essentially *practical* insights into experience: see *ibid.*, 29-36 and 81-86.

⁵ *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, 89.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.* Note that Finnis does not reduce religion to (theoretical) knowledge.

cannot be reduced to merely human choice, and thus is objective and obligatory, points beyond itself to the transcendent objective “something” that grounds that very responsibility in some way.

Finnis mentions the importance of harmony, which is the main term Grisez uses to describe the benefit sought in the good of religion. Finnis seems to allow for even agnostics and atheists to grasp the good of religion, however, which is an issue not dealt with explicitly by Grisez, though it is not contradicted by his understanding of religion.⁹ Finnis’ understanding of the good of religion allows it to be grasped in a very minimal way, as a practical opportunity of sorts, even a conditional opportunity, that an atheist or agnostic could grasp: *if there is a God, then it would be good to live in harmony with him*. Even atheists and agnostics, if they are reasonable at all, can see what “religion” is and why intelligent people find it worthwhile to pursue the good of religion. Their very broad understanding of the good of religion, at least in its initial reality in people’s lives, makes it easy to see why Grisez and Finnis include it in their list of basic human goods. It is

⁹ Finnis’s position is shared by two others in the Grisez school: Joseph Boyle (see s. 7.4.1 below) and Robert P. George: see his *Making Men Moral: Civil Liberties and Public Morality* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 219-228, at 220. Other natural law theorists have come to a different conclusion: that religion can be considered a basic human good only if it is understood in a full theistic sense: see M.C. Murphy, *Natural Law and Practical Rationality* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Press, 2001), 131-133, and A. Gómez-Lobo, *Morality and the Human Goods: An Introduction to Natural Law Ethics* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 24-25. Murphy’s and Gómez-Lobo’s positions on religion depend on their seeing the harmony involved in it as being very similar if not identical to friendship, which is interpersonal. However, the understanding of religion in the Grisez-Finnis-Boyle natural law theory, whilst holding that the good of religion is most richly instantiated and pursued with a theistic understanding of God and an understanding of religion as a friendship with God, holds that religion can be instantiated and pursued, albeit less richly and less effectively, even with a non-theistic understanding of religion. Grisez’s (and Finnis’s and Boyle’s) understanding of religion at its most basic and even impersonal is similar to the understanding of the “Tao” which all men at least implicitly know and follow, as believed in some eastern religions and as presented (as a synonym for the natural law) by C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, (1943; repr., London: Collins/Fount Paperbacks, 1987).

difficult to see anyone denying that consideration of religious or philosophical questions is unimportant, unintelligible, or practically insignificant.

7.1.2 Towards a fuller understanding of religion

In his final chapter Finnis presents a fuller concept of the transcendent “something” that grounds human responsibility and that forms the object of religious concern.¹⁰ Practical questions arise out of the fact that our participation in the basic forms of human flourishing is for us as individuals and members of communities “even at best, very limited”.¹¹ The effects of time and decay lead us to wonder

whether my good (and the well-being of my communities) has any *further* point, i.e. whether it relates to any more comprehensive human participation in good.¹²

In addition, our commitment to the good seems to be brought into question by “conflicts of opportunities” that call for us to sacrifice ourselves and our well-being for the good of others who are our friends, even though we know that these others and their good will also come to an end.¹³ We are inevitably moved to question: what is the ultimate good of being moral? Further, each of us is part of a universe, and the question arises whether “it too has a good, a point, a value” and whether and how it might relate to my good and the good of my communities.¹⁴ If there are no answers to such questions,

¹⁰ In an earlier chapter, Finnis had called his remarks on religion “no more than a place-holders”. See *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, 90.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 372.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ See *Ibid.*

¹⁴ See *ibid.*, 373.

the basic human values will seem, to any thoughtful person, to be weakened, in their attractiveness to reasonableness, by a certain relativity or subjectivity ... the 'subjectivity' of the '*merely* relative to us'.¹⁵

The myth of historical progress towards a future utopia, which is a kind of subjective projection or wishful thinking, does not make up effectively or adequately for the weakness of all human effort and the fragility of human flourishing.¹⁶

Finnis anticipates what Grisez (sometimes in collaboration with Finnis) was to say regarding the genesis of our grasp of the good of religion in our experience of conflict, tension and limitation.¹⁷ The only adequate way of dealing with inevitable and universal human limitations and frustrations, in the context of individual human dignity, the objectivity of morality, our experience and appreciation of friendship and self-sacrifice, and our cosmic-scale sense of wonder, is to seek a more-than-human solution. The only adequate way, in other words, is in the good of religion (along with truth or knowledge).

7.1.3 *The Stoic understanding of religion*

The problem with the Stoic response to the problem of the always limited 'subjectivity' of human effort is that it calls on us to be virtuous, to conform ourselves to "intentions of the superintending universal-intelligence"¹⁸ by conforming to 'nature', without really addressing the question of *why* we should do this. Why should we conform ourselves to a

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, emphasis in original.

¹⁶ See *ibid.*, 373-374. Finnis is in critical dialogue with ideas from Mill, Marx and Kant in this section of his chapter.

¹⁷ See ss. 3.3.3, 4.1.2, 4.1.3, 4.4, 6.1.4, and 6.2.1 above.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 377.

world-order “whose order might well be regarded as not altogether admirable, and whose outcome might equally be regarded as a matter of indifference to us”?¹⁹ In saying this, Finnis implicitly acknowledges the importance of sound philosophy and real revelation to our understanding of the good of religion.

7.1.4 Finding an adequate understanding of religion

To find a sufficient response to the practical questions that the natural law raises, it is necessary to attend to some theoretical questions. These questions concern firstly the source of the orderliness of nature,²⁰ an orderliness that enables us to understand nature and its order. Finnis concludes that

direct speculative questions about the significance, implications, or source of the orderliness of things yield, *by themselves*, no clear or certain answers.²¹

This is mainly because there is a significant lack of order in nature too, that needs to be explained. Finnis then looks at the question of the source of the sheer existence of things. He presents an argument to show that an uncaused cause must exist, with rational necessity rather than logical necessity, in order to account for the existence of contingent things.²²

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 378.

²⁰ By “nature”, Finnis means an order of relationships “external to our understanding, which our understanding can only discover”. Alongside the order of nature, there is also “the order of human artifacts”, “the order of attitudes, habits (‘second nature’), commitments, and principles of action”, and “the order of logic, of investigations, critiques, analyses, and explanations (including the reflexive explanation of this order itself, as well as of the others)”, *ibid.* 380. This division of reality into four orders follows Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle’s ‘Nicomachean Ethics’*, trans. C.J. Litzinger, rev. ed. (Notre Dame, Indiana: Dumb Ox Books, 1993), 1-2, and Grisez, *Beyond the New Theism*, 230-240 and 353-356. See above s. 2.6.

²¹ *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, 382, emphasis in original.

²² Finnis’s argument is a summary of Grisez’s argument in *Beyond the New Theism*: see above s. 2.5.2.

As with Grisez's argument, this one ends with a "thin" concept of God. All that can be said about this uncaused cause is that "it has what it takes to make all other states of affairs exist".²³ Like Grisez, Finnis seems to say that the most sound philosophical way to know God exists is a pure cosmological argument based on the contingent existence of things, rather than any argument from design, or the order of things, or any argument from the objectivity of morality and the reality of goodness.

7.1.5 The Eternal Law is expressed in the four orders

Like Grisez, Finnis speculates that God's causing is "in some respects analogous to the free choices of human persons".²⁴ Finnis then links this speculative insight with "the theory of Eternal Law" developed by Augustine and Aquinas:

... the theory of Eternal Law proposes that the laws, principles, requirements, and norms of the four orders be regarded as holding for their respective orders precisely because they express aspects, intelligible to us, of the creative intention which guides [God's] causing of the categorically variegated "community" of all entities and all states of affairs in all orders.²⁵

What Finnis says here about the four orders as expressions of the Eternal Law suggests that our understanding of God's existence and nature can be based on aspects not only of nature, but also aspects of logic, morality, and technical/creative reasoning. We can learn

²³ *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, 382.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 389.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 389-390. Finnis refers to God as "D" in the original, to emphasise his otherness.

from the “laws, requirements, and norms” of all four orders, not just the natural order, something of the existence and nature of God.²⁶

Finnis is careful to emphasise that the theory of the Eternal Law does not give us detailed information about reality in any of the four orders; nor does it enable us to understand God’s creative plan, which includes elements that appear to us as coincidental or “evil”.²⁷ The theory of Eternal Law, insofar as it is a philosophical theory, is very limited and not fully secure. Still, its concept of God as making choices suggests that God knows, acts, and lives a personal life. It also suggests strongly that God has a plan for our flourishing, and the flourishing of creation in its various aspects and widest scope. And these points leads to the further speculation: would or could this God choose to communicate with his rational creatures? It would be good to have such revelation, taking us beyond the somewhat uncertain conclusions of mere philosophy.

7.1.6 The Natural Law and human understanding

However, the philosophical beginnings of natural law theory did not presuppose any such direct divine revelation:

Plato and Aristotle do not use the existence of God or the gods as an argument to justify their claim that there are objective norms of human flourishing and principles of human reasonableness. But their arguments in justifying that claim, and their reflection upon the nature, point, and source of those (and all such) arguments, lead them to affirm that there is a transcendent source of being (i.e. of entities and states of affairs, and of their existing) and in particular of our capacity

²⁶ This foreshadows Finnis’s and Grisez’s development of the cosmological argument by seeking to combine the notions of God as the transcendent creator with God as the transcendent guide and helper: see ss. 4.2, 6.1.4 and 6.2.1 above.

²⁷ See *ibid.*, 390-391.

and desire to understand being (or nature) and its many forms of good. Thus in realizing one's nature, in flourishing (*eudaimonia*), and (what is the same thing from another aspect) in recognizing the authoritativeness of practical reasonableness, its principles, and its requirements, one is responding to the divine pull and recognizing the mastery of God.²⁸

This seems to link "religion" and "morality" very closely indeed. The "originators of natural law theorizing",²⁹ (Plato and Aristotle), were able, without the help of specific, historical divine revelation, to grasp the truth that the very use of intelligence or understanding by human persons puts them in relationship with the transcendent Source, even sharing in his activity.³⁰ It seems that Finnis is much more positive than Grisez, though not uncritically so, towards the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. Finnis allows for a religious aspect to the philosophical understanding of the natural law developed by these two ancient philosophers; he sees a kind of natural mysticism in their thought.

7.1.7 The limitations yet suggestiveness of philosophical understanding

Still, purely philosophical knowledge of "God's nature and relation to this world and its goods" is deeply uncertain.³¹ It is not clear that a human person could be God's *friend* in any true or substantial sense of friend; nor is it clear how the good of contemplation (i.e. understanding) is related to the practical life of *all-round* human flourishing.³² Finnis does not consider Plato or Aristotle to have come to an adequate understanding of the

²⁸ Ibid., 395-396, (references to Plato's and Aristotle's works are omitted).

²⁹ Ibid., 392.

³⁰ See *ibid.*, 393.

³¹ Ibid., 397.

³² See *ibid.*, 398, with particular critical reference to Aristotle's philosophy. Finnis shares much of Grisez's concerns about weaknesses in Aristotle's approach even though he has more to say of a positive nature too.

good of religion,³³ which would involve grasping the possibility of being friends with God and would also involve seeing the good of religion in its proper relationship to the other goods. Knowing the possibility and opportunity of friendship with God is especially difficult from a merely philosophical perspective, as it tells us so little about God.

The theoretical philosophical argument for God's existence "does not directly assist us in answering those practical questions" – namely, the questions regarding

the possibility of a deeper explanation of obligation; the reasonableness of self-sacrifice in human friendship; the relevance of our limited place in human history and the universe; the point of living according to the principles and requirements of practical reasonableness.³⁴

These four points seem to be a kind of summary of what Finnis might accept as essentially *religious* challenges.³⁵ These challenges indicate the scope and scale of the good of religion, and how it can include and promote the other goods whilst respecting their irreducibility and distinctiveness. These challenges seem also to point towards the need for divine revelation for us to grasp the fullest understanding of the good of religion.

Still, we can grasp some philosophical points with confidence. Even though the limitations of natural reasoning leave the natural law somewhat subjective and questionable, still the natural law *is* objectively structured and reasonable. The natural law is not constituted by the fact that we humans happen to have inclinations that just happen to lead us to act for our well-being; rather, it is constituted by our *intelligent* grasp

³³ Finnis does not express this point in this way, with explicit reference to "the good of religion".

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 405.

³⁵ Finnis does not present them explicitly as such. They can be compared with Grisez's account of the four experiences grounding our religious awareness in s. 3.3.3 above.

of these goods (that our natural inclinations point towards) as goods, by our understanding as rational beings that the objects of our inclinations can be worth pursuing reasonably. In the light of divine revelation, Aquinas described this natural law as *participatio legis aeternae in rationali creatura* (“The participation of the Eternal Law in rational creatures”).³⁶ Already believing in divine revelation, Aquinas was able to see that our ability to reason and choose practically and morally was grounded in the reasonable providence of God, and was in fact a participation in God’s providence.

7.1.8 Hope for divine revelation

Another philosophical point that is certain is that observing the similarity of the Creator’s causing to our freely and intelligently choosing, leads us to wonder if it/he might freely and intelligently communicate with us. This, in its turn, leads us

to hope that the uncaused cause might reveal itself to be lovable, and that the ‘ideal observer’ which practical reasonableness postulates as a test of arbitrariness might prove to have a real and substantial counterpart.³⁷

We would hope for this because such a divine revelation would make possible “a more basic account of obligation”.³⁸ This account would assure us that even though we know our friends are imperfect and our communities impermanent, we could understand our obligation to pursue the common good, and the good of friendship even to the point of self-sacrifice, as grounded in God’s favouring the good of all and in our being God’s

³⁶ Aquinas’ understanding of natural law, and its similarities to, and differences from, that of Plato and Aristotle, is the theme of part 4 of Finnis’ final chapter, at 398-403.

³⁷ Ibid., 406. Perhaps another way of expressing this latter point is that people often hope for an objective, transcendent Justice, knowing that our own human justice is so imperfect, yet also knowing that human justice always seeks true justice.

³⁸ Ibid.

friends, and so sharing his good as our common good (as an integral part of our friendship).³⁹

7.1.9 Religion involves participating in God's goodness and truth

We cannot do something for God's good in the sense that he needs anything or lacks anything. Still, our understanding good and choosing good can be a participation in God's goodness. In light of divine revelation, bearing in mind also the insights gained from philosophy, we can come to understand more deeply the basic goods. We can come to see how they can be part of a common good that is shared with God.⁴⁰ According to Finnis, when we come (if we come) to know that God is real and values all the goods in his own supremely correct and sound way, then our own pursuit and instantiation of them can be rendered even more correct and sound insofar as we are in harmony with God (i.e. we participate in the good of religion).

7.1.10 Knowledge, religion, practical reasonableness and play

Finnis points out the interrelationship between three basic goods: practical reasonableness, play, and religion.⁴¹ In light of this interrelationship, moral obligation is no longer to be seen as

³⁹ See *ibid.*, 406-407. Finnis is using the term "common good" here in a different way than it is used in Catholic Social Doctrine, where it tends to be used to refer to a set of political conditions.

⁴⁰ This notion of common good is an important part of his book as a whole; Finnis emphasises it more in his expression of natural law theory than Grisez does in his. However, it can be said that most recently Grisez has begun to think about God and the common good in a manner similar to Finnis: see s. 6.3 above.

⁴¹ See *ibid.*, 409-410. Finnis builds his analysis on the foundation of the work of Plato in his last work, the *Laws*.

the framework or finally authoritative category of 'moral' thought. The requirements of practical reasonableness have a 'point' beyond themselves. That point is the *game* of co-operating with God. Being *play*, this co-operation has no point beyond itself, unless we wish to say that God is such a further 'point'.⁴²

Morality is to be most adequately understood in terms of co-operation with God for its own sake: in other words, morality is to be understood in terms of the basic good of religion. However, this basic good of religion is to be understood in terms of another basic good, the good of play. And play, in its turn, throws light on how we are to fully understand practical reasonableness (i.e. morality) itself:

Practical reasonableness, therefore, need not be regarded as ultimately a form of self-perfection. That is not its final significance. Nor, on the other hand, are its requirements sheer categorical imperatives; they gain practical force from the most basic explanation that can be provided for them – that they are what is needed to participate in the game of God.⁴³

7.1.11 Religion is not the only or best good

Nevertheless, Finnis is careful to end his book with a warning: understanding morality in terms of the basic good of religion (seen in terms of play) is not to be taken as making religion the best or highest good.⁴⁴ One may never choose against any of the basic goods for the sake of religion; nor may one ever ignore any of the other requirements of practical reasonableness for the sake of religion. Like Grisez, Finnis wants to safeguard morality from being swallowed up, so to speak, by religion, especially religion

⁴² *Ibid.*, 409. Finnis does not deal here with the issue of how and whether the beatific vision (of God himself) is distinct from human fulfillment. Some of what he writes in these final pages of *Natural Law and Natural Rights* suggest he is commingling them to some extent.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 409-410.

⁴⁴ A less than careful reader might miss this point and think that Finnis presents religion as the highest good. See, for example, the misreading of O. Anderson, "Is Contemporary Natural Law Theory a Beneficial Development?" *New Blackfriars* 86, no. 1005 (Sept. 2005): 478-492, at 483.

understood narrowly. When it is understood more widely, in a way that includes the other goods and respects their own distinctiveness and value in their own right, then religion can have its own rightful place in moral theory and practice, as one of the basic goods, albeit one that has its own distinctive and inclusive character. The good of religion has a central role to play in any adequate moral theory, whether it be a mainly philosophical theory (such as the one presented by Finnis here) or a theological one (hinted at in his final chapter, and developed in later works by Grisez). Such moral theory will be permeated by the good of religion, as well as shaped by it, and supported by it insofar as moral obligation and cosmic intelligibility and significance are guaranteed only by the existence and love of God.

7.2 Finnis – *Fundamentals of Ethics* [1983]⁴⁵

7.2.1 *The common good of friendship*

Philosophy can help us to understand more clearly what friendship is, in particular by elucidating the concept of “common good” in the context of friendship.⁴⁶ In any friendship, there is “a sharing, community, mutuality and reciprocity not only of knowledge but also of activity (and thus, normally, of enjoyment and satisfaction)”⁴⁷ Each of two friends (to take the simplest example) wills the good of the other for the sake of the other. For two friends, A and B, their common good includes the good of each

⁴⁵ J. Finnis, *Fundamentals of Ethics* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1983).

⁴⁶ See *ibid.*, 147-149. The theme of friendship is also treated in *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, 141-144.

⁴⁷ *Fundamental of Ethics*, 147.

other, so that each must value both his friend's good *and his own good* for the sake of the friend, as part of the friendship.⁴⁸ It is as though a friend can love himself in an unselfish way as part of a true friendship, by seeing himself and loving himself through the eyes of his friend.

We can apply aspects of human friendship to a friendship between God and man. However, unlike man-to-man friendship, a friendship between God and man cannot share equality in its mutuality: no human being can act for God's well-being, in the same way that one human friend can and should act for the well-being of his human friend, as an integral aspect of their friendship. Yet we humans can act "for the sake of God" which means to act

out of regard for and affection for God as such, and out of concern that God's concerns be advanced, i.e. that the goods that God favours and chooses should be favoured and chosen by me, out of friendship.⁴⁹

What this means is that we can share a common good with God, where his good is our good, and vice versa, in the endless mutuality and reciprocity of friendship. This friendship, from God's point of view, is a kind of play, seeing as there is no need for him to engage in it and nothing for him to gain from it, as he lacks nothing.

Thus any friendship with God must be regarded as a sharing, in a limited way, in the divine play – a sharing already envisaged, in a particular form, by Plato, as the only really serious thing to be concerned with.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ See *ibid.*, 148-149.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* (with reference to Plato's *Laws*, VII, 803b-c). See s. 7.1.10 above.

Such a friendship with God would have a very beneficial effect:

Such a friendship with God would relativize our self-love and would dispel the anxiety that most insidiously undermines any and every ethics, the anxiety that concern to be practically reasonable (virtuous, upright ...) is ultimately no more than a refined form of self-cultivation. That anxiety would be allayed, because every form of genuine friendship relativizes our self-love without destroying or discrediting it.⁵¹

It matters that you love yourself because you are friends with God who loves you, so you love yourself out of love for God. So too with love of others, who can be loved for the sake of God, their creator, your friend, who loves them. You love what your Friend loves. Considering that your Friend is God, your love is therefore given a divine soundness and foundation that it would not otherwise have. Ethics is no longer merely subjective, merely anthropocentric, but anthropocentric and theocentric.⁵² (In fact, it is truly anthropocentric in being theocentric: one loves the God who loves man.)

7.2.2 *The good of religion as an overarching good*

This understanding of friendship and its common good leads to understanding the good of religion to have an overarching significance:

... one's concern to be practically reasonable would not need to be regarded either as a search for self-perfection or self-cultivation, or as obedience to sheer categorical imperatives unrelated to any participation in intelligible good(s). Rather, it could be seen as what is needed to participate in the play of God, to favour and participate integrally in the human goods, which God's creative activity (subject to our free choice so to favour and participate in them) makes possible.⁵³

⁵¹ *Fundamental of Ethics*, 149. In the original, the second sentence begins a new paragraph.

⁵² Finnis does not speak in terms of *theocentric* and *anthropocentric*.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

Once again, Finnis combines several of the basic goods – practical reasonableness, play, friendship between people, and friendship with God (i.e. religion) – letting each shed light on the other.⁵⁴ Religion shares in some of the characteristic goodness of friendship and play, and precisely as such, can both include, promote and guarantee practical reasonableness in its pursuit of all the human goods in their integral goodness.

7.2.3 Transparency

Yet Finnis does not explicitly say in either of his first two books that the good of religion is, or ought to be, the overarching basic good that organises and shapes and motivates our integral pursuit and participation in the other goods. That role seems to be reserved for the good he calls “practical reasonableness”. This is both a basic good in its own right and a kind of master principle for understanding how we are to pursue all the basic goods well (i.e. morally, with right reason).⁵⁵

Practical reasonableness is a good that can be “transparent” for the other goods. It can be a kind of lens that enables us to see the other goods and pursue them well.⁵⁶ We need this

⁵⁴ See 7.1.10 above.

⁵⁵ See *ibid.*, 70-74. In Grisez’s version of this natural law theory, the master principle is the first principle of morality, which is distinct from any one of the basic goods; also, what Finnis calls “practical reasonableness” is replaced in Grisez’s list of basic goods with a more restricted kind of good, which is inner consistency and good conscience.

⁵⁶ This metaphor is not Finnis’s, but is suggested by his use of the term “transparent” and his explanation of why practical reasonableness is necessary: see *ibid.*, 73. In a later work, Finnis makes the point that transparency can also be applied to persons. Thus, the principles of practical reason are transparent for persons, or, in other words, the basic goods provide the reasons why we act for the sake of persons’ well-fare and flourishing. The concept of “transparency” can therefore be applied in Grisez’s moral theory not only to practical reasonableness and religion, as discussed in this and the following section, but also to show how this natural law theory is not focussed on only goods, but on goods *and persons*. See J. Finnis, “Foundations of Practical Reasoning Revisited”, *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 50 (2005), 109-131, at 128.

lens because we are easily blinded by unreasonable emotion, and thus unable to accurately see the good and pursue it well. With the lens of practical reasonableness we can order our emotions correctly and see the good truthfully. This seeing is itself a good, a form of human fulfillment to be valued in its own right. At the same time, however, and this is the primary point of transparency, it is a good that is good precisely in its enabling us to see other goods. It is a good that, by its very nature, opens out towards the other goods, seeks them, and enables us to be fulfilled by them. This is why any failure to use the lens of practical reasonableness is a failure to find true and integral fulfillment in the other goods, such as life, knowledge, and so on; further, it is a moral failure if it is voluntary.

Ethics can be said to be summed up by the term “practical reasonableness”, but it is not therefore the highest or supreme good.

The present importance of transparency is simply this: When we talk in ethics about practical reasonableness or “right reason” ... we must not be taken to suppose that practical reasonableness is the supreme good. Ethics is not just, or even particularly, for intellectuals or rationalists, for people who want to cultivate a special (“the highest”) part of their make-up. The point of being practically reasonable is not: being practically reasonable, full stop. Rather, it is: participating in all the human goods *well*. “Well”, here, expresses the implications not of some *further*, external (e.g. moral) standard, but simply of all those human goods to be participated in, integrally, in each and all of one’s self-constitutive choices.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ *Fundamentals of Ethics*, 72. Finnis is here distinguishing the natural law theory developed by himself and Grisez from what they see as the over-emphasis found in Aristotle on self-cultivation of one’s intellect as the highest good, and the emphasis found in Kant on following reason for its own sake. These mistakes of Aristotle and Kant lead to serious neglect of the other goods. Much of *Fundamental of Ethics* is a dialogical reflection on Aristotle and Kant. What Finnis has to say about the transparency of practical reasonableness, and what we say here about the transparency of religion, goes a long way towards answering those critics of Grisez’s theory who accuse it of being Kantian. See, for example, B.V. Johnstone, “‘Objectivism’, ‘Basic Human Goods’, and ‘Proportionalism’, and Interpretation of the Contemporary History of Moral Theology,” *Studia Moralia* 43 (2005): 97-126, at 114-119. Johnstone misunderstands the basic human goods, which he says are “not moral at all” (114), are “non-moral structures” (115), are “constructions of the reason of the subject” (115), are “abstract ideas of goods, which exist in the mind of the subject” (116), and are therefore unrelated to the fulfillment of other persons (117).

The first principle of morality functions in Grisez's moral theory in a *transparent* manner in much the same way that practical reasonableness functions in Finnis' theory, at least insofar as practical reasonableness is seen in Finnis' theory as a transcendental kind of good, with an architectonic role, acting transparently as a kind of "lens" as discussed above. It could be then that the two theories are not really all that different, but just different in their terminology.⁵⁸

7.2.4 *The transparency of religion (friendship with God)*

Neither Finnis or Grisez applies the concept of "transparency" to the good of religion, but what Finnis says about it applying to practical reasonableness can very easily and aptly be applied to the good of religion. The good of religion can be seen as both a basic good in itself and as a good transcending all the other goods. Religion's transcending, integrating and motivating all the other goods in one's life as a whole – this is religion's architectonic role.⁵⁹ Thus, religion is both a distinct form of human fulfillment, not to be confused with the other human goods, and not to substitute for them or deny their goodness, and an architectonic good that allows persons and communities to integrate life around all the goods. Maybe it is correct to see the good of religion as a kind of "lens"

None of this is a fair reading of Grisez's, Finnis's and Boyle's "basic human goods" theory. See also ss. 8.1 and 8.2 below, where similar criticisms by Hittinger and Di Blasi are outlined and discussed.

⁵⁸ This is supported by a remark of Grisez's in the bibliography appended to "A Contemporary Natural Law Ethics" in *Moral Philosophy: Historical and Contemporary Essays*, ed. William C. Starr and Richard C. Taylor (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1989), 125-43, at 141-142, where he says that there are "some differences in ethical theory between Finnis, on the one hand, and Grisez and Boyle, on the other. But most differences are in formulation rather than in substance."

⁵⁹ See s. 4.6 above for Grisez's and Finnis's (and Boyle's) clear development of this theme in 1987. We have seen clear anticipations of this development in Finnis's earlier work: see ss. 7.1.9 – 7.1.11 above.

that allows us to avoid a kind of blindness that we would otherwise suffer from, and “see” the basic goods, at both their primary, merely practical level, and the fully moral level. Thus the good of religion would be transparent for all the other goods. In this way, parallel with what Finnis says about practical reasonableness, religion would be the highest good in some respects, but not *the* highest good in *every* respect. Also, when religion is instantiated as true friendship with God, this friendship itself is the lens through which we can see the good properly, as the common good willed by God when he wills the flourishing of his friends.

7.2.5 Religion or practical reasonableness?

Do we have to choose between religion or practical reasonableness as transparent goods? No, we do not have to choose only one of the basic human goods as both individual and transcendent. Perhaps it is simply the case that more than one of the basic human goods can be transparent for the other goods and perform a special role beyond its role as a specific-basic-human-good-amongst-others.

The architectonic role played by the good of religion is different, but related, to the architectonic role of practical reasonableness. A purely anthropocentric ethics suffers from a kind of incompleteness or instability, even though it is still objectively true and sound. Our mortality and human limitations lead us to wonder if our choices really matter in the widest context and longest term. Religion helps us cope practically with such issues. This can happen if God reveals himself as “the cause of all human goods, and as

offering the gift of friendship with all human beings of every time and place”.⁶⁰ Given divine revelation, we could escape the subjectivism and relativism that seems to haunt a purely anthropocentric ethics. Given divine revelation,

we could be confident that the participation in human good(s) that we can realize by our own free choices is a good which will indeed “have a place” and “have a point” in the overall pattern and common good of the created universe – a pattern and common good not now understood by us, but understood and chosen by the same God who is responsible for all the goods that we can, at least partly, understand and value.⁶¹

Thus, for Finnis, the good of religion (along with knowledge to an extent too) seems to have an important and distinctive role to play in ethics *as a whole*.

7.2.6 Religion as a basic and an instrumental good

This role of religion as transparent and architectonic, like the special, transcendental role of practical reasonableness according to Finnis, seems to have a strong instrumental dimension. It would be a mistake then to over-emphasise the intrinsic goodness of the basic human goods, including religion, to the exclusion or neglect of their instrumental goodness.⁶² To do so might mean we miss or misunderstand the properly instrumental goodness human goods can have whilst not losing their intrinsic goodness, a properly

⁶⁰ *Fundamental of Ethics*, 150. It is not clear that Finnis means to say that it is only in the light of revelation that we can come to know God as the cause of all the goods and as offering friendship to us; perhaps he considers only the latter to be made clear by revelation alone.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² This is one way of reading Peter Simpson, “Grisez on Aristotle and Human Goods,” *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 46 (2001): 75-90, at 84-85, where he points out that the basic human goods, whilst continuing to be properly basic and thus essential to the whole, can be compared with one another with regard to their instrumental goodness. Thus it is possible to see a kind of natural hierarchy in the goods, with some of them suitable as instrumental goods for the sake of others. The argument in the previous sections of this present work is that religion (and practical reasonableness) can be intrinsically good as distinct and incommensurable basic human goods, on the one hand, and also instrumentally good (in their transparency) with regard to the other basic human goods, on the other hand.

instrumental goodness that is embodied in a special transcendental role that these various basic goods can play, when they allow us to understand, pursue and instantiate the other basic goods in a better way than we would have available to us otherwise.⁶³

7.3 Finnis – *Aquinas: Moral, Political, and Legal Theory* [1998]⁶⁴

“The good of religion” does not feature explicitly to any great extent in this book, but it contains many less explicit things that are relevant for the present work.⁶⁵ Further, although Grisez presents and develops his own moral theory as his own, and not merely an exegesis of Aquinas, it is interesting, nonetheless, to see how Grisez’s work is indebted to, similar to, but distinct from, Aquinas’s thought.⁶⁶

⁶³ The points in this section are not adverted to by either Finnis or Grisez. How basic human goods other than practical reasonableness and religion could have special transcendental roles in moral theory and practical rationality is not a matter that will be investigated here, but it seems that at least some of the others could be transparent for the basic goods as a whole in much the same way as practical reasonableness and religion. If so, then “life” or “health”, or “justice”, or “excellence in action”, or “knowledge”, when understood as instrumental goods, could play special roles in helping us both to understand all the basic goods and morality itself and to act morally.

⁶⁴ J. Finnis, *Aquinas: Moral, Political, and Legal Theory* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). Finnis’s ideas on Aquinas are more succinctly found in his article: “Aquinas’ Moral, Political, and Legal Philosophy” (2005), which is available online as part of the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy at <http://www.seop.leeds.ac.uk/entries/aquinas-moral-political/> [accessed 17th July 2008]. One might also consult Finnis’s earlier treatment: “Practical Reasoning, Human Goods, and the End of Man,” *Proceedings of the American Catholic Association*, 58 (1984): 23-36.

⁶⁵ There are only two references in the index to “religion, basic good of”: see *Aquinas*, 380. However, there is much more on religion here than these two references suggest.

⁶⁶ It is helpful to consult another work in this regard: W.E. May, *An Introduction to Moral Theology*, 2nd ed. (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, 2003), especially chapter two, where May treats the natural law theory of Aquinas, Grisez et al., Martin Rhonheimer (briefly), and Pope John Paul II, bringing out their similarities.

7.3.1 *The basic good of religion is a kind of deep harmony*

Finnis outlines a number of basic human goods that Aquinas recognised,⁶⁷ which provide basic reasons for human action, picking out intrinsically worthwhile benefits to be pursued by human action. These goods include life and health, marriage, knowing the truth (especially about God), living in society with others, but also other goods.⁶⁸ One of these others is the good of religion:

Harmony with the transcendent source of the universe's existence and order is a good which Aquinas judges basic and the object of natural inclination; it probably should not be reduced to 'knowledge about God' or *societas* and friendship, for it goes beyond knowing and loving to becoming like {assimilation}.⁶⁹

Religion here is seen as a kind of harmony, specifically harmony with the Creator, the source of all existence and order. The harmony that Aquinas speaks of is a very deep harmony, however, even extending as far as being assimilated to God.⁷⁰ This good is "basic" and "the object of natural inclination".

⁶⁷ See *Aquinas*, 79-86. Although there is no one section of any work of Aquinas that treats the whole range of basic human goods in detail, Finnis considers Aquinas, in his work viewed synthetically, to have "identified such reasons [for action] with unprecedented explicitness and care", see *ibid.*, 95. Aquinas never offered a complete inventory of such goods as he was mainly interested in working as a theologian, rather than a moral philosopher: see *ibid.*, 79-80.

⁶⁸ See *ibid.*, 81-83, where Finnis analyses the famous part of *Summa Theologiae* (I-II, q. 94, a. 2) where Aquinas discusses the natural law and its several primary principles. Finnis is clear that Aquinas does not purport to offer a complete list of such principles in this part of his work, as is sometimes thought. Clearly the idea of there being several basic goods, including religion, is Thomistic.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 85, two notes omitted. The first omitted note is a reference to Aquinas, *De Perfectione Spiritualis Vitae* (On the Perfecting of the Spiritual Life), written in 1269-1270. This is the only reference by Finnis to a work of Aquinas mentioning the good of "religion" as such. Finnis introduces this citation with "e.g." indicating that there are other citations from Aquinas' works that explain what the good of religion is, but Finnis does not list any. The second omitted note is to the final chapter of *Aquinas* where Finnis discusses how we are to seek assimilation to God: we will treat this below when we look at this final chapter. Perhaps surprisingly, Finnis does not deal at all with Aquinas's treatment of religion as a virtue.

⁷⁰ This depth or transcendent quality of the harmony involved in Aquinas's understanding of religion is treated below at s. 7.3.6b.

7.3.2 Religion is a self-evident basic good

All the basic goods, including the good of religion, are basic insofar as they are self-evident principles, truly *primary* principles of practical thinking. They form the starting points of all practical deliberation and action, shaping it from the very beginning.

This does not mean that they are data-less intuitions, or “felt certainties”, or that one cannot be mistaken about them, or that they cannot be defended by rational considerations. On the contrary, Aquinas firmly holds that they are understood by what he calls “induction” of principles, by which he means insight into data of experience (data preserved, after the direct experience, in the memory).⁷¹

To speak of the self-evidence of the basic goods is not to claim that everyone knows them correctly or easily. It is necessary to have experience (and memory of this experience) in order to grasp the point of the various forms of human flourishing, including the good of religion.⁷² It is possible to be mistaken about the basic human goods, at least to some degree. Finnis acknowledges that Aquinas wrote more than once that “no one makes mistakes about principles, or first principles”,⁷³ but Finnis argues that

this must be understood narrowly, since (often in the same works, and sometimes in the same passage) he also says that error about even first principles is possible (and can even be difficult to overcome, for want of more obvious considerations by which to disprove the mistaken belief).⁷⁴

⁷¹ Aquinas, 87, two notes omitted.

⁷² Finnis does not explicitly refer to the good of religion being included in his analysis of the basic human goods in general, but obviously what he says about them applies to religion too, so religion is emphasised here even though perhaps this gives the false impression that it is explicitly and comprehensively treated by Finnis (as part of the work of Aquinas).

⁷³ Ibid., 100, with six references to Aquinas’ work, including *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 100, a. 11.

⁷⁴ Aquinas, 100, with six more references to Aquinas’ works, including *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 72, a. 5.

Errors about first principles can be caused by reasoning being clouded by emotions, for example, or by one's assuming something false or imaginary.⁷⁵ Therefore, Aquinas' insistence that one cannot be mistaken about first principles, that these principles are known to everyone, "must be understood as stating what is the case 'in principle' or under favourable conditions".⁷⁶ All this can be applied to the good of religion.

7.3.3 Religion is the object of a natural inclination

Aquinas saw religion as a basic perfection of human nature, which precisely as such provides us with a reason to pursue it and instantiate it in actions. Finnis emphasises that Aquinas did not put forward the idea that we first come to know our nature in a theoretical manner, and *then* come to know the goods that are perfections of our nature.⁷⁷ No, we first come to know the objects of our actions as opportunities for fulfillment, and *only then* come to know these fulfilments as indicating truths about our nature as human beings. Our capacities as human beings, which are grounded in our human nature, are expressed in our "natural inclinations". The good of religion is not itself an inclination; it is pointed to by an inclination. Finnis says that Aquinas did not make clear what kind of inclination provides the object of any particular basic human good.⁷⁸ However, Finnis

⁷⁵ Errors made in practical reasoning can also contribute to future errors in grasping first principles, by a kind of corruption of one's nature, even though one's basic nature is not thereby fully corrupted and continues to witness to the falsity of one's erroneous practical reasoning based on false first principles: see *Aquinas*, 100-101.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 101. Finnis (presuming that he agrees with Aquinas here, which seems likely) is more clear than Grisez on the point that one can be incorrect in one's grasp of even first principles.

⁷⁷ See *ibid.*, 90-94 and 101-102.

⁷⁸ See *ibid.*, 93.

does say that, according to Aquinas' understanding of inclinations and goods, "the goods cause the inclinations" and that

the important point to understand is that the discussion [in *Summa Theologiae*] neither asserts nor implies that one knows *which* inclinations are 'natural inclinations' (in the relevant sense) *prior* to or independently of an understanding of the intelligible goods which are their objects.⁷⁹

The point here seems to be that one's grasp of the goodness of any basic form of human fulfillment is a thoroughly practical grasp, a practical insight into why some option for choice might be worthwhile to pursue by action, rather than a theoretical insight into the way things are independently of any potential, and potentially fulfilling, action of one's own. It is also clear that one's grasp of a primary practical principle is a grasp of a good, not of one's inclination, as such.⁸⁰

Aquinas was not talking about idiosyncratic inclinations shared by only some human beings (due to illness, for example), or about inclinations to sin. Such inclinations are not natural in the sense meant by Aquinas in his discussion of the goods, because they do not point to *reasons* for action.⁸¹

7.3.4 Practical insight into religion presupposes non-practical knowledge

Finnis does not claim, however, that Aquinas wishes to restrict the goods to the purely existential order, the order to do with our choices and commitments, thereby denying that

⁷⁹ Ibid., making reference to *Summa Theologiae* I-II q. 23, a. 4 and II-II q. 47, a. 15.

⁸⁰ One might even be unaware of having an inclination when one grasps the point of pursuing a good.

⁸¹ See *Aquinas*, 93. Note therefore that Aquinas's understanding of natural law as natural is intrinsically linked to the idea of reasons for action being naturally accessible.

any theoretical knowledge is necessary for grasping them as goods or pursuing them effectively. In Aquinas' epistemology, all our knowledge, even knowledge of primary principles, depends firstly on the senses, even though we are born with an innate ability to experience and know.⁸² Our practical knowledge of first principles "will outrun, by anticipation, the theoretical knowledge it presupposed",⁸³ but some non-practical knowledge and experience is presupposed by all practical knowledge.⁸⁴

7.3.5 Religion is a search for the objective truth about God and life

Finnis adds to his definition of the good of religion as harmony with the transcendent source of reality, the following phrase:

the basic good of religion as a personal search for, appropriation of, and adherence in practice to the truth about God as one can grasp it.⁸⁵

Following Aquinas, one of the things that both Finnis (and Grisez) insist on is that the basic goods are open-ended fields of human opportunity, and as such, we do not grasp

⁸² See *ibid.*, 101-102.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 94. This is so because the goods are open-ended opportunities for fulfillment, so the initial experience that is presupposed will be only a starting point for pursuit, not the full reality of the good.

⁸⁴ Aquinas (read by Finnis) seems to go further than Grisez here in his saying that some non-practical knowledge is presupposed by practical knowledge. However, if we keep it clearly in view that practical knowledge is not deduced or derived from such non-practical knowledge, but that the non-practical knowledge is needed as a kind of material for the practical reasoning to work with, then it would seem that Grisez is not that different from Aquinas and Finnis after all. See Grisez, "The First Principle of Practical Reason: A Commentary on the *Summa Theologiae*, 1-2, Question 94, Article 2," *Natural Law Forum*, 10 (1965), where he says: "the basic precepts of practical reason accept the possibilities suggested by experience and direct the objects of reason's consideration toward the fulfilments taking shape in the mind" (179) and "The direction of practical reason presupposes possibilities on which reason can get leverage, and such possibilities arise only in reflection upon experience" (180).

⁸⁵ *Aquinas*, 293. The context here is one in which Finnis is discussing the freedom of the act of faith, and issues surrounding Aquinas' position on the treatment of heretics. Finnis holds that Aquinas was seriously mistaken with regard to such issues, especially in light of the insights of Vatican II's "Declaration on Religious Freedom" (*Dignitatis Humanae*), which Finnis explicitly refers to, and echoes in the phrase quoted here.

these goods definitively at first; in fact, we do not *ever* grasp them definitively or instantiate them completely. This suggests that the goods all share the quality of an ongoing search, on which one can make progress (or go astray), but which one never finishes (at least in this life, and maybe not even in the next). Applying this to religion, we can see how the idea of it being a search, at least initially and to some extent always, is clearly appropriate.⁸⁶

Finnis' use of the word "truth" in his reference to religion reminds us of the objectivity of the good of religion. Anyone who conscientiously pursues the good of religion, and who wills to effectively instantiate it, is concerned with finding the truth about God and about how to live in harmony with God. Such a conscientious and religious person is not content with merely being subjectively sincere and well-intentioned.

The final chapter of *Aquinas* offers some discussion of matters relevant to the truth about religion and about God. One of the first things Finnis does there, is to make sure that we do not envisage practical rationality as a matter purely of the existential order.⁸⁷ Although matters to do with deliberation and choice are primarily third-order matters, "no course of reflections [such as those in *Aquinas*] could reasonably remain confined to the practical, to third-order considerations."⁸⁸ The existence of moral principles is both a matter of the

⁸⁶ In a sense, all the basic human goods involve a search, as they all can be *pursued*, and not just instantiated or done.

⁸⁷ See *Aquinas*, 294.

⁸⁸ Ibid. Finnis' reference here to "third-order" is a reference to the ontology presented by Aquinas in his prologue to his *Commentary on Aristotle's Ethics*. Finnis discusses this ontological schema in *Aquinas*, 20-23. First order matters are matters to do with given nature, matters that reason considers but does not affect. Second order matters are matters of logic. Third order matters are matters to do with practical rationality,

existential order, and thus thoroughly practical in that respect, but *also* a matter of the first-order, the order of nature, of the given (independently of our use of reason), and thus theoretical in that respect. Our capacities, which ground our deliberations and choices, are matters that are to some extent given, “independently of our thinking and willing”,⁸⁹ and so are matters of the first-order. The basic human goods “in important respects are what they are independently of one’s deliberation and choice”,⁹⁰ and so are first-order matters too. Also, one needs theoretical knowledge (knowledge of the first-order, of the given) of possibilities if one is to be able to deliberate and choose (in the third-order). It is clear that for Finnis, as for Grisez,⁹¹ the four orders are not sealed off from each other. Neither Finnis nor Grisez is an existentialist, thinking that choices are independent of objective reality, or existence separate from essence.

Factors in the third order point beyond practical reasoning,⁹² or, in other words, beyond the existential order. Do our capacities and possibilities, human goods and moral principles, just happen to exist and be as they are, or do they exist, with the character they have, for some more-than-human reason, by some more-than-human cause? Further, why is it that practical and moral principles oblige us to seek integral human fulfillment? Aquinas sees the answer to these kinds of questions, which are about the widest reaches

order introduced by human reason into our deliberation and choosing. Fourth order matters have to do with things we make or design, matters to do with technical or artistic skill. See s. 2.6 above for Grisez’s approach to this in *Beyond the New Theism*.

⁸⁹ *Aquinas*, 294.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 294-295.

⁹¹ See ss. 2.6.3 – 2.6.5 above.

⁹² The title of the relevant section of *Aquinas* [X.1] is called “Beyond Practical Reasoning”, 294.

of reality and the overall context of our deliberating and choosing, to be answered adequately only with reference to God.⁹³

Finnis outlines the five ways of Aquinas demonstrating the existence of God.⁹⁴ One of his reasons is that he sees a very close “fit” between first-order positions and third-order positions.⁹⁵ A person’s (or group’s) position on theoretical matters, such as whether reality is purely material or is created by God, will affect substantially that person’s (or group’s) understanding of practical rationality. And vice-versa. It matters for practical rationality what one thinks theoretically about God; and it matters for one’s thinking about God what one thinks about practical rationality. Although Finnis does not say so, this last point is particularly true for one’s practical grasp of the good of religion and the way one ought to pursue and instantiate it. Clearly, if one holds the philosophical position of a materialist or a Nietzsche, or some post-modern worldview, to mention only the positions criticised by Finnis in this chapter, this will affect one’s view of the good of religion, as well as one’s view of practical rationality and morality in general. Truth matters to the good of religion. The basic goods of knowledge and religion are closely related.

⁹³ Reflections about God come last in a philosophical education, according to Aquinas, after we have reflected on creatures (and, according to Finnis, also on our practical rationality): see *ibid.*, 296. This why Finnis (and Grisez) most often place their thoughts on God and religion at, or towards, the end of their philosophical texts. Finnis makes the point too that in a theological text, by contrast, one could appropriately, in fact most appropriately, place matters to do with God first, as theology is based on divine revelation, not on reflection on creatures.

⁹⁴ See *ibid.*, 298-304, and (for the fourth way) 332. In the previous two books by Finnis, examined above, he followed Grisez’s cosmological argument for God’s existence; here, not surprisingly in a book on Aquinas, he specifically follows Aquinas’ five ways, which are similar in some respects, but not the exact same, as Grisez’s argument.

⁹⁵ See *ibid.*, 296.

7.3.6a *The five ways and God as pure mind*

Like Grisez, Finnis emphasises that the God whose existence we come to know through reason (in Finnis' case here, following Aquinas' five ways) is a very mysterious reality. "God exists as pure act" but "this existence and act cannot be like any existence or act(uality) otherwise known to us".⁹⁶ Nevertheless, in following Aquinas, Finnis seems to be not as strict as Grisez on this point.⁹⁷ The arguments from change needing to be explained by the unchanging, existence needing to be explained by the necessarily existing, the fact that a universe (of contingent beings) with no beginning would at some time ceased to exist and so nothing now should exist unless there is a necessary being, the ordered nature of things which exist at various levels of excellence and being, and their orderliness and directedness – these being the five ways of Aquinas – all seem to point to a God who is pure act, without any unactualised potential. The five ways begin from factors in our experience, and they end up showing us that:

Only that [divine] government and that shaping and sustaining providence can explain the actuality, existence, specific reality, goodness, and orderliness of every being without exception.⁹⁸

Finnis thinks that the five ways point clearly to a God who "must be pure mind without mutability (or inertness!) or any trace of bodiliness – for the potentiality to be changed ...

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 305.

⁹⁷ See *ibid.*, n. 45: Finnis says "Aquinas takes his own warning [about how we can know almost nothing positive about God, but only what he is not] less austerely than Grisez", with reference to Aquinas's work and to Grisez, *Beyond the New Theism*, 241-272.

⁹⁸ *Aquinas*, 305, echoing the five ways.

is intrinsic to being a body.”⁹⁹ This means that God’s action in creating, governing and sustaining the universe is the act of a mind, an intellectual act that includes practical understanding and willing, though on a scale beyond any human understanding and willing.¹⁰⁰

Finnis sees a very close parallelism between God and man. Man has natural capacities to understand and to will in accordance with practical reasonableness. Thus he is able to share in God’s action, and this sharing in God’s action (of creation, providence and governance) is our imperfect fulfillment in this life, but our perfect fulfillment in the next. Following Aquinas closely, Finnis thus tends to see our ultimate fulfillment as a singular reality, a sharing in God’s act, in God’s own reality and life, which can begin now and will be perfected by God’s act in the next life.¹⁰¹

7.3.6b Practical reasonableness is our sharing in the eternal law

Following Aquinas,¹⁰² Finnis speaks of the governance and sustaining of the universe as “the eternal law” of God. Each of the orders of reality (the natural, the logical, the existential, and the technical/artistic) has its order from God’s impressing onto it the

⁹⁹ Ibid. Grisez, by contrast, is not happy in speaking of God as a “mind”: see ss. 6.1.9d and 6.2.2a above.

¹⁰⁰ See *ibid.*, 305-306. Thus Finnis seeks to retain the sense of God as utterly mysterious.

¹⁰¹ Grisez, by contrast, sees our fulfillment in this life and the next as having two quite distinct aspects, one of which is a natural fulfillment of our nature and the other a supernatural fulfillment that goes beyond our human nature. The former includes fulfillment in the good of religion, and thus a rich harmony with God in and through human action, and also a fulfillment in all the other basic human goods; the latter, the strictly supernatural fulfillment, is a special gift of God to us, not a human action at all, as it is the vision of God offered to the blessed as their share in God’s life and love by pure grace.

¹⁰² For simplicity’s sake, mainly Finnis is referred to in the following paragraphs, with the understanding that his thoughts are presented by him as an accurate interpretation of the thought of Aquinas, with whom Finnis agrees.

appropriate principles or “laws” of that order. The laws of the various orders of reality, expressing the eternal law of God in his own perfect practical reasonableness, direct towards “the common benefit of the universe as a whole (and thus of its parts).”¹⁰³

We move from here to the idea that we can share by our judgement and willing (themselves God’s gifts) in God’s legislation, his eternal law, and thus his governance and providence. Insofar as it is accessible to unaided reason, this sharing in the eternal law, in God’s providence and plan, is called “the natural law”, meaning the natural *moral* law (and not the natural laws of science, or the laws of logic, or of technical or artistic production, all of which are orders distinct from the existential order).¹⁰⁴

What Finnis is moving towards here is a *religious* way of understanding practical rationality and morality.

The principles of practical reasonableness are now understandable as having the force and depth of *a kind of sharing in God’s creative purpose and providence*. The good of practical reasonableness {bonum rationis} is now understandable as good not only intrinsically and for its own sake but also as a constituent in the good of *assimilatio* and *adhaesio* to the omnipotent creator’s practical wisdom and choice. The truth of the practical principles is now understandable not only as the anticipation of the human fulfilment to which they direct us, but also as *their conformity to the most real of all realities, the divine creative mind*, the mind which is nothing other than the very reality of that pure and simple act, God.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Ibid. Particularly in the existential order, the term “law” and the image of God as a legislator of the universe, is appropriate for this providential governance, insofar as law in its central sense “is something addressed by one mind and will to others – by one freely choosing person *to other freely choosing persons*... It is always a plan for co-ordination and free cooperation”, *ibid.*, 307-308 (emphasis in original; note omitted).

¹⁰⁴ See *ibid.*, 309, n. 64, quoting from *Summa Theologiae* I-II q. 91, a. 2.

¹⁰⁵ *Aquinas*, 308-309, two notes omitted, emphases added. What Finnis seems to be saying here is that the good of religion (as assimilation to, and adherence to, God) involves us understanding the basic human goods and moral truth to be such because of their conformity to God’s creative mind and act.

Finnis states that practical reasonableness, which is a basic good in itself as well as an overall term for moral goodness with its integral love of all goods and persons, can be understood in a new way by reference to the good of religion. The key term is *assimilation*, which Finnis had clearly used to specify the harmony constituting the good of religion in his earlier definition.¹⁰⁶

Even though Finnis does not use the term “good of religion” in his final chapter, then, we can be sure that this good is what he is talking about when he talks about the good of our assimilation to God in our pursuit and instantiation of practical reasonableness.¹⁰⁷ When we are truly practically reasonable, truly morally good, we are like God in a very important way, sharing his intellect and will, so to speak, and conforming in our own judgements and choices to his wisdom and choice. Being like God is the good of religion and it is a transcendent aspect of the good of practical reasonableness itself too. The good of religion helps us to understand the truth of practical principles because it makes clear that practical principles, both in their basic practical sense and in their fuller moral sense, are true in their conformity to the mind of God,¹⁰⁸ the mind that projects and chooses our human fulfillment as part of his eternal law (which is God’s providential plan for the common good, or flourishing, of the whole universe). This is why natural law is *natural and law*. Practical rationality is created by the author of our nature. The reasonableness of

¹⁰⁶ See 7.3.1 above (n. 69), and *Aquinas*, 85.

¹⁰⁷ One should remember too that our pursuit of practical reasonableness is not a pursuit of reasonableness in and for itself only, but a pursuit of integral fulfillment in all the goods. Practical reasonableness is transparent for the full range of goods, substantive and existential: see s. 7.2.3 above.

¹⁰⁸ See *ibid.*, 100. See also Finnis, Boyle and Grisez, “Practical Principles,” 115-120.

natural law is a sharing in the reasonableness of God the creator of nature, who impresses the principles of his wisdom and providence into nature in various ways, to direct it towards its fulfillment and flourishing, its common good.¹⁰⁹ Thus, our being practical and moral is a kind of cooperation with God in his providential plan for the happiness of all his creation. The natural law is a kind of “bond or covenant ... with God”.¹¹⁰

7.3.6c Cooperation with God through religion and practical reasonableness

Clearly Finnis sees practical reasonableness as embodying the good of religion, which is harmony with God, assimilation to God, adherence to God’s will, a bond with God, a covenant with God – even at the level of a strictly philosophical understanding of the natural law. It is possible to grasp by philosophy alone that God is a person (albeit utterly mysterious), who creates purely for the sake of expressing the fullness of divine being by bringing into (and maintaining) in existence beings who can share various kinds and levels of likeness to God in their various kinds of flourishing.¹¹¹ The God demonstrated by the five ways of Aquinas is surely not less than personal, particularly when we take into account that creation must be a freely chosen act, thus exhibiting intellect and will; also, such an ultimate being must not lack anything, being pure act, and so must have created only for the sake of freely expressing his own fullness of being and goodness. Therefore it is not “arbitrary or anthropomorphic” to understand God as personal, or to see our own acts of intellect and will (especially insofar as they are morally good, fully

¹⁰⁹ See *Aquinas*, 309.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 309, n. 68.

¹¹¹ See *ibid.*, 310 and 311. Finnis is more confident now, about knowing philosophically that God is a person, than he was in *Natural Law and Natural Rights*: see s. 7.1.7 above. This probably stems from his recent in-depth study of Aquinas’ work.

open and loving towards being, as God is) as sharing in God's intellect and will. Further, it is not impossible or wrong for us to think naturally and philosophically that "some kind of interpersonal co-operation with the divine is possible, and, since possible, an important good and something supremely to be hoped for."¹¹²

We might not know for sure philosophically if the good of religion is fully achievable, but our grasp of its possibility and benefit can lead us to wonder if this God has communicated with us "in a way more intelligible and more personal than the unfolding of this ordered universe", to help us to know more about the good of religion and how to instantiate it.¹¹³

7.3.6d The point of human existence is to be as like God as we can be

Aquinas' five ways take us beyond the limits of Aristotle's understanding of God, and so make it possible for us to grasp by unaided reason the good of religion in a way not possible for Aristotle's philosophy. Grasping the good of religion enables us to come to a deeper understanding of practical rationality as a distinctively human (rational) way of sharing in God's wisdom and love. Love of God is the overall context and rationale for love of neighbour, which is the master principle of morality.¹¹⁴ It is right that we should

¹¹² *Aquinas*, 311. Finnis is here referring to the good of religion, which he speaks of as a great benefit "supremely to be hoped for". Finnis also points out (311-312) that it is not merely arbitrary or anthropomorphic to acknowledge our utter dependence on "the divine cause of nature's existence and orderly fecundity" in all our projects and hopes.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 311.

¹¹⁴ On love of neighbour as master principle of morality (in Aquinas' account of morality), see *ibid.*, 126-128; see also *ibid.*, 131, where he states that the "love of neighbour as oneself" principle is similar in content to the first principle of morality in the moral theory shared by himself, Grisez and Boyle.

love God above all things, as God is the perfect creator of all things, and thus the ultimate cause of their goodness, of all created goodness, or “loveableness”. However, in loving God we also love the good things he has created as an expression of his goodness. We thus can, and ought to, love our neighbours because we can see the divine goodness in them:

... the master principle or first precept of the natural *moral* law can now be more adequately stated: one should love one’s neighbour as oneself *by reason of* the divine goodness as it is participated, reflected, and imaged in that neighbour as in every human being – a goodness that can be both respected and nurtured in those in and for whom one can do good.¹¹⁵

Our grasp of the good of practical reasonableness is deepened and strengthened by our seeing it in the light of the good of religion, the good of our loving God in our neighbour, loving with a love that is truly God-like. Finnis sees practical reasonableness as having “a *further overarching point*”,¹¹⁶ beyond its own intrinsic, specific goodness.

This further, more ultimate point {finis} is to be as *like* God as human persons can be. For that is how we can participate well in – and give our own life the characteristics of – that activity which not only is supremely intelligent, free, self-possessed, and generous, but also must make best sense of everything.¹¹⁷

The point of human existence then is to participate in God’s activity, which is a kind of participation in God himself, who is pure act. We do this by practical reasonableness, seen as a kind of participation in the good of religion.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 314, emphasis in original. (Three notes omitted.)

¹¹⁶ Ibid., emphasis in original.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 315, emphasis in original. (Two notes omitted.)

Yet this does not mean that we ought to be concerned only with the good of religion, or only with the good of practical reasonableness, for their own specific sakes. On the contrary, this participating in the goods of practical reasonableness and religion (and thus in God's free, wise, creative and loving act[ivity]) is totally open to the full range of human opportunities for fulfillment. The further overarching point of practical reasonableness, which is to be like God, "subsumes, embraces, confirms, and explains all the other reasons for action" at both the individual and social levels.¹¹⁸ The reasonableness of the various human goods, in all their distinctness and incommensurable diversity, is not destroyed by the overarching religious point of practical reasonableness, but affirmed and included and rendered even more reasonable, and thus stronger as motives for living a good human life. The good of religion gives meaning to living a good human life because it places all of human life in the context of loving God, and this is a love that includes all other loves, and strengthens them.

7.3.6e The beatific vision and human fulfillment

What Finnis says in his positive interpretation of Aquinas thus far is broadly supportive of Grisez's moral theory and his view of religion as a basic human good. Still, there are some questions that arise. Does Finnis, following Aquinas, go too far in understanding God to be a mind, in attributing to God perfections that we find in human beings, such as intellect and will? Does Finnis, subsequently, understand our participation in God's actions through practical reasonableness (and religion) to be our sharing in God's very life as God? If the answer to these two questions is yes, then there would seem that Finnis/Aquinas do not support Grisez's moral theory or his view of religion totally,

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 314.

because Grisez emphasises in several of his works, as we have seen above,¹¹⁹ that the good of religion is a *natural* human good instantiated in human acts. It is a good that can be instantiated only with God's help, and it will not be perfected in the kingdom until God recreates his creation and raises us up to everlasting life, but it is still a precisely *human* fulfillment. As such, it is not a complete sharing in God's own divine life, which remains ultimately mysterious and utterly distinct from the human. We can share in God's own life by grace, by God's act, not our own human act(s). This sharing in God's own life is perfected in the kingdom as a fulfillment in addition to the rich human fulfillment in all the human goods. Grisez criticises Aquinas for holding a view that seems to reduce the beatific vision to a human act (albeit done with necessary divine help) that fulfils us as human. Does Finnis follow Aquinas here, or does he support Grisez's position?

Finnis broadly supports Aquinas' position, but he criticises aspects of it, pointing out some of the same weaknesses in it that Grisez points out too.¹²⁰ Finnis seems to accept Aquinas' "long argument"¹²¹ that perfect fulfillment,

a condition in which all human desires are fulfilled and all human efforts find their completion, *consists in* an uninteruptible vision of God (and in God of the other truths that we naturally desire to know), a vision which would be possible, by divine act, after one' bodily, active, and secular life ... is ended in death.¹²²

¹¹⁹ See above, ss. 3.1.3, 3.1.5, 3.4.6, 3.5, 4.7.2, 6.1.1, 6.1.9c, 6.2.3b.

¹²⁰ See *Aquinas*, 315-319.

¹²¹ Finnis refers to Aquinas' argument in *Summa Contra Gentiles* III, (chapter twenty five onwards), in which he reviews our human desires and eliminates as candidates for the integrating role of giving meaning to human life "all those objects of desire (e.g. power, reputation, sensory pleasure) which cannot make fully satisfactory sense of one's own or one's community's whole life" (*Aquinas*, 315).

¹²² *Ibid.*, 315-316, note omitted.

However, Finnis accepts this conclusion “only when understood restrictively”.¹²³ Aquinas’s argument succeeds in some ways, but fails in others. Firstly, it successfully shows “that human *beatitudo perfecta* must be structured around seeing God ... and be free from susceptibility to illness, injury, loss, or death.”¹²⁴ Secondly, it shows that such perfect fulfillment “would be a further dimension of likeness, *assimilatio*, to God”, as God’s life is “the activity of an understanding totally intelligible to (and fitting object of) itself”.¹²⁵ Thirdly, the argument for the beatific vision as the ultimate end of human life succeeds in showing

that our *beatitudo* would also add to *assimilatio* a much closer relationship, a kind of joining up, cleaving, *adhaesio*, to God inasmuch as one would understand God and not only understand but also, inevitably, love him – something not possible for subrational created realities.¹²⁶

We can begin this assimilation to God and this adherence to him in love even now in this life, and can be motivated thereby to love our neighbour for a transcendental reason: because we recognise “that every human being is, like oneself, the object of this special, interpersonal divine providence and possible fulfillment in relationship with God.”¹²⁷

¹²³ Ibid., 316.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid. This seems to suggest that there could be less than perfect assimilations to God, which we can perhaps see as constitutive of the natural good of religion.

¹²⁶ Ibid., note omitted. Here Finnis seems to see adhesion to God as a further perfection of our relationship with God. Thus there seem to be gradations of perfection within *beatitudo* itself, with adhesion (or union with God) as the highest. However, this is not totally clear from Finnis’ treatment. Perhaps this is simply the inevitable limitations of human language trying to express truths about God and heaven.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 317, note omitted.

Finnis follows Aquinas much more closely than Grisez here, in that he seems to agree with Aquinas that our complete fulfillment can be found, and, indeed, must be found, in the beatific vision, because we are to be defined primarily as human by our intelligence and the beatific vision is the perfect fulfillment of our human capacity to understand, and thus be like God, who is perfect self-understanding. Grisez criticises Aquinas on these points because he thinks Aquinas too narrowly defines God and man by reference to the intellect, and thus reduces human fulfillment to one dimension of our full humanity, as well as reducing God to a category of our experience, intellect. Also, Aquinas' approach presents the beatific vision as a perfection of a purely human capacity, and a sharing in God's own divine life by this human fulfillment, whereas Grisez has argued that our sharing in the vision of God, and sharing in God's own divine life, is possible not as a human fulfillment, but only as a divine gift that transcends our human capacities and actions. So Grisez wants to see two distinct dimensions to our fulfillment in the kingdom, one a human fulfillment, including the perfecting of our human harmony with God in the good of religion, and a divine fulfillment in the beatific vision. The question might be put like this: does Finnis, following Aquinas, equate the good of religion with the beatific vision, in contrast to Grisez, who sees the two as distinct?

7.3.6f Finnis' critique of Aquinas on the beatific vision

Finnis says he thinks Aquinas' argument is successful *only* if it is understood restrictively. Firstly, Finnis thinks that Aquinas has not shown philosophically that perfect human fulfillment (in a vision of God) is actually a reality, and not merely an

attractive possibility.¹²⁸ Secondly, and here he draws closer to Grisez's thinking, Finnis states that

the arguments for a purely contemplative human fulfillment must be taken together with the reasons which Aquinas himself provides for significantly widening *beatitudo*'s content.¹²⁹

Like Grisez, Finnis does not want to define perfect human fulfillment in terms of only contemplation. He mentions the fact, for example, that one's soul, separate from its body, is imperfect, so that bodily resurrection must be part of one's perfect fulfillment.¹³⁰ Thirdly, Finnis argues that, as God is active in loving his creation and creatures, our being like God in sharing the beatific vision must include our loving, actively, other creatures as God does.

How then could *beatitudo perfecta* fail to include, *over and above* contemplation and love of the God thus seen, a willing sharing of goods with other human persons, in friendship?"¹³¹

Finnis admits that Aquinas did not deal well with these issues.¹³² He thinks that Aquinas' argument that our perfect human fulfillment is to be found in contemplation of God is a kind of incomplete argument. It is as if Aquinas were arguing a hypothetical case, an artificial case: whether, if all that existed were one's soul and God, one would be perfectly happy in contemplating God. To this question the answer must be yes, and

¹²⁸ See *ibid.* Finnis is not impressed or convinced by Aquinas' argument that man's natural desire to know God, because it is natural, cannot be in vain.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ See *ibid.*, 318. Finnis sees himself as following the lead of Aquinas in all this, and provides references to Aquinas's works in his text.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, emphasis added. See also, *ibid.*, 329-330.

¹³² See *ibid.*, 318-319.

Aquinas' argument, with its emphasis on God's perfection, shows this. But the fact is that none of us is a solitary creature; nor is any of us a disembodied soul. Finnis seems to accept that Aquinas' philosophical treatment of the beatific vision is weakened by his failure to deal with these facts and to integrate them properly into his arguments and conclusions.

However, Finnis thinks that when Aquinas engages in theology rather than philosophy, his thinking was more adequate concerning human fulfillment. In the light of revelation, the radically social nature of our fulfillment after death, which can be expressed in biblical metaphors such as "kingdom", was much more clearly seen by Aquinas.¹³³

7.3.6g Aquinas is partially supportive of Grisez's theory

It could be said then that Finnis in this book, following Aquinas closely, is only partially supportive of Grisez's moral theory and his understanding of the good of religion. Like Grisez, Finnis and Aquinas acknowledge the idea that we can gain a deeper understanding of, and stronger motive to engage in, practical reasoning by seeing it in the light of our calling to be like God, to share in God's thinking and willing, his wisdom and love. Finnis (and Aquinas) seem to identify this being-like-God with our sharing in the divine life in the beatific vision, a sharing that can begin even now, and which could be called the basic human good of religion, and which will be perfected in heaven. Finnis argues that even though Aquinas identified this vision of God with contemplation, it is only adequately understood to be *perfect* and *real* fulfillment when we see it as a vision

¹³³ See *ibid.*, 320 and 327-331. Aquinas' theological thought is treated only briefly in *Aquinas*.

of God that allows us to share in God's love of creation and creatures in a more integrally human way than the word "contemplation" might denote. Thus, Finnis shares Grisez's concern that the full range of basic human goods should constitute our perfect fulfillment in heaven, and not just the fulfillment of our intellects. Finnis also states that he accepts (following Aquinas) that our sharing in God's divine life is a pure gift, rather than a human achievement.¹³⁴

Still, Finnis' thought in this book does not indicate any major distinction between the basic human good of religion and our vision of God in heaven, except insofar as the beatific vision is a *perfection of* our seeing God in this life; Finnis seems to see both the (practical) good of religion and the perfect beatitude of our vision of God in heaven as *assimilatio*, or assimilation, to God. Grisez, on the other hand, seems to see the beatific vision as quite distinct from the good of religion, which might be understood as our harmony with God in and through human actions, with the term "harmony" being understood as a narrow and limited reality, as a kind of naturally available harmony between our choices and God's will.

Nevertheless, Finnis (following Aquinas) agrees with Grisez in considering the good of religion to offer an overarching purpose for human life, integrating life as a whole. This overarching purpose is a kind of natural union with God, a union that includes all the human goods, especially that of friendship and society. Understanding our lives as

¹³⁴ See 331, n. 174.

essentially religious helps us to understand morality in a way that supports, illuminates, and elevates morality, and to understand life as a whole.

7.4 Boyle “The Place of Religion in the Practical Reasoning of Individuals and Groups” [1998] ¹³⁵

This article is the most sustained philosophical piece by any of the Grisez school on the good of religion, and helps to clarify and extend what has been seen thus far.

7.4.1 A broad definition of religion as harmony

Boyle firstly argues that religion can be an end, and not just a means to an end. Religion has a distinctive benefit:

I propose that a religious benefit is a harmony between a person or persons and the divine, that is, God or the gods or whatever is understood to be the ultimate principle of reality and meaning in the universe.¹³⁶

Religion is centrally concerned with a particular practical response to the “divine”: human seeking to be in harmony with it. The “divine” need not be understood as referring to a God or gods, especially as these terms are assumed to refer to personal or quasi-

¹³⁵ J. Boyle, “The Place of Religion in the Practical Reasoning of Individuals and Groups,” *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 43 (1998): 1-24. Footnote 5 points out explicitly the relationship between “Practical Principles” (1987) and this article. See chapter four above for analysis and summary of “Practical Principles”. Boyle has been a substantial contributor to Grisez’s theory over many years; in particular, he was one of the main collaborators on *Christian Moral Principles*.

¹³⁶ “The Place of Religion in the Practical Reasoning of Individuals and Groups,” 3, making comparative reference (in footnote 3) to Cicero’s definition of religion, which Aquinas used in *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 81, a. 1: “religion consists in offering service and ceremonial rites to a superior nature that men call divine”. Boyle draws here on a standard dictionary definition (Webster’s) of religion. He also refers to William Alston’s idea that religion should be defined by pointing out several “religion-making characteristics” that combine, in various ways and to various degrees in specific instances, to define religion: see “The Place of Religion in the Practical Reasoning of Individuals and Groups,” 2, n. 1.

personal realities. A person can seek the benefit of religion by seeking to be in harmony with an impersonal ultimate principle of reality and meaning, or even more than one such principle. Pantheists, who typically identify nature as the ultimate principle of reality and meaning, can pursue the good of religion by seeking to live in harmony with nature, thus exhibiting “a kind of natural piety”.¹³⁷ Even atheists can seek the good of religion insofar as they can seek to live in harmony with an “impersonal principle of [objective] goodness”.¹³⁸

7.4.2 Grounded in our experiences of sin and failure

We experience ourselves as sinful and, thus, alienated from the divine. We also experience the failures of our initiatives, and quite naturally link these failures with our sinfulness: “Success is often taken as a sign of divine approval, failure a sign of divine displeasure.”¹³⁹ We might experience this alienation emotionally, or we might suppress, ignore, or explain our psychic discomfort in non-religious terms. However, many people seek to overcome this alienation by religious acts such as repentance and sacrifice to the gods. Even people who do not belong to organised religions can experience sinfulness, failure, and grasp the point of trying to seek harmony with the ultimate principle of reality.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 4.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 3. In this respect, Boyle is similar to Finnis and George: see s. 7.1.1 above.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

7.4.3 Religion as a distinct end

People can choose aspects of religious practice and even the benefit of religion itself as a means to other non-religious ends. Such ends include good community relations, the beauty of ritual, and “peace of mind or survival”.¹⁴⁰ Still, many people criticise religious practices that are carried out exclusively for non-religious purposes. Such practices seem to miss the central point of religion. They also fail to recognise the “ultimacy of the divine with which harmony is sought”.¹⁴¹

Is religion the same thing as knowledge of the divine? Boyle argues that it is not, summing up his view in a pithy phrase: “The devil knows a lot about God.”¹⁴² Knowing about the divine is not the same thing as being in harmony with the divine. Still, knowledge of the divine is a necessary condition for anyone to pursue *effectively* harmony with the divine. However, cognitive states are not sufficient for harmony with the divine. Religion and knowledge are two linked but distinct basic human goods.

Is religion reducible to other kinds of harmony, within the self or between self and others? No, religion is its own distinctive good, offering a benefit that can be related to the other reflexive goods, that can even contribute to them, but only insofar as it is a distinct good.¹⁴³ One can recognise “a different and more radical kind of transcendence” in the divine than in oneself or one’s fellows:

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 4.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 5.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ See *ibid.*, 6.

The goodness of friendship and of personal peace and integrity is objective; as such it points to a transcendent principle of objective goodness. The possibility of harmony with that principle cannot be simply an instance of friendship or personal peace; *the divine is too different from other people and from the elements of oneself* to permit such reductions.¹⁴⁴

Reducing religion to other goods makes some benefits impossible. For example, people who become aware of their mortality often seek the distinct good of inner peace. However, if people want to pursue this distinct good effectively and thoroughly, they want to pursue it in a way that is “in accord with the truth about reality”.¹⁴⁵ Such a concern, to be in accord with the truth about reality, and so to achieve a true and lasting inner peace, “leads naturally to a concern to be in a proper relationship with the ultimate principle of this truth”.¹⁴⁶

Boyle also gives a second example of how the divine is often seen as quite distinct from the self or other people. When we hope that the divine will bless our undertakings with success, we also recognise that the divine “may have other plans” than our own, and yet we still hope to initiate or maintain a relationship with this objective, transcendent Other. People often make a clear distinction between God’s will and our own will(s).¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., emphasis added.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ See *ibid.*

7.4.4a Practical judgement is not reducible to simply having certain desires

Boyle distinguishes reasons for action from subjective desires, and goes on to show that the good of religion, along with the other basic human goods, is objective and normative. Boyle is not denying that emotional desires are important in human motivation; in fact, emotional desires are essential.¹⁴⁸ But the human goods that provide us with *reasons* for action, and thus motivate us rationally, are not reducible to mere desires that one happens to have. Boyle wishes to emphasise the role of *judgement* in our grasp of, pursuit of, and instantiation of the human goods, including religion.¹⁴⁹ The basic goods are *intelligible* benefits. As such, we can pursue them even in the face of emotions that impede such pursuit. We can pursue them even when our emotions vary in intensity over time. We can pursue them in groups even though the different members of such groups vary in their emotional motivation.¹⁵⁰ When one has a reason for action, one grasps the point of such action: one grasps its prescriptivity, or normativity. Such an action “is to be done”.

This is not the unconditional prescriptivity of moral obligation, since the reason may compete with other, undefeated reasons, but it is a ground for action irreducible to the fact that someone happens to be in a certain affective state toward some action or outcome.¹⁵¹

The basic goods, which are reasons for action, are normative then in a way that desires are not. We can explain to a third party (and/or to ourselves) why a particular good ought

¹⁴⁸ See *ibid.*, 8-9. Boyle has treated the distinction between goods (as reasons for actions) and emotional motivations in “Reasons for Action: Evaluative Cognitions that Underlie Motivations,” *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 46 (2001): 177-197.

¹⁴⁹ See “The Place of Religion in the Practical Reasoning of Individuals and Groups,” 7.

¹⁵⁰ See *ibid.*, 8. These three examples are given not to disparage emotions and emotional motivation but to emphasise the distinction between rational and emotional motivations and the importance of the former *along with the latter*.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* Note that this means that no-one is morally obliged in every situation to pursue all or any of the goods.

to be pursued or instantiated; we do not simply point out that we feel a certain way, but we point to the intelligible benefit we rationally anticipate participating in through or in our action.¹⁵²

The rational element in this basis of motivation, that is, the intelligibility and normative character described above, holds out a promise that reasons for action are not simply subjective but importantly objective and interpersonal. The presence within reasons for action of intelligibilities that allow different persons to consider, assess, and argue about the same normative realities provides for the possibility of objectivity in this arena of reason and judgment. But objectivity also includes the idea that there is a rational method for correcting opinion and confidently approximating the truth.¹⁵³

Boyle argues that the objectivity and normativity of these reasons for action make it imperative that we “clarify and scrutinize basic judgements about the nature of various sorts of benefits”.¹⁵⁴ Such rational reflection on the basic goods is necessary if we are to pursue them as real benefits. It is necessary for us to correct mistakes about these benefits and how to instantiate them effectively. Such correction is possible when we take into account “past pursuit of goods by others, and the practices and institutions which provide the framework within which people pursue many benefits”.¹⁵⁵

Boyle acknowledges here something that is implicit in Grisez’s moral theory, but not clearly expressed before now, namely that we can learn, indeed, we are required to learn,

¹⁵² See *ibid.*, 9. When we explain our actions, we point to the goods we seek, not to the inclinations we have. We justify the appropriateness of our inclinations (desires) with reference to the benefit or point of our act. Simply saying “because I feel like it” is not usually considered a good justification for acts.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.* We might add that there could be several rational methods for correcting opinion and attaining truth, and not just “a rational method”.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 10. This is so notwithstanding the fact that basic goods are open-ended and our anticipation of the benefits of these goods is not totally predictable, as Boyle mentions (*ibid.*) and he, Grisez and Finnis insisted on in “Practical Principles,” part VI.

from the practical reasoning and actions of others, in order to reason practically ourselves in any effective way. In fact, it is more than just a matter of being effective: we are required as a matter of practical reasoning itself to seek to instantiate as effectively as practically and morally possible the good(s) we are pursuing in an action. Not to do so would be to fail to be practical or moral.

7.4.4b Religion is a normative and objective good, not a merely subjective desire

Boyle then goes on to specifically apply these insights to religion:

The intelligibility, normativity, and objectivity of reasons for action imply that religion, like other basic benefits people anticipate in reasons for action, is not simply a benefit some happen to want but a human good that can make rational demands on anyone.¹⁵⁶

In other words, it is possible and necessary for people to think critically about the good of religion. The good of religion itself demands as much.¹⁵⁷

The intelligibility, normativity and objectivity of religion as a basic good mean that we can recognise and criticise inadequate understandings and instantiations of the good of religion. Boyle points out that we can pursue the good of harmony in numerous ways, depending on which element of the harmony we choose to make dominant. If we choose to make our own will dominant, for example, in pursuing the good of religion, then we will end up with an inadequate kind of harmony with the “divine” because we will shape this divinity and its “will” in our own image, so to speak, and end up trying to manipulate

¹⁵⁶ “The Place of Religion in the Practical Reasoning of Individuals and Groups,” 10.

¹⁵⁷ This clarifies what was perhaps not explicit enough in Grisez’s moral theory until now.

the divine into agreeing with our own (independent) will. This can develop into our using religion to rationalise immorality.¹⁵⁸

The fact that religion is a basic human good does not legitimise each and every attempt to pursue this good. Untrue ideas about God and about how to pursue harmony with him have a devastating effect on our grasp of, and, in particular, our instantiation of, the good of religion:

[I]n religion, false views about the divine are perhaps impossible altogether to correct without divine assistance, and such views will make harmony with the divine less than satisfactory. When such views are developed to rationalize individual or social immorality, the harmony people seek is hardly the friendship of the righteous with God.¹⁵⁹

7.4.5a Religion needs community and tradition

Boyle makes a further point which was only implicit in Grisez's explication of his moral theory until now:

Furthermore, the very transcendence of the divine makes religious activity more dependent than activities for other goods on inherited beliefs and practices.¹⁶⁰

Here, Boyle recognises a problem with the good of religion that does not seem to be such a difficulty with the other goods, including the other reflexive goods: How does one know if one's religious activity *actually* instantiates harmony with the divine? Boyle

¹⁵⁸ See *ibid.*, 10-11. Boyle also outlines how this happens with friendship and inner peace, which can be pursued in inadequate forms, thus instantiating merely domination or denial of the truth.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 11. Perhaps the word "satisfactory" is unfortunate here, as Boyle is so careful in this article to insist and argue that our grasp of the basic goods, which is essentially rational, is not reducible to emotional desire, and so it is not appropriate to describe fulfillment in the basic goods only in terms of "satisfaction", which might suggest purely emotional contentment.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

recognises (albeit briefly, at this point) that it is very difficult to answer this question, precisely because the divine is transcendent, and so not part of our direct experience, or understandable in the way that other items in our experience, or in our reasoning, are understandable. Therefore, we are going to need help in knowing about the good of religion and how to pursue it effectively. This means that we are going to need community and tradition.

This is obvious in Grisez's moral theology, where he often emphasises the importance, and witnesses to it in his own writing, of Christian tradition and community. However, the importance of community and tradition is not so obviously treated in the natural law writings of Grisez, particularly in relation to the good of religion in general.¹⁶¹ The good of religion is not something that we grasp or understand as individuals only; it is a good that one grasps and increasingly understands or misunderstands as part of a community and in the light of tradition. When the community and its tradition are in good shape, then our grasp of religion and our knowledge of how to instantiate it, will be too.

7.4.5b Religion is open to and needs divine revelation

Boyle makes the additional, related point:

Of course, God may have something to say about how to get religion right. But even for those of us accepting divine revelation, the demands of the naturally understood good of religion *provide reason for listening* to what God has to say

¹⁶¹ It should be noted that the natural law writings of Grisez are shorter than his moral theology writings. Still, it should also be noted that Grisez's book, *Beyond the New Morality*, co-authored with Russell Shaw, which outlines his natural law theory in popular form, does give a clear idea of the importance of community and tradition: see chapters five, fourteen, sixteen, and eighteen of the third edition (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988). In Grisez's moral theology, presented in his "The Way of the Lord Jesus" series of books, he focuses on Christian community and tradition, rather than on community and tradition in general.

and seeking to bring our religious practice and our lives as a whole into line with it.¹⁶²

Boyle's (and Grisez's) philosophical natural law theory recognises the importance and value, indeed the necessity, of God guiding us in our understanding of religion and how to pursue it, and helping us to avoid mistakes and errors. Still, Boyle insists that we would have no rational motive to listen to God, or to take his revelation seriously, and to conform our lives to his revealed will, unless we already had some basic grasp of our need for harmony with God and some understanding, however dim, of the benefits of accepting revelation in faith.

7.4.6a Religion and other human goods

Boyle says that the relationship of religion to the other goods is "complex":

Religion is one good among others and so does not negate or subsume the irreducible goodness of the others, but religion can embrace the whole of the life of a morally good person in a way that other human purposes cannot. Consequently, religion has moral priority among human goods without having more of anything that could be called "goodness" in a univocal sense.¹⁶³

Boyle acknowledges that we often act for goods other than religion. Still, we also can see that non-religious activities, such as visiting a friend, can be chosen for religious motives as well as non-religious motives.¹⁶⁴ The non-religious motive, which is provided by one of the basic goods other than religion, remains in its own distinctness and irreducibility. Indeed, the distinct and irreducible goodness of friendship, life, knowledge, and the other

¹⁶² "The Place of Religion in the Practical Reasoning of Individuals and Groups," 11, emphasis added.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ See *ibid.*, 12.

non-religious goods, is “rooted in the divine principle of reality and meaning just as is the goodness of religion”.¹⁶⁵ All the basic goods have something to do with God. God is the source of *all* the principles of the natural law, the creator of *all* forms of goodness. The good of religion can pick out this insight and can include it as an additional motive for actions in pursuit of forms of goodness that could be pursued independently of the good of religion, but which are given strengthened motivation by being understood religiously.

7.4.6b Religion as a supervenient motive

Boyle calls such an additional motive a “supervenient motive for doing otherwise beneficial things”.¹⁶⁶ One can sometimes grasp one substantive good, such as knowledge, as both instrumentally good (to pursue health, for example) and as intrinsically good too, and “one can then act in anticipation of both benefits”.¹⁶⁷ With regard to reflexive goods, acting for the sake of goods *other than* the operative reflexive good “is often constitutive of the harmony”.¹⁶⁸ In other words, pursuing a reflexive good is even more likely to be interconnected with the pursuit of some other good.¹⁶⁹

Applying this to the good of religion, Boyle argues that one can pursue this good whilst pursuing another (seemingly non-religious) good, without rejecting the status of that

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. Boyle means both the intrinsic and instrumental good of knowledge in a single instantiation of it, whilst pursuing another good simultaneously.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 13. The term “operative” is not Boyle’s.

¹⁶⁹ See *ibid.* Here Boyle is developing ideas found in *Christian Moral Principles*, chapter five, where the relationship between substantive and reflexive goods was treated by Grisez: see s. 3.1.7 above.

other good as a basic good in its own right. One pursues the seemingly non-religious good “in a certain spirit or frame of mind”.¹⁷⁰ Such a frame of mind might be minimal or rich. One might pursue friendship, for example, for the sake of friendship itself along with a readiness to reject any sinful aspect of it. This would be a minimal type of pursuit of religion. Or, one might pursue human-to-human friendship in a manner that explicitly sees it as a constitutive aspect of one’s relationship (of harmony) with the divine. The latter would be a richer interrelationship of the two distinct goods of friendship and religion. In either case, the goods of friendship and religion would combine both instrumental and intrinsic goodness.¹⁷¹

7.4.6c Respecting other goods in their own right is essential

It is only when we respect non-religious goods in their own right that we can properly grasp religion as a supervenient motive for their pursuit. For example, it is only when we value true friendship, excellent work, and honest inquiry as goods in their own right, that we can offer them truly as “the stuff of proper human sacrifice”.¹⁷² Thus, respecting the “irreducible plurality of intrinsic goods” is an essential part of respecting the good of religion in its own right and instantiating it effectively.

¹⁷⁰ “The Place of Religion in the Practical Reasoning of Individuals and Groups,” 13.

¹⁷¹ See s. 7.2.6 above.

¹⁷² *Ibid.* Note the link between life as religious and life as sacrificial: see s. 3.5.3 above.

7.4.7a As a supervenient motive, religion can integrate one's life

As a supervenient motive, religion can motivate all the voluntary actions of the life of each of us: "it provides a common, unifying motive for the totality of a person's actions."¹⁷³ But is religion merely suitable for this, or is it morally required for doing so? A major part of Boyle's article aims to answer this question.¹⁷⁴

Boyle does not think that there is any easy deduction from moral principle for the conclusion that religion should be the good that unifies one's whole life. He begins by looking at the more basic norm: "that all have the obligation to seek the truth about religion and live by it".¹⁷⁵ Only if this more basic norm is true, is it true that religion is required for us to integrate our lives. How can the more basic norm be justified? Boyle presents three reasons.

7.4.7b Being an existential good, religion is pervasive as an interest

Firstly, there is "the pervasiveness of the rational appeal of the reflexive goods".¹⁷⁶ This refers to a characteristic of the reflexive goods, namely the fact that "one will have a

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ See *ibid.*, 14-20.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, with reference to *Dignitatis Humanae*, par. 3. Here, Boyle touches on a moral norm that is also treated in detail by Robert George in his *Making Men Moral*, 219-228 and "Religious Liberty and Political Morality", in R.P. George, *In Defense of Natural Law* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press), 125-138. Like Boyle, George deals with religious liberty in light of Grisez's understanding of religion, which he sees as substantially the same as the Council's understanding (insofar as the Council saw religion as a good and as a good involving free choice essentially).

¹⁷⁶ "The Place of Religion in the Practical Reasoning of Individuals and Groups," 14. Boyle is using his own language, not claiming that his approach is a paraphrase or exegesis of *Dignitatis Humanae*. The terms "existential" and "reflexive" are used interchangeably here, though Boyle tends to favour "reflexive".

motive to act for these harmonies in *any* situation of life".¹⁷⁷ One will always find that avoiding conflict or finding harmony is at issue in situations of choice. There will always be choices left not chosen, which causes tension or conflict.¹⁷⁸ In one's decisions, one will always have a rational interest in "an inner life that runs smoothly and is free of conflict"; one will also find that relationships with others make pervasive demands on oneself as a moral agent. Even if we choose for other reasons (goods), a concern for harmony within the self and with others will always be at stake, even if only implicitly.¹⁷⁹

The same is true of harmony with God. It too is at stake, even if only in the background so to speak, in all our decisions. This is very clearly true of those who hold that the divine is personal, but it also applies to those who hold a nontheistic view of the divine:

For even those whose conceptions of the divine are confused, implicit, or very minimal are aware that they sin, that is, act against the objective morality rooted in the divine, and that objective factors beyond human control often foil their hopes and plans.¹⁸⁰

The good of religion is inescapable; we cannot rationally avoid dealing with it. This is one reason why we ought *responsibly* to seek religious truth and live by it.

¹⁷⁷ "The Place of Religion in the Practical Reasoning of Individuals and Groups," 14, emphasis added.

¹⁷⁸ See *ibid.*, 14-15.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 15. Here, Boyle seems to contradict what Grisez had said about the non-religious reflexive goods not being at stake in *all* our choices, as religion can be: see ss. 2.4.6b and 4.6 above.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.* In a footnote appended to this sentence, Boyle makes the point that his argument would be easier if he assumed an articulate theistic conception of a personal God, as "Practical Principles" did, but he wants in this article to show that even a minimal conception of the divine can still make possible an awareness of sin and our vulnerability and dependence on the transcendent. Arguably, Boyle's claims here are in need of empirical support, but as his is a philosophical approach, he merely depends on the reader to accept the truth of his claims as backed up by ordinary and common experience.

7.4.7c *Effective instantiations of reflexive goods include upright willing*

Another reason for this natural law obligation to “seek the truth about religion and live by it” is the connection between reflexive goods and morality. Only choices made in a morally upright way can instantiate effectively the benefits one seeks in the reflexive goods.¹⁸¹ Evidence for this is seen in the widespread assumptions that “the moral virtues are the forms of valuable self-integration”.¹⁸² Of course, people “can seek a limited version of these benefits in harmonies that do not include upright willing”.¹⁸³ One can therefore seek a kind of limited religious harmony by desiring “divine approval for one’s plans, however rationalized or immoral”.¹⁸⁴ However, obviously such religious “harmony” is not a real, lasting harmony with the divine.

Even when one settles for a limited version of harmony, by self-deception,¹⁸⁵ or manipulative or dominating relationships with others, or by false religion, one will always have the genuine benefit of the harmony as a kind of norm acting as a standard calling one back to the genuine benefit that one has foregone by one’s settling for the limited, merely apparent reflexive good.¹⁸⁶ For example, the very possibility, value, and necessity of objectively true religion will continue to act as a moral standard throwing

¹⁸¹ See “The Place of Religion in the Practical Reasoning of Individuals and Groups,” 15-16.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 15-16.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ Boyle tends to treat what Grisez usually lists as the two basic goods to do with harmony within the self (inner peace and inner consistency) as one good. Therefore he tends to see the reflexive or existential goods as having to do with three levels of harmony: within the self, between human selves, and between the self and selves with God.

¹⁸⁶ See *ibid.*, 16.

light on any immoral settling for false religion as an apparent good: it will call one to repent. Therefore, one has a good moral reason to try hard to seek the truth about God and religion and to live by it.

7.4.7d Finding religious truth demands effort

A third reason why one should make the effort to seek religious truth and live by it is that finding religious truth is not easy and so needs effort. Our grasp of religious truth can be hampered by the very alienation from the divine that makes the good of religion so necessary and so rationally appealing. Because the good of religion is so pervasive, and because its real instantiations include upright willing, we need to know religious truth accurately. We cannot rightly ignore or neglect the moral obligation to make the effort necessary to find and live by religious truth. This will include reflection, inquiry, and criticism, and openness to “expose the rationalizations that can easily flaw religious motivations and prevent true harmony with the divine”.¹⁸⁷

7.4.7e Organising one’s life as a whole is a very valuable kind of harmony

Having shown that virtuous, conscientious pursuit of religious truth is rightly presupposed as obligatory, Boyle goes on to examine why such “good religion” (virtuous, reflexively conscious, concerned with objective truth) is required for integrating one’s life. First, he looks at the integrative role of reflexive goods in general.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 17.

¹⁸⁸ Boyle develops what was said only rather briefly in “Practical Principles”: see s.4.6 above.

One reason why we should organise our lives around a reflexive good that brings our choices into unity is that such unity is itself a kind of harmony, and therefore an aspect of the benefit one can seek in reflexive goods. The reflexive goods are concerned with more than just avoiding conflict; they are concerned also with “positive integration of the elements of the self and the development of a positive set of relationships with other people and with the divine”.¹⁸⁹ There is “an integrating thrust” to the reflexive goods, which reaches out to anything in one’s life that “affects or is affected by one’s pursuit of these goods”.¹⁹⁰ Seeking the reflexive goods in only single acts, or choices viewed only as isolated events or individual challenges, tends to lessen the benefit of the goods. A unified life is a more harmonious life than a fragmented or non-integrated life. A life unified around limited, false versions of the reflexive goods (“self-deception, manipulation of others, impious religiosity”)¹⁹¹ will not effectively instantiate harmony and so these false goods are not suitable as principles to organise a truly harmonious life around. Reflexive goods, specified morally as virtues, can provide appropriate supervenient motives around which a whole life can be unified, thus instantiating harmony in its fullest measure.

7.4.7f Supervenient motive provide additional grounds for acting morally

Secondly, Boyle notes that a supervening motive can unify a whole life by giving the person an additional reason to always choose morally. One way of summarising the

¹⁸⁹ “The Place of Religion in the Practical Reasoning of Individuals and Groups,” 17.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid. Note that Boyle here refers to imperfect instantiations of the three levels of existential harmony: within the self, between self and others, and between self and God.

supervening motives provided by the reflexive goods is to consider how the following three additional motives can be operative in all of our choices: Never to act dishonourably; never to act unfairly; never to sin.¹⁹² A person tempted to act against the good of life, for example, has a motive grounded in the good of life to resist this temptation. There are additional motives provided by the reflexive goods, however, that can strengthen such a person's motivation to act morally for the sake of life. These supervening motives bring to mind aspects of various forms of harmony as additional aspects of goodness at stake in the choice concerning life. Acting against life can also be understood as acting against conscience, and/or acting unfairly, and/or sinning, and so an act against life can be understood as simultaneously an act against one and more of the reflexive goods.

7.4.7g The reflexive goods are mutually constitutive and mutually supporting

Boyle acknowledges that each of the reflexive goods can provide a supervening motive as a unifying motive for one's whole life. One can organise one's whole life around the goods of personal integrity, justice, or religion. Nor is it necessary to focus only on one. Although they are three distinct and irreducible goods, the reflexive goods are mutually constitutive and supporting.¹⁹³ Following one's conscience, for example, can be one way,

¹⁹² See *ibid.*, 18. As noted above, Boyle treats the reflexive goods of inner peace and inner consistency as one good: harmony within the self. This is the good violated by dishonourable acts.

¹⁹³ This is one point that is completely overlooked by Tracy Rowland in her criticism of Boyle's treatment of religion as a supervenient motive: see T. Rowland, *Culture and the Thomist Tradition: After Vatican II* (London: Routledge, 2003), 145. Rowland misunderstands completely what Boyle (and Grisez and Finnis) mean by existential goods: she thinks that they are distinct from reflexive goods and that they are "not directly related to each other" (196, n. 41). With such blatant misreading of Grisez's basic theory, it is hardly surprising that Rowland fails to see how his moral theory has a very important place for religion with regard to all the other goods (religion is infrastructural, not just extrinsically "superstructural", as she claims). She also overlooks how his natural law theory flows into his moral theology, and allows and

a very important way too, of instantiating harmony with God; and once one realises that God wishes us to choose in harmony with his will, one is motivated to pursue the good of religion conscientiously. Respecting any one of the reflexive goods will tend to involve respecting them all. Boyle is not arguing that the good of religion should be given priority to the exclusion of the goods of personal integrity and justice.

7.4.7h Religion has moral priority as a supervenient motive

Still, Boyle does argue that the good of religion has a certain kind of moral priority. Religion can supervene on the other reflexive goods and on the whole of morality. This is because God is the source of all the goods and of morality itself. We do not invent or control practical rationality, the natural law, but we acknowledge it as an objective and obligatory reality.¹⁹⁴ “Acting morally is a requirement of harmony with the divine.”¹⁹⁵ People with no real grasp of the objective reality of the transcendent source of everything will be deprived of a supervening motive for organising their whole lives, and they, and people who hold a very minimal conception of the divine, tend to focus on personal integrity or interpersonal harmony as the supervening motive for organising their lives as a whole. Still, religion provides the most suitable supervening motive of all because it is focused on the *transcendent* source of *all* practical rationality, the practical rationality that grounds all deliberation, choice, and action. It is easy for us to understand our responding to the integral directiveness of the human goods as always and necessarily an

requires strong criticism of modern and postmodern culture insofar as that culture is atheistic, agnostic, and immoral. See *Culture and the Thomist Tradition*, 144-148 for her main criticisms.

¹⁹⁴ See “The Place of Religion in the Practical Reasoning of Individuals and Groups,” 19.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

instantiation of the good of religion. Thus religion provides us with a supervening motive for always acting morally.

Another reason for giving religion moral priority as a supervening motive is that religion provides an answer to the questions: why be moral when our efforts are ultimately futile and often lead to suffering for us? Such questions are bound to arise in our fallen world. The good of religion, because it points to a transcendent reality, can deal with these questions, and can ground practical rationality (and justify its integrity) in a transcendent and objective Source capable of rising above our natural limitations and fallenness.¹⁹⁶

A final reason to see religion as the most appropriate basic human reflexive good for organising one's life as a whole is that this good "is concerned more centrally than the other reflexive goods with the reality and objectivity of moral norms."¹⁹⁷ Again, it is important to stress that Boyle is not arguing that it is only religion that grounds the objectivity of practical rationality:

... because of religion's object, the divine source of meaning and reality, it has pride of place even among the reflexive goods. Of course, "never sin" will not override imperatives such as "never violate conscience" and "never wrong others". But "never sin" involves taking a perspective from which it is more difficult to avoid the implications of the real goods all moral norms prescribe, and possible to find grounds for trusting reason in humanly hopeless cases.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ See *ibid.*, 19.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 20.

7.4.8a Religion and human communities

Boyle also treats religion as a social good, and outlines the political implications of this.¹⁹⁹ One way that religion is a social good is that, precisely as a supervening motive, it can motivate “the various acts of obedience and authority which constitute the voluntary lives of people as family members, members of voluntary associations, and citizens”.²⁰⁰ So, at various levels of social organisation, from family, through civil society, to political society, religion can indirectly motivate acts performed for one or more of the other goods.

However, religion can provide a *direct* motive for social action too. The harmony constituted by the integration of all aspects of life under the supervening motivation of religion provides a reason for communities, as well as individuals, to pursue the good of religion. Certain conditions need to be met, if this integrative pursuit of religion is to be effective and morally good. In particular, the various goods involved must be respected in their integrity. The true good of the community, for example, must not be subordinated to the good of religion, or vice versa.²⁰¹ Still, if necessary conditions are met, then community action for the sake of religion can be beneficial and necessary, and can make it possible to participate in the good of religion in a way that purely individual actions cannot.

¹⁹⁹ Boyle covers ground similar to Robert George: see n. 175 above. The social nature of the goods is often overlooked by critics of Grisez’s moral theory. For example, Rowland, 136-138, claims that Grisez’s theory has no place for culture, as if people grasped, instantiated and pursued the basic goods in total isolation from culture, social structures, community, and tradition. This is a serious misrepresentation of Grisez’s theory.

²⁰⁰ “The Place of Religion in the Practical Reasoning of Individuals and Groups,” 20.

²⁰¹ See *ibid.*

Our participation in the good of religion is very dependent on social factors. The transcendence of the divine can make it somewhat difficult to grasp the good of religion and particularly difficult to know how to pursue it effectively. So we depend a great deal on help from others. Boyle emphasises this when he points out that the religious beliefs and practices on which we depend for having any relationship with the divine “are essentially social since they depend upon established social forms.”²⁰² In fact, without such social forms, it would be impossible to pursue the good of religion. Religion is essentially a social good. We cannot pursue it effectively except as part of a community. This implies that “the existence of organized religions, the social opportunities for people to join them, and so on are significant social goods.”²⁰³ It is easy to see, therefore, why the good of religion can be, and ought to be, a social concern for communities at various levels.

7.4.8b Political society and religion

What about the political level in a pluralist society? May it concern itself with the good of religion? Writers such as John Rawls have answered negatively here.²⁰⁴ Boyle’s answer is yes, under certain conditions religion may be a concern at the political level in a pluralist society.

²⁰² Ibid., 21.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ See *ibid.*, n. 15, where Boyle refers to Rawls. Boyle insists that his own approach is a matter of soundly understood “public reason”, and thus respectful of all people, in that “it is addressed to anyone who will pay attention to it and criticise it”. Rawls’s concept of public reason, which functions as a criterion for what is acceptable in political life and action, allows no place for religion or any argument from a comprehensive moral theory.

One of the conditions is that of religious liberty. Here, Boyle, like Robert George, follows the lead of *Dignitatis Humanae*, the Vatican II Declaration on Religious Liberty, which declared that immunity from coercion in matters to do with religion should be a civil right for all.²⁰⁵ Like George, Boyle sees the right to religious liberty as grounded in the very nature of the good of religion. Coercion would destroy the good of religion by making free choice and personal responsibility regarding religion impossible or extremely difficult.²⁰⁶ Political society may intervene in religious matters if this is strictly necessary for protecting human rights or maintaining public order. Still, ordinarily, political society may not command religious belief/practice, or prohibit religious belief/practice.

Does this mean that political society must be religiously neutral? Does it mean that politics must be non-believing or unbelieving? Boyle says no:

But a protected liberty to find out the truth about the important things in life and live according to it, a liberty of worldview for all, including nonbelievers, does not imply that the public domain must be a realm of nonbelief.²⁰⁷

Boyle's reason for holding this position is that political society has a moral responsibility to create a space where people can fulfil their obligation to seek religious truth and live by it, but it cannot carry out this responsibility if a particular answer to the religious question is assumed to be true. Nonbelief, or even religious scepticism, is a particular

²⁰⁵ See *ibid.*, footnotes 16 and 19. See n. 175 above too.

²⁰⁶ See *ibid.*, 21.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

position regarding religion. So, if political society assumes that nonbelief, or even agnosticism, is true, it has already forestalled the religious quest, so to speak, and will act in ways that interferes with citizens' religious quests, thus violating their right to religious liberty.

This is an important point in Boyle's final section, and it goes beyond what George, or Grisez, or Finnis, had written up until that time.²⁰⁸ In an earlier version of his argument, Boyle had argued for political neutrality with regard to religion, but in the published version, he rejects this idea:

No doubt strict neutrality between the variety of worldviews, religious or other, which have bearing on such matters [as child care and education, abortion and euthanasia, and the use of religious symbolism in public places] is impossible. Political choice is needed on these matters and it is bound better to fit one rather than others of the competing worldviews.²⁰⁹

We might give an example here: if a decision has to be made on whether to legalise abortion, then the decision taken cannot be neutral if one worldview argues for the banning of abortion on the grounds that is the killing of the innocent, whilst another worldview argues that it is not such killing and should be legally allowed. Allowing

²⁰⁸ However, Finnis has commented since on Boyle's article. See his "Religion and State: Some Main Issues and Sources," *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 51 (2006): 107-130. One major point Finnis makes is that if a state is confronted with a religion that teaches its members to act in a way detrimental to the public good (by intimidating those who leave that religion to join another, for example, or calling for violence towards those who criticise that religion), then that state will have to make a judgement on the truth of the religion in question. Because such a religion, at least insofar as it teaches what is morally false and socially harmful, is judged to be wrong, and must be so judged, the state in this circumstance cannot remain non-judgemental regarding religious matters: see *ibid.*, 124-127 (section VII).

²⁰⁹ "The Place of Religion in the Practical Reasoning of Individuals and Groups," 23. In the footnote appended to the final sentence of this quotation, Boyle mentions how he originally argued in terms of political neutrality, but now sees this as mistaken (see *ibid.*, n. 17).

abortion, even in restricted circumstances, cannot fail to show favour to the latter view, and disfavour towards the former (and the former view might be a religious one).

Boyle does not elaborate on these matters but makes some brief remarks that indicate how such difficulties might be tackled politically. He favours the idea that political authorities should create the conditions for good public debate and deliberation, conditions that do not prejudice any particular religious position, or any non-religious position, and that any political decisions on controversial matters would take into account all the relevant arguments, in the light of reason.²¹⁰ Boyle does not treat these issues in enough detail for us to evaluate or analyse his position on them here. He does state clearly, however, that the state must be ready to show respect, or at least avoid disrespect, towards religious views and communities, and that if a state did this, it would make a substantial difference to the quality of public deliberation and public policy in that society. Boyle seems to be hinting that in present circumstances the state tends often not to respect religion as a good, and this lack of respect, embodied in an assumption of supposed neutrality or religious scepticism, leads to flawed political deliberation and policy.

The state has a moral obligation to create the social space for citizens to meet their religious responsibilities as individuals and members of groups. One aspect of this obligation is that the state has to help keep peace between religions; another thing the

²¹⁰ See *ibid*, n. 18 especially on this, but note how Boyle in n. 19 seems somewhat vague.

state can do is to promote religious, moral and philosophical inquiry.²¹¹ Boyle, like George and Grisez,²¹² seems to allow for state aid to religious schooling, as long as this does not violate religious liberty. Boyle makes the point that

if a polity creates and protects the social space people need to discover and live out the truth about their relationship with the divine [by facilitating] honourable religious practice, then it constitutes itself as a community ready to submit to the transcendent source of reality and meaning.²¹³

A state can pursue and instantiate the good of religion in its own appropriate way, by political means that respect religious liberty and the value of the good of religion for all its citizens. Boyle contrasts such a “religious” state with one in which religion is viewed as “an eccentricity of certain individuals and groups that must be put up with only to respect their privacy, freedom of expression, and rights of association”.²¹⁴ This latter kind of polity is one which fails to understand or acknowledge the true value of the good of religion, and it is one that will tend to express this lack of respect in its policies and actions, which will tend to disfavour religious belief and practice. Boyle argues in favour of a polity (which includes both legislators and judges) that recognises the moral goodness of pursuing the good of religion in appropriate ways. He does not argue directly in favour of a paternalistic state, as does George, but he seems to come to much the same

²¹¹ See *ibid*

²¹² Some ideas on Grisez’s position regarding political morality can be found in *Living a Christian Life*, chapter 11, Questions B-D: see especially Q. B part 2 (846-851), which discusses how the political common good both requires and limits political responsibility. The good of religion is not treated there in any detail, apart from a brief treatment of religious liberty (861-862) which shows that Grisez supports the point made in *Dignitatis Humanae* (and supported by Boyle and Finnis and George) that governments have the duty to show favour to the religious life of their citizens, for instance in supporting religious schools and hospitals.

²¹³ “The Place of Religion in the Practical Reasoning of Individuals and Groups,” 23-24.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

conclusions as George, particularly with regard to the good of religion as the ground for religious liberty and for providing a reason for the state to support religion by positive and fair policies and actions, though he is not as definite or as clear in the examples he gives of how a state can support religion or show favour to the religious life of its citizens.²¹⁵ His final remarks concern how a state that tries to respect religion and religious liberty is thereby participating in the good of religion as an intrinsic aspect of human fulfillment. Thus, Boyle ends up as he began, with religion as an intrinsically fulfilling end of human deliberation, choice and action.

Finnis has gone further than Boyle in giving some details of how the state ought to favour religion. He argues that the state is bound not to do certain things if it is to act with respect for the good of religion in a philosophically sound and morally upright manner.²¹⁶ It must not teach or imply by its actions or policies that no religion is true. Nor may it teach that any false religion is the true religion. Except in a small number of exceptional cases, the state may not impose any affirmative religious test for public offices or benefits. It may not seek to direct the true religion in that religion's own governance. Finnis also argues that individuals may refer to their religious beliefs in voting or legislating, as long as these beliefs are capable of being defended publicly by way of philosophical and historical reasoning and knowledge (and the religion in question is

²¹⁵ Like George, Boyle refers to the passage in *Dignitatis Humanae* in which the Fathers of Vatican II state that the right to religious liberty does not render it wrong for the state to *show favour towards* the religious life of its citizens, but in fact requires it: see "The Place of Religion in the Practical Reasoning of Individuals and Groups," 23, n. 19.

²¹⁶ The following points are taken from Finnis's conclusions in "Religion and State", 128-130. Finnis nuances some of these points; for example, he insists that a religion may not rightly influence its members in voting or legislating by teaching beyond its own competence with regard to facts and predictions.

willing, capable and acting to do so). Finally, Finnis makes the point that a people may rightly identify in their constitutional arrangements what they consider to be the true religion, as long as the principles above are followed and religious freedom is honoured.²¹⁷

Clearly the area of how the public authorities ought to treat the good of religion is one part of Grisez's theory that is being developed by his collaborators, with George, Boyle and Finnis taking similar, but distinct, approaches. It is an area in need of further development.

7.5 Conclusion to the chapter

Finnis and Boyle have done important work regarding the philosophical aspects of the good of religion and its place in the moral theory they share with Grisez.²¹⁸ They have shown how religion is a very broad good, one in which even agnostics and atheists can participate, to a very limited extent of course, insofar as they can appreciate and engage in the religious quest. They have also clarified the distinctiveness and irreducibility of the good of religion, whilst analysing its architectonic, or overarching, character and potential. They have brought out the limitations of practical reason and philosophy, and the openness of practical reason towards community, tradition, and divine revelation.

²¹⁷ See *ibid.*, 130. Finnis states that his six conclusions follow from his article in full.

²¹⁸ Grisez has developed the theological aspects, as we have seen in chapters three, five, and six above.

Finnis has shown how deeply rooted in classical philosophy the basic goods moral theory is. He has analysed how human understanding has been considered a kind of “god-like” attribute, and how practical reasoning, or the natural law, has been understood as a sharing in divine wisdom and providence. Finnis has developed these thoughts to a great extent in his study of Aquinas, and has shown how supportive Aquinas is of the basic goods theory. In particular, Finnis has shown how religion can be understood to be a kind of assimilation and adherence to God, which begins in our practical reasonableness in this life, and is perfected by God in the next. Finnis has demonstrated a critical attitude towards aspects of Aquinas’ work, but overall he is more sympathetic than Grisez towards Aquinas’ thought. Perhaps Finnis shows how it might be possible to deal positively with the differences between Grisez’s and Aquinas’s approaches.

Finnis has developed a number of concepts that are related to religion and which clarify its meaning and potential, namely friendship, common good, and transparency. Religion is seen as a friendship with God, which has as its common good the flourishing of the self and others as God’s creatures whom he loves and wills to flourish. It also can include God’s “flourishing” as our friend, in an analogical sense. Religion is transparent for the full range of goods and persons, enabling us to see these goods and persons more clearly and love them more strongly. The good of religion illuminates the natural law.

Boyle presents the concept of “supervenient motive” to help us to understand how religion adds motivation to our love of the goods. A supervenient motive adds a further, overarching motive to one’s actions. Religion can do this by adding the motive of

avoiding sin, and/or of doing God's will, to all our other motives, thus strengthening these motives. Boyle has shown also how religion is irreducible, with its own distinctive and normative character. He has brought out the objective aspects of religion very well, showing how we are always bound morally and practically to search for religious truth. Finally, he and Finnis (and Robert George) have begun to develop a theory on how religion is to be treated in the public square, with an emphasis on religious freedom and also on how religion forms part of the common good of society.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CRITICISMS

8.1 Russell Hittinger, *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory* [1987]¹

This was the first book-length analysis and criticism of Grisez's moral theory. It was dismissive and critical in its tone and arguments and extremely negative in its conclusions. Grisez and some of his collaborators issued detailed replies to Hittinger's criticisms soon after his book was published. These replies demonstrated that Hittinger's work was inaccurate in many instances and unfair to Grisez's theory.² However, Hittinger brings to light some important matters, especially regarding religion, so it is worthwhile to look as constructively as we can at his criticisms.³

¹ Russell Hittinger, *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Notre Dame Press, 1987). This book criticises what it calls "the Grisez-Finnis new natural law theory", thus leaving out Joseph Boyle's important contribution to the theory, and also reducing Grisez's work to natural law theory. In the present chapter, the theory is often referred to as Grisez's theory for simplicity and as he is the originator of the theory, and the one who has developed it theologically. Also he is the focus of this dissertation. Still, both Finnis's and Boyle's contributions to the theory are acknowledged by the present author and works of theirs have been treated in previous chapters.

² See G. Grisez, "A Critique of Russell Hittinger's Book, *A Critique of the New Natural Law*", *New Scholasticism* 62 (1988), 438-465; John Finnis, "Russell Hittinger's Straw Man", *Fellowship of Catholic Scholars Newsletter*, March 1989, 6-8; John Finnis, "Doctor Finnis Replies to Doctor Koterski", *Fellowship of Catholic Scholars Newsletter* (June 1989): 6-7; Robert P. George, "Recent Criticism of Natural Law Theory" (originally published 1988), in Robert P. George, *In Defence of Natural Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 31-82, at 59-82.

³ Rufus Black takes a different line on this matter. He considers the articles by Grisez and especially George to have answered Hittinger's arguments sufficiently, and so he does not deal with them in any detail: see Rufus Black, *Christian Moral Realism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 5, 9. Black also mentions some other criticisms of Grisez's moral theory by Ralph McInerny and Henry Veatch, and others, who take an approach similar to that of Hittinger (and so we do not look at their specific criticisms separately here). Black's mainly positive criticisms of Grisez's theory is examined below in s. 8.3.

8.1.1 *An outline of Hittinger's criticisms of Grisez's moral theory*

Hittinger claims that Grisez's moral theory has a seriously flawed foundation because it does not found itself upon a comprehensive philosophy of nature (8, 36, 171, 193).⁴ As a result of this, Grisez presents the basic human goods, including religion, as self-evident intuitions, grasped without any need for other knowledge, and so beyond debate or discussion or any rational evaluation or critique (34, 38, 41, 164f, 193).⁵ Therefore, Grisez's theory cannot allow any effective reply to the objections of atheists or to those who point to the bewildering diversity of religions (47, 90, 95). Grisez's philosophical approach to proving God's existence and working out the nature of this "God" is too narrow, confined to a *via negativa* that ends up with a deity that cannot be the object of the good of religion (99-104, 152). Therefore, there is no morally significant object for religion and so no naturally accessible rationale for our obligation to obey God's will (20, 90, 105, 122).

As there is thus no specifically religious benefit in the good of religion, it is reduced to the First Principle of Morality: to love all the (other) goods with an inclusivistic attitude (110, 142). Any possible motivational attractiveness for the good of religion becomes evident only in the light of divine revelation and Christian faith, which are the sole source of religion's content and specificity and of certain knowledge of God as personal. Thus, Grisez's moral theory is founded on a kind of fideism (20, 51, 88f, 90, 105, 113, 158,

⁴ The logical relationship between these criticisms is indicated here in the order of their presentation in the following three paragraphs, which is not precisely Hittinger's order. References to Hittinger's book are given in brackets in the main text of this section.

⁵ This idea, that the goods are self-evident intuitions, is held not only by Hittinger. For example, Jean Porter, *Nature as Reason: A Thomistic Theory of the Natural Law* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, UK: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005) makes the same criticism (at 127, 129 and 150).

167). Therefore, there are two kinds of “religion” in Grisez’s system: the natural law religion, which is unattractive and thus useless as a practical principle, and the Christian religion, which is attractive but available only to those with a faith seen as unsupported and irrational. This leads to two separate moral systems, and an incoherent moral theory (91, 122, 124, 184).

The basic human goods, including religion, have no transcendent dimension but are concerned with only the worldly good of the self: self-fulfillment and purely immanent goodness (42, 53-55, 65, 85, 153, 186). The basic human goods are isolated from each other, as they are incommensurable and irreducible to each other, and so religion cannot have any architectonic role for one’s life, nor can it be the pre-eminent virtue (51, 90, 170f, 181). Grisez is subjectivist with regard to life plans: one can have no criteria for evaluating options with regard to life plans, which are therefore always merely matters of personal taste and/or convention (79-84, 153, 181). Finally, according to Hittinger, the obligation to pursue and respect the basic human goods, including religion, is presented by Grisez as a duty, but integral human fulfillment is seen as an unachievable ideal, thus reducing Grisez’s theory to a kind of Kantianism, especially as there is no overall *telos* for human life, nor any possible natural transcendence, that can be known prior to choice or faith (7, 53, 143f, 154, 168, 178, 186f).

Very concisely presented, such are the main substantive criticisms of Grisez’s (and Finnis’s) moral theory offered by Hittinger. An article⁶ by him in 1989 shows that he did

⁶ Russell Hittinger, “A Response to the Exchange of Opinion,” *Fellowship of Catholic Scholars Newsletter* (June 1989): 7-8 and concluded on 23.

not change his mind even after Grisez, Finnis and Boyle published their 1987 article “Practical Principles, Moral Truth, and Ultimate Ends”; in fact, Hittinger seems to think that their attempts to clarify matters in the 1987 article shows that his criticisms had some cogency.⁷

8.1.2 *The need for a philosophy of nature and a philosophy of God*

One of the most central claims in Hittinger’s criticism of Grisez is that a sound theory of natural law must be founded on a comprehensive and accurate philosophy of nature, in which man’s having his final end in God is acknowledged and has a foundational role to play. Hittinger seems to consider Aquinas’s work as an example of this and a stark contrast to Grisez in this regard.⁸ Hittinger claims that even though Grisez makes reference to Aquinas’s treatment of religion as a natural virtue, (he cites *Christian Moral Principles*, 124), he overlooks some very important characteristics of Aquinas’s approach. According to Hittinger, Aquinas uses a

theoretical apparatus ... to justify the so-called natural good of religion and its place in the natural law system. Not only is it presupposed that certain aspects of God’s being are demonstrable (such as excellence of being, governance of the world, and his status as final cause of human nature), but Aquinas’s discussion of religion likewise presupposes a philosophy of human nature – in particular, a hierarchical and teleological account of the intellect and the will’s relation to objects and ends. Indeed, Aquinas argues that the virtue of religion is superior to the other natural

⁷ See *ibid.*, 7. It seems that Hittinger has not changed his mind regarding Grisez. A more recent book by Hittinger, which contains chapters on natural law theory, does not even mention Grisez or Finnis: R. Hittinger, *The First Grace: Rediscovering the Natural Law in a Post-Christian World* (Wilmington, Delaware: ISI books, 2003). Without necessarily agreeing with all of Hittinger’s criticisms, one has to agree that Grisez has made definite efforts since 1987 to clarify his theory, and that some of these clarifications address matters raised by Hittinger (and others). In this, Grisez shows himself willing to develop his theory and answer critics.

⁸ Hittinger’s point is not that Grisez fails to be an accurate exegete of Aquinas, but that he fails to develop a theory as sound as that of Aquinas.

virtues precisely because it governs man more immediately with regard to his final end. It is not one categorical among others, but an architectonic virtue.⁹

Hittinger describes the foundational work that Aquinas had to do as a “massive amount of philosophical work necessary to establish this minimal toehold regarding the natural virtue of religion.”¹⁰ Grisez does not do this necessary, huge amount of philosophical work, according to Hittinger, and so in Grisez’s theory the basic human goods, including religion, seem to be simply “pulled out of thin air”.¹¹ Hittinger sees Grisez’s theory as a kind of intuitionism in which there is no real attempt to justify the existence of, and nature of, the basic goods.

Hittinger mentions the fact that Grisez engages in some dialectical arguments in favour of the goods, and points out some anthropological and psychological evidence for them, but Hittinger considers these to be weak arguments. For example, how could empirical evidence justify positing religion as a basic principle of practical reason, when the object of religion is beyond human sight?¹² Further, such dialectical arguments or evidence are seen by Hittinger to be inconsistent with Grisez’s theory. Hittinger argues that Grisez’s presentation of the basic principles of practical reason as self-evident entails that it is unnecessary to argue for them.¹³ As far as Hittinger is concerned, Grisez simply posits this list of goods as intuited from human inclinations. Indeed, he claims that Grisez sees

⁹ *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory*, 171.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 220, n. 23.

¹¹ This is the phrase Hittinger uses on the first page of his short article mentioned in note 6 above.

¹² See *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory*, 45.

¹³ See *ibid.*, 44.

the goods as identical with human inclinations.¹⁴ Grisez does not adequately explain or justify why he picks certain inclinations to specify the basic goods. Nor can he, because he does not work out an adequate philosophy of nature and man and God to be the foundation of the theory and to provide the rationale for the goods and virtues shaping the theory. In particular, and in contrast to Aquinas, Grisez does not show how man is naturally oriented towards God as his final end.¹⁵ Hittinger maintains that for Grisez “practical reason is not naturally ordained to an end that transcends” this-worldly goods here and now, and he also claims that “this represents a significant departure from the natural law theory as it has been explicated within the Augustinian-Thomistic nexus.”¹⁶

8.1.3 The issue of self-evident primary principles

If we understand the term “self-evident” to mean “intuitively picked out of thin air”, as Hittinger seems to understand the term, then Grisez’s theory will seem very weak. However, it is only fair to mention that Aquinas says that the primary principles of the

¹⁴ See *ibid.*, 40. This is one of Hittinger’s misreadings that Grisez points out in “A Critique of Russell Hittinger’s book,” 451f. There, Grisez says “... ‘tendencies’ and ‘inclinations’ are never used to refer to the goods (see *Contraception and the Natural Law*, 64-70, to which Hittinger makes several references, in the context of 63). ‘Tendencies’ and ‘basic inclinations’ refer not to the goods, but to appetites which point to the goods. The goods are ends not appetites.” We might add here that the very first sentence on page 65 of *Contraception and the Natural Law* states explicitly: “The inclinations, simply as psychic facts, are not themselves principles of practical reason.” See s. 2.1.3 above. Hittinger probably has confused Grisez’s list of basic tendencies (*ibid.*, 64) with Grisez’s list of basic goods and thus mixed up the two concepts. Note, however, that on page 31 of *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory*, Hittinger acknowledges that Grisez does *not* equate the tendencies with natural law. Clearly, Hittinger contradicts himself on this matter.

¹⁵ See *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory*, 20.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 86.

natural law are self-evident, and that Grisez is following him in this, so if Grisez's theory is weak in this respect, so is Aquinas's.¹⁷

Of course, it is very important that we are completely clear on what "self-evident" means (and does not mean) and what exactly is claimed to be self-evident in Grisez's theory. If we understand Grisez's theory to be saying that the *fullness* of the benefit in each and all of the basic human goods is grasped in a purely intuitive manner simply by awareness of our inclinations, then we will judge the theory to be inadequate as this does not make sense or hold up to scrutiny. Hittinger thinks Grisez's theory understands self-evidence in this inadequate way, so it is no wonder that he is scathing towards any theorist (he is clearly pointing to Grisez) who completely discounts the need for any philosophical knowledge in practical reasoning or the moral life:

But what strains credibility is that one could purport to have a coherent theory of practical reason, even while disclaiming to know (in the strong sense of the term *to know*) what it is to be human, whether human beings have ends, and how the overall setting of nature either orients or disorients human action. Credibility is further strained by one who would insist that the latter type of knowledge is unnecessary, even if one should have it.¹⁸

¹⁷ See *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 94, a. 2, which was analysed in detail in a seminal article by Grisez: "The First Principle of Practical Reason: A Commentary on the *Summa Theologiae*, 1-2 Question 94, Answer 2," *Natural Law Forum* 10 (1965): 168-201. Hittinger mentions this article many times but does not seem to see his inconsistency in criticizing Grisez's presentation of the primary principles as self-evident, whilst praising Aquinas's natural law theory, which does so too. Kevin M. Staley, "New Natural Law, Old Natural Law, or the Same Natural Law?" *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 38 (1993): 109-133, at 121 points out that Aquinas' position on the primary principles of the natural law being self-evident is one reason why we should not consider him a *eudaimonia* foundationalist. In other words, Aquinas does not base the natural law on a theoretical understanding of human happiness, which is not a self-evident principle or kind of knowledge, but on practical principles, which are self-evident. Only when one has grasped the primary self-evident principles of normative natural law, can one understand what the purpose of life as whole is. In other words, the natural law is prior to *eudaimonia* (or happiness). Staley considers the good of religion in its architectonic role in Grisez's moral theory to be similar to *eudaimonia* in Aristotle's philosophy and to contemplation in Aquinas' thought.

¹⁸ *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory*, 193.

Still, Hittinger raises important questions about self-evidence and the place of knowledge and philosophy in practical reasoning. He also raises the following interesting questions: What exactly is the foundation of Grisez's theory? What is the foundation of the natural law? Are these the same foundation?

According to Grisez, the primary principles of the natural law are its foundation and are self-evident. This means that an ordinary person can "access" the natural law, at least its primary principles, without having any detailed or sophisticated theory of human nature or God. This seems to be a way of understanding morality and our natural grasp of it that is very much characteristic of natural law theory. The natural law is morality as reasonableness, as common sense, as graspable (in principle) by anyone who is willing to use his reason honestly.¹⁹ So one has to wonder why it is that Hittinger insists that every natural law theory must be founded on a comprehensively worked out philosophy of nature and God. Such a view would seem to imply that ordinary people, who generally lack any grasp of detailed philosophy or theory, are obliged to follow the natural law without having any knowledge of its foundational principles, which is surely not the case.

Perhaps Hittinger is merely claiming that the *theorist* needs to have a fully worked out accurate philosophy of nature and God in order to have an adequate theory of natural law, even though the ordinary person is not expected or required to have such a theory (or even to know of it). This will not do, however, as we surely do not want to claim that the

¹⁹ See, for example, J. Budziszewski, *What We Can't Not Know* (Dallas: Spence Publishing Company, 2003). This book provides an interesting account of the natural law as common sense. It also provides an example of a critic who has revised his earlier "uncharitable and imperceptive" criticisms of Grisez's moral theory (see *ibid.*, 104-105). Budziszewski's earlier criticisms were in his *Written on the Heart: The Case for Natural Law* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 198-201.

ordinary person can have access to the primary principles of the natural law without having a comprehensive philosophy of nature worked out, whilst the theorist has to have such a philosophy before he can grasp the primary principles. It is true that the theorist will need more than a grasp of the primary principles of the natural law if he is to fully understand the various aspects of morality and human life, and to expertly work out answers to difficult moral questions, (expert answers which the ordinary person can benefit from). In such theoretical (and practical) endeavours, the theorist will need an accurate and comprehensive philosophy of nature and God, but this philosophy is not needed *before* the theorist can grasp the primary principles: it can be developed only *after* he has grasped these primary principles.²⁰ Hittinger seems to be confusing the basic principles of practical reason with the fullness of practical reason; only the former are self-evident.²¹

8.1.4 Grisez's philosophical notion of God

Hittinger thinks that the ways of proving God's existence followed by Aquinas (the famous "five ways") are adequate, and that we can come to know a morally significant amount of knowledge about God's characteristics, though in a limited way, by unaided reason.²² He thinks Grisez's argument for God's existence, by contrast, is very narrowly

²⁰ It should be added here that the "ordinary person" too can benefit from having a more detailed understanding of human nature and of human life – this is not restricted only to the theorist! Grisez is perfectly happy that theorists and others ought to search for a more and more adequate understanding of human nature and human life, including theoretical study.

²¹ Hittinger is also confusing natural law theory with the natural law itself. The former is more complex and theoretical than the latter, which it presupposes. See s. 1.2 above.

²² See *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory*, 103, where Hittinger complains that Grisez "has no use for the *analogia entis* and the *analogia eminentiae*". Obviously, Hittinger considers these to be essential for coming to know about God naturally, and to have been used by Aquinas and his followers.

focussed, comprising a *via negativa* that ends up saying very little about God. As such, Grisez's approach does not allow us to naturally know enough about God for us to be motivated by the good of religion, understood as harmony between our wills and God's will. Grisez's philosophical notion of God is too "thin", so to speak, for his "thick" notion of the good of religion.

[Grisez] rejects the soundness of any argument based upon design or telic order in nature or any other 'way' to God that would enable one to affirm a property of God other than obtains²³

Hittinger has put his finger on something that is quite noticeable about Grisez's philosophical argument for God's existence: Grisez is very strict about the fact that we cannot know what God is in himself. God is utterly incomprehensible in himself, a total mystery, not to be described as similar to anything in our experience (or, at least, not in any direct or literal manner).²⁴ It is legitimate to ask if the God that Grisez thinks is *naturally* knowable could be the object of the basic good of religion, or whether divine revelation is necessary for this God to be understood, even minimally, as worth being in harmony with.

Grisez seems to be very negative about any argument from design for God's existence and character. Hittinger is accurate in this respect.²⁵ One might wonder if a natural law

²³ Ibid., 102., with a footnote reference to Grisez, *Beyond the New Theism: A Philosophy of Religion* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), 301 and 12.

²⁴ See ss. 2.5.1, 2.5.2, 4.2.1 and 6.1.2 above.

²⁵ Of course, Hittinger cannot be expected to refer in any detail in his 1987 book to articles and books published after that date, so he could not have known about the developments in Grisez's argument for God's existence, which can be seen in "Practical Principles, Moral Truth, and Ultimate Ends," *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 32 (1987): 99-151, "Natural Law, Religion, God, and Human Fulfillment,"

theory can, and ought, to incorporate an argument from design, or whether the strict argument of Grisez's is the only one to use. In his reply to Hittinger's book, Grisez points out that he does acknowledge clearly in *Beyond the New Theism* that there are other kinds of argument for God's existence that are different from his, but which "also yield definite descriptions of something which I would call 'God' without qualification". Grisez mentions the moral argument as an example.²⁶ Grisez also points to a section of *Beyond the New Theism* (85-87) which shows how many believers reason about God and his existence in a way that is religiously significant and *is similar in kind* to the reasoning he pursues in his strict cosmological argument from contingency.²⁷ Still, one's overall impression of Grisez's approach, albeit probably against his intention, could very well be that it is a philosophical approach that ends up with a very austere and perhaps forbidding notion of God, one that does not easily evoke religious feelings. Without necessarily agreeing completely with Hittinger's criticism of Grisez in this respect, we can agree that the main argument presented in *Beyond the New Theism* was too open to misunderstanding, and that its development by Grisez in subsequent years was welcome and helped to clarify matters. (And such development should continue.)²⁸

American Journal of Jurisprudence 46 (2001): 3-36, and the new preface to the republished *Beyond the New Theism*, re-titled: *God: A Philosophical Preface to Faith* (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2005). In these, Grisez moves closer to acceptance of a kind of moral argument for God's existence, and maybe even towards a kind of design argument. See ss. 4.2.2 and 6.1.4 – 6.1.6 above.

²⁶ *Beyond the New Theism*, 90.

²⁷ See "A Critique of Russell Hittinger's book", 461.

²⁸ Staley, 131-132, argues that Grisez needs to develop his theoretical metaphysical foundations with regard to God and how we participate in God's goodness by our virtuous actions, and not to rely only on theology. Perhaps some of what Finnis has done goes some of the way towards answering Staley: see ss. 7.1 – 7.3 above.

That said, Hittinger goes too far when he says that Grisez's notion of God allows us to say nothing of him except that he 'obtains'. This is to ignore most, if not all, of several chapters (fifteen to seventeen) of *Beyond the New Theism* in which Grisez writes about the various things that can be said of God philosophically, whether by noting what can be denied of God, or what "metapredicables" can be affirmed of God, and what things can be said of God as he exists in relation to us.²⁹ Certainly, we are still left with a notion of God that is far from fully satisfying, but one might ask: so what? Is Hittinger arguing that our purely philosophical notion of God ought to be fully satisfying and complete? Surely not, as if it were, what need would there be for divine revelation, faith, and theology?³⁰

We can also mention here the fact that ordinary people's grasp of the primary principles of the natural law, including their grasp of the principle directing us to pursue and instantiate the good of religion, is not dependent on their having any sophisticated philosophy of God, or even on knowing that such a philosophy exists. Even so, ordinary people will be helped in their pursuit and instantiation of the basic goods, especially religion, by avoiding false or inadequate ideas of God and his relationship to us and nature, and the natural law theorist will be helped in this respect too. So it is good to have an accurate philosophy of God, including the kind of strict cosmological argument of Grisez's, as well as other arguments and approaches.³¹ Nothing in Grisez's theory

²⁹ See also "A Critique of Russell Hittinger's book," 443.

³⁰ Actually, perhaps Hittinger is aware implicitly of the danger of a philosophical foundation that goes too far and leaves no room for theology, for he briefly criticises Aquinas for *over-determining* his own philosophical foundations: see *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory*, 163.

³¹ It should be noted that Grisez developed his argument for God's existence at least partly to answer the sophisticated philosophical objections of Hume, Kant, Hegel, and post-Hegelian relativists, (which is why he devotes so much space to them in his book), and that this shapes the kind of approach he takes. How we

discounts the usefulness and even necessity of good philosophical knowledge and understanding: he just denies that such knowledge and understanding is necessary for our grasp of the very first principles of practical thinking, the primary principles of the natural law. Nor does Grisez deny that revelation is useful and necessary, even though it is not necessary for our grasp of the basic principles of natural law.³² The basic principles of the natural law in Grisez's theory are only starting points for practical thinking, not final, completely formed and comprehensively accurate understandings of the full reality of the basic goods. It is only these starting points (which point us towards the ends that are specified by the various basic goods) that are self-evident; to know more than just these starting points, we need to pursue the goods and attempt to instantiate them, and this pursuit and instantiation can make use of, and needs to make use of, many kinds of knowledge beyond the self-evident principles that start the whole process off and continue to motivate its open-ended progress.

8.1.5a Are the basic goods concerned only with immanent self-fulfillment?

One of the most critical claims of Hittinger is that Grisez presents the goods as concerned solely with self-fulfillment and that these goods lack any transcendent dimension. So, religion, to take the most pertinent example, is not concerned with our obeying, loving and worshipping God as an objective, transcendent reality that is supreme and ultimate and so worthy of our obedience, love and worship. Instead, the good of religion is

should understand God for other purposes, including the practical purposes of living a moral life and living the life of a believer, are dealt with to some extent in various chapters of the book outside of the strict presentation of the central argument itself.

³² On the place of accurate philosophical and theological knowledge in Grisez's moral theory, see ss. 2.2.3; 2.4.3; 2.5.1; 2.5.5b; 2.6.4; 2.6.5; 3.1.4; 3.1.7; 3.2.3; 3.2.4; 3.3.4; 3.4.1; 4.3.2; 4.5.6; 4.7.1; 4.9.2a; 5.1.1b; 5.1.2e; 5.1.6a; 6.1.7b; and 6.2.2 above. Regarding his collaborators' thoughts on this, see 7.1.10; 7.2.6; 7.3.4; 7.3.5; 7.4.4b, 7.4.5a, 7.4.5b, and 7.4.7c above.

concerned only with our following the First Principle of Morality, or, in other words, with having an inclusivistic attitude toward all the other basic goods. And these goods are concerned only with our own immanent fulfillment as individuals. Hittinger thinks that Grisez's understanding of religion fails to see it as concerned with honouring God, bearing in mind his status as superior to us, but as using a concept of God to motivate us to honour the goods (and thus serve our own needs).³³ Hittinger thinks that Grisez's theory puts all the emphasis on goods and none on persons, including the person of God. Such an emphasis "virtually insures an ethico-religious positivism"³⁴ in which God must lay down the law (our duty) extrinsically, because it is not clear how the human subject is open to transcendence. In Grisez's system the moral subject is trapped in the immanent sphere. This also means, however, that there seems to be no specifically *religious* benefit in the good of religion, that it has no real religious meaning.

These criticisms of Hittinger are very harsh, and hardly seem to do justice to the basic goods as they have been presented by Grisez as part of his theory. Grisez presents these goods as essentially rationally grasped opportunities for fulfillment of human beings as human beings, and so we can grasp them as worthy of pursuit and instantiation not only for ourselves as individuals but for others who are human like us.³⁵ Further, friendship and religion are two goods that very clearly call us out of ourselves and can be pursued and instantiated well only when we go beyond ourselves and reach out to others. (The

³³ Note Hittinger's seventh question regarding religion, *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory*, 91f.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 187.

³⁵ See, for example, ss. 2.1.6; 2.3.2; 2.4.4; 2.5.5c; 3.2.4a; 4.1.1; 4.5.2; 4.6.3; 5.1.3c; 5.3.6; 6.1.6b; 6.1.10; 6.2.3d and 6.3.4.

other goods too have their own important social aspects.) It could be the case that Hittinger has been confused by the fact that Grisez often adopts a style of writing, for the sake of simplicity, that uses the singular, when both singular and plural are included, and so he may have gotten the (wrong) impression that Grisez's theory is mainly concerned with individuals acting for single basic goods for their own benefit as individuals.³⁶ It is clear that nothing in Grisez's theory need confine our interest in the goods to an exclusively selfish interest in one's own fulfillment. Nor need one's pursuit of the goods (or a group's pursuit of them) be engaged in for only one basic good at a time: one, or many, persons can pursue one, or many, goods at the same time. In fact, Grisez explains frequently and explicitly in his writings that when one pursues the goods in a way that is narrowly selfish, one fails to pursue them well. If one is to act well, in a manner that is entirely practically reasonable (i.e. morally good), one's will must be a will compatible with a will towards integral human fulfillment, which is a communal reality (although it includes individual's fulfillment as part of it, of course).³⁷

³⁶ See the introduction to "Practical Principles, Moral Truth, and Ultimate Ends," where Grisez (Finnis and Boyle) draw explicit attention to this and warn the reader not to be misled by it. Anyone reading Grisez's works accurately cannot fail to notice how the social aspects of the basic goods are mentioned frequently. It is fair to say, however, that it is mainly in his theology that Grisez emphasises and details the social aspect of our pursuit of the goods and of living a moral life, but this is surely because it is mainly in his theology that Grisez has developed a comprehensive account of moral life, especially with regard to religion. Still, it is also true that the social aspect of the basic goods and the natural law is clearly evident in the purely philosophical theory presented by Grisez (and Russell Shaw) in the various editions of *Beyond the New Morality*, especially the third (1988).

³⁷ This point is not affected, except to be strengthened, by the new development of Grisez's theory in which he replaces "integral human fulfillment" with "integral communal fulfillment". One of the reasons for Grisez's change of theory is that he wishes to emphasise even more strongly the communal nature of the fulfillment for which we ought to intend all our choices and commitments. Grisez continues to define morally good choosing by its respect for the integral directiveness of the basic goods of all persons. See s. 6.3 above.

8.1.5b The religious good and moral goodness

Still, it is an interesting question whether Grisez's account of the good of religion pays enough attention to its specifically *religious* benefit for us and its 'benefit' for God. Perhaps he emphasises too much the moral benefit for us to the exclusion of the religious benefit. What is wrong with Aztec sacrifice, demonology, or drug-induced religious trances, to mention the examples given by Hittinger?³⁸ He thinks that Grisez's system does not provide us with any criteria apart from *moral* criteria to judge if these kinds of religion are inadequate. But what, we may ask, would be wrong with a Hindu worshipper going to a temple in complete good faith (i.e. inculpably) to pray to Krishna?³⁹ This individual is not failing in specifically moral goodness. Does Grisez's moral theory offer any criteria to judge if this man is failing to instantiate the good of religion, if he is acting according to an inculpably erroneous conscience?

According to Hittinger's construal of Grisez's theory, Grisez makes reference to divine revelation and Christian faith to give "religion" its content, and thus we could evaluate the Hindu worshipper only from the point of view of faith. But Hittinger thinks Grisez's notion of faith is fideistic, as there is no attraction in the good of religion prior to faith that might enable us to choose to have faith. It is true that Grisez has not written a lot about religion from a purely philosophical point of view, and that he has written a lot of theology, so it is hardly surprising that he might criticise Hindu worship (or, at least, its

³⁸ See *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory*, 111.

³⁹ This example is chosen here because, in contrast to the examples mentioned by Hittinger, there is no obvious moral fault in the Hindu worshipper: he is not sacrificing a human being, or abusing drugs, or worshipping the devil.

objective inadequacy) by reference to the Christian faith. Still, in some writings, Grisez has offered philosophical criticisms of religious positions, such as monism and polytheism.⁴⁰ It is also wrong to say that Grisez's notion of Christian faith is fideistic, as he clearly sees the act of faith as being motivated by our rational interest in the goods of religion and knowledge, and supported by reason and fact.⁴¹

8.1.5c Effective instantiation: more than just a moral issue?

Still, it could be argued that often Grisez's treatment of free choice in pursuit of the goods emphasises the intransitive effect of these choices, their effect on the person choosing, rather than their effect on others, including God.⁴² Grisez frequently points out that moral goodness is not primarily about producing good effects, bringing about good states of affairs, but about choosing in a way that is fully open to all the basic human goods. This is entirely right, but it can have the unfortunate side-effect of making Grisez's theory seem to be mainly, or even completely, uninterested in the effects of our actions on others (even including God, who cannot be affected by our actions, strictly speaking, but who can be honoured or dishonoured, or pleased or displeased, by them).

⁴⁰ See ss. 6.1.7b above. Hittinger should have taken note that Grisez's position in *Beyond the New Theism* obviously offers cogent and detailed criticisms of several inadequate theoretical and practical positions regarding God and religion, and from a purely philosophical point of view too.

⁴¹ See chapter twenty, questions B-E, in *Christian Moral Principles* and chapter one of *Living a Christian Life*. Obviously, Grisez does not consider faith to be purely a matter of reason and fact, nor purely a human act. See also ss. 3.4 and 5.1.2 above.

⁴² Perhaps Grisez does this because the intransitive effect of free choices is an important aspect of morality, one that tends to be overlooked or neglected by proportionalism, an approach to morality which Grisez considers incoherent, inadequate and mere rationalisation. See chapter six of *Christian Moral Principles*.

Thus, Hittinger can wonder: In Grisez's system, is our tendency towards God "an efficacious tendency"?⁴³ Or, as he puts it in another place, does Grisez's approach provide us with anything "which would permit us to judge what *truly* satisfies this human good"?⁴⁴ We could ask: Is there any criterion or criteria, other than the moral truth or goodness, that would enable us to judge if an instantiation of the good of religion actually instantiated this good? Is acting with a good will enough to instantiate the good of religion fully?

It could be argued that Grisez's theory is not fully clear in providing answers to these questions. Insofar as he focuses on *moral* goodness, it would seem that the main criterion for judging if a choice instantiates the good of religion is moral truth, which seems to reduce the good of religion to moral goodness. But, as the primary practical principle directing us to pursue and instantiate the good of religion is not in itself a moral principle, but a wider *practical* principle, it would seem that one should judge the efficacy of one's attempts to instantiate this good by looking not only to whether one is acting in a morally good way, but also at whether one is acting in a way that is truly God's will, in a way that is truly honouring, obeying, loving, and/or worshipping him, not just with a will that is good, but in actions that conform objectively to God's plan.

One who chooses to instantiate the good of religion *effectively* will have to do so in a morally good way, but this is a way that is open fully to the substantive goods of

⁴³ *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory*, 106. Hittinger is confusing "tendency" with "good" here, but his question is still a useful one if we replace "tendency" with "good".

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 108, emphasis added.

knowledge and work, which provide it with content.⁴⁵ One who wishes to truly share in the religious benefit of religion will want to do so in a manner that is both truly in touch with reality (accurate knowledge) and is truly fit for the purpose of honouring, worshipping, obeying and loving God (excellent work and play). Even though one can pursue the good of religion in a morally good way without knowing the full truth about God or without any skill in ritual or religious practice, one will not choose to instantiate the good of religion in a morally good way *unless one is willing to do whatever one can do to act in a way that is objectively true and fitting*. Thus, it would seem that one always attempts simultaneously to instantiate the goods of knowledge, excellence in work/play, and religion in any morally good instantiation of religion. Therefore, one can fail, with no moral fault, to instantiate the good of religion if one's effort to instantiate the good is lacking in the substantive goods of knowledge and excellence in work.⁴⁶ It could be said that these two substantive goods (and maybe we could include the substantive good of life here too, as promoting health and life is necessary for us to pursue religion effectively) provide us with objective practical criteria, along with the objective criteria of moral goodness, to judge if any instantiation of religion is truly an instance of harmony with God, or fully an instance of harmony with God.

⁴⁵ See s. 3.1.7 above on Grisez's treatment in *Christian Moral Principles* of the relationship between reflexive and substantive goods.

⁴⁶ It should be noted here that we are concerned with the goods of accurate knowledge and excellent work/play as instrumental goods rather than goods sought only for their intrinsic goodness. Still, there is no reason why one cannot pursue religion as an intrinsic (basic) human good, with knowledge and excellent work as instrumental goods to help one to pursue religion, and also intend to benefit from knowledge and work as basic goods too. It would seem that Grisez's theory allows one to instantiate goods as both basic and instrumental simultaneously (at least de facto, if one is not consciously aware of it). See s. 7.2.6 above.

8.1.5d Is religion both an existential and substantive good?

Another possibility is to adapt Grisez's characterisation of the good of religion as an existential good and to see it instead as *both* existential and substantive, much like the good of marriage, which has both existential and substantive aspects. This would have the effect of making it less likely for the unwary or hasty reader to mistake Grisez's theory for a "full-blown", but frustrated, existentialism.⁴⁷ Grisez's characterisation of religion as a good in the existential domain might be one of the main reasons why Hittinger mistakenly thinks his theory is a kind of existentialism or intuitionism (and thus, a kind of Kantianism ultimately, insofar as it strives to emphasise obligations and moral absolutes). It is easy to misunderstand Grisez here as saying that religion is purely an existential concern, with no substantive aspects at all.

Grisez has not shown any tendency to see religion as both existential and substantive, however, perhaps because he does not view the basic human goods as "atomic wholes" as Hittinger does,⁴⁸ and so he has no difficulty with seeing our choosing to pursue and instantiate religion as *necessarily* involving other goods too, including substantive goods.⁴⁹ Therefore, all that may be required for us to avoid mistaking Grisez's moral

⁴⁷ See *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory*, 73, where Hittinger accuses Grisez of wanting to espouse a full blown existentialism in his account of the self in the context of the four orders in *Beyond the New Theism*. Hittinger thinks Grisez's existentialism is seen in his wanting to emphasise the existential order of reason (in which free choice and commitments are the essential categories) to the exclusion of the other orders; but it is a frustrated existentialism insofar as Grisez actually says that none of the orders is primary, and so each of them must be taken into account when understanding the self. However, it needs to be added here that, according to Grisez's moral theory, one cannot make good and practical choices without reference to all the four orders; one is not advised or required to confine oneself to the existential order. Grisez is not an existentialist, not even a frustrated one. See ss. 2.6.3 - 2.6.5 above.

⁴⁸ *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory*, 51.

⁴⁹ See *Christian Moral Principles*, 130-132, where Grisez explains how the reflexive and substantive goods are interrelated. This is a very important part of *Christian Moral Principles* for our purposes in this work.

theory for existentialism or Kantianism is an accurate grasp of what he actually says about the basic human goods and about practical rationality itself, and especially what he says about the interrelationship between the existential and substantive goods, and how *both* are involved in our choices and actions.

8.1.6 Grisez's specific replies to Hitinger

It is helpful to note even briefly what Grisez said in reply to the questions raised by Hitinger about religion.⁵⁰ Firstly, Grisez clearly states that “principles of practical reasoning and morality” are not “sufficient [in themselves] to guide action to authentic fulfillment” and that “parts of philosophy and theology [other than ethical theory and moral theology], including philosophical anthropology, metaphysics, apologetics, and so on” are necessary to provide us with criteria for assessing religious practices (and thus specific religions).⁵¹ In reply to Hitinger's question regarding how Grisez can make the transition from moral philosophy to moral theology, Grisez explains that

in moral theology I assume the truth of the Catholic faith. Making this assumption, my work neither on ethical principles nor on moral theology deals with the many interesting and relevant questions which pertain to other fields.⁵²

Grisez is here stressing the fact that his work provides *only a part* of what is necessary for one to make good moral judgements and choose actions that are truly effective in instantiating God's will.

⁵⁰ These questions are originally in *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory*, 89-90. Grisez's replies are in “A Critique of Russell Hitinger's book,” 456-461.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 456.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 457.

Grisez also replies to Hittinger's question concerning his theory's supposed reliance on faith for recognising the good of religion, and in particular our awareness of our obligation to obey God, which Hittinger thinks ought to be a foundational obligation of religion available as part of the natural law. Grisez points out that Hittinger has overlooked a category of normative truth in his moral theory: "the category of moral norms derived from self-evident moral principles."⁵³ The obligation to obey God's commands is derived from self-evident moral principles: it is neither self-evident itself nor based exclusively on faith.⁵⁴ The basic principle here is that "only God is in a position to make certain decisions for the life we share with him."⁵⁵ In addition, God's commands are always for our true good so it is reasonable to obey them.

Grisez does *not* insist that it is only with explicit faith that we can know something of God's authority and providential plan. Even though faith clarifies the fact of God's authority and providence, and is necessary in practice for certainty and rich understanding, it is possible for us to grasp some aspects of the truth about God's authority and wisdom by our use of reason. Thus an "individual who does not already

⁵³ Ibid. Hittinger seems to acknowledge only two kinds of norm in Grisez's theory: self-evident norms and norms made accessible only by faith. Grisez's point here is that this is a seriously incomplete version of his theory, which has a very important role for derived, naturally accessible moral norms.

⁵⁴ Grisez makes reference to *Christian Moral Principles*, 278-279 in this regard. Surprisingly, Grisez does not ground our obligation to obey God in the self-evident good of religion. Surely if harmony with God is a good to be pursued and instantiated it will include obeying God's commands? That Grisez overlooks this is a sign perhaps that he has not integrated his thought on religion fully into his moral theory, and that he is somewhat unhappy with the idea of obedience of God being linked with the good of religion (maybe as being too legalistic).

⁵⁵ Ibid., 278. This is emphasised in the original.

have faith, if confronted with a recognizable divine command, can (and should) judge on the basis of moral principles that the command ought to be obeyed.”⁵⁶

Grisez emphasises too the fact that a person can participate in the good of religion, as with the other basic goods, more or less; it is not a matter of all or nothing, as Hitinger seems to think. Therefore, it is possible for someone to partially grasp with his human reason God’s authority and commandments, and our obligation to obey them, and for this partial grasp to be perfected and strengthened later by faith. Grisez criticises Hitinger’s treatment of Grisez’s supposed “definitions” of religion in his various works.⁵⁷ Grisez does not consider these to be attempts at theoretical definition; they are “attempts at identification”.⁵⁸ Also, he thinks that Hitinger has “overlooked explanations that the basic goods are not fully determinate conceptually, but unfold dialectically as human individuals and humankind as a whole pursue them”.⁵⁹ Therefore it is not surprising that our initial grasp of religion, and our understanding of how to instantiate it, will develop and change, being enriched by faith, theology and experience.⁶⁰

Another point emphasised by Grisez in his reply to Hitinger is that his (Grisez’s) theory points beyond the human goods themselves to the Good in which they are participations.

⁵⁶ “A Critique of Russell Hitinger’s book,” 457. In this and the previous paragraph, points from *Christian Moral Principles* 278-279, are combined with the explicit points made by Grisez in “A Critique of Russell Hitinger’s book”.

⁵⁷ See *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory*, 106-118, for Hitinger’s original criticisms of Grisez’s “definitions” of religion.

⁵⁸ See “A Critique of Russell Hitinger’s book,” 457.

⁵⁹ Ibid, with reference to *Beyond the New Morality*, 73-74 and *Christian Moral Principles* , 182.

⁶⁰ See “A Critique of Russell Hitinger’s book,” 458.

He does not consider this point to be dependent on faith. Faith can enrich our natural understanding of how our good acts are a participation in the more-than-human source of meaning and value by letting us know that we can share in God himself, by his divine gift of a share in the divine nature, and so we can go further than participating in divine goodness naturally.⁶¹ Our sharing in divine goodness *by participation* is a natural possibility based on human nature's "indefinite potentiality for fulfillment in human goods as participations in goodness itself", but Grisez rules out the idea, which he finds in "Augustine's restless heart [argument] and Aquinas's argument that God is man's final end by nature", that there is or can be "a proportionality between human nature and fulfillment in divine goodness ... *in itself*".⁶² So Grisez's moral theory accepts the idea that participation in God's goodness is naturally possible, and proportionate to human nature, and can form part of man's final end as man, but that sharing in God's divine life and in God himself is not possible except by God's supernatural gift.⁶³

8.1.7 Life Plans

Finally, we look at Hittinger's criticism of Grisez that he is a subjectivist with regard to life plans.⁶⁴ It should be obvious in light of the points made above that Grisez's theory does not rule out the making of critical assessments of facts and possibilities and theories and so on. It is entirely in keeping with Grisez's theory that a person can and should deliberate about what kind of life he should lead, what his personal vocation is, what is

⁶¹ See *ibid.*, 459.

⁶² *Ibid.*, emphasis in original.

⁶³ See ss. 2.1.9; 2.3.4; 2.7; 3.1.3 – 3.1.5; 4.5.1 - 4.5.2; 4.7.2; 6.1.9; 6.3.3 and 6.3.6d above.

⁶⁴ Grisez does not deal with this criticism in his reply to Hittinger.

really God's will for him, which religion he should believe in and follow, and such matters.⁶⁵ It is not the case that such assessment is purely subjective or arbitrary because the basic goods are incommensurable and irreducible to each other. As we have seen in our analytic survey of Grisez's theory as a whole, his theory requires us to not only to make morally good choices rather than bad ones (following moral norms and principles), but also to discern between good options, taking into account all the relevant factors, including our emotions and talents and the needs of others, and so on.⁶⁶ Grisez does insist that the basic goods are incommensurable, but he does not deny that sensible goods are inferior to intelligible goods, for example; clearly a life plan organised around pursuit of merely sensible goods would be ruled out by Grisez's theory.⁶⁷ Matters would be similar with regard to instrumental goods, which are inferior to intelligible goods: once again, a life plan organised around instrumental goods would be ruled out. Hittinger is wrong to consider Grisez's theory to be subjectivistic with regard to life plans.

⁶⁵ It is important to remember that in Grisez's theory religion ought to be the focus for one's life plan, therefore all the criteria that one should follow in evaluating religion should apply to choosing one's life plan. This point seems to apply even if one takes "integral communal fulfillment" as the focus for one's life plan, as integral communal fulfillment is adequately understood only when it is seen to be centred on God and his will. See s. 6.3.6 above.

⁶⁶ On this matter of the place of discernment in Grisez's theory, see *Living a Christian Life*, 291-193; on the matter of the importance of being accurate regarding facts, see *ibid.*, 268-270. The whole of chapter five in *Living a Christian Life* is worth looking at to get a comprehensive idea of what is meant by "seeking moral truth" in Grisez's moral theory, and how far it is from intuitionism or arbitrariness.

⁶⁷ See "A Critique of Russell Hittinger's book," 442. The sixth mode of responsibility would rule out such a life plan: see *Christian Moral Principles*, 214-215.

8.2 Fulvio Di Blasi, *God and the Natural Law* [1998/2006]⁶⁸

We turn now to a more recent book criticising Grisez's moral theory from a Thomistic perspective similar to Hittinger's. Di Blasi calls the moral theory of Grisez, Finnis and Boyle "the neo-classical" theory of natural law, maintaining that this is what these thinkers "explicitly" call their theory.⁶⁹ It is clear from his use of this term, along with his criticisms of Grisez's natural law theory and his presentation of his alternative, that Di Blasi considers Grisez's theory⁷⁰ to be a failed attempt to interpret Aquinas's classical natural law theory. Di Blasi even describes Grisez's early article (1965) in *Natural Law Forum* 10, commenting in detail on *Summa Theologiae* Ia IIae, Q. 94, a. 2, as "the manifesto of the neoclassical school",⁷¹ clearly acknowledging Grisez's importance but also giving the mistaken impression that the theory of Grisez and Finnis is meant to be an interpretation of Aquinas and should be judged on its success in interpreting Aquinas. Finnis and, especially, Grisez have frequently denied that their moral theory is to be read and judged as an interpretation of Aquinas.⁷²

⁶⁸ Fulvio Di Blasi, *God and the Natural Law: A Rereading of Thomas Aquinas*, trans. David Thunder (South Bend, Indiana: St Augustine's Press, 2006; original Italian edition, 1998). Di Blasi translated Finnis's *Natural Law and Natural Rights* into Italian and studied Finnis's work, coming to very critical opinions of it, (see *ibid.*, 6-10) and so his book refers more to Finnis than to Grisez, but he clearly acknowledges Grisez's importance in the origin and development of the theory: see *ibid.*, 10 and 38. Di Blasi is a professor of philosophy of law and human rights theory at the Libera Università in Palermo.

⁶⁹ See *ibid.*, 10. Di Blasi does not give any reference from the work of Grisez, Finnis or Boyle to substantiate this claim or to back up his consistent use of the term "neo-classical" to describe their theory.

⁷⁰ Di Blasi doesn't exclusively target Grisez or link the theory exclusively to him; he also targets Finnis, and, to a much lesser extent, some other thinkers that he describes as similar modern interpreters of Aquinas. As our main focus here is Grisez, however, and it originated with him, the theory in the present work is treated mainly as a theory of Grisez's. This is not to suggest or imply that it is only his theory.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁷² See, for example, "Practical Principles," 99 and especially 148. Di Blasi refers to the first of these but not the second, and fails to recognize and acknowledge the significance of the fact that Grisez and his school present their work almost from the start as a moral theory in its own right and not as a Thomistic theory as such: see *God and the Natural Law*, 38, n. 1.

Although Di Blasi's criticisms are not as detailed or extensive as Hitinger's, nor backed up with as many references to Grisez's and Finnis's work,⁷³ Di Blasi's book is worth our attention because it reiterates many of the criticisms of Hitinger and others,⁷⁴ and it develops in some detail an alternative natural law theory that purports to avoid the weaknesses in Grisez's theory by a more accurate reading of the natural law theory of Aquinas.

8.2.1 Di Blasi's criticisms of Grisez's moral theory⁷⁵

According to Di Blasi, Grisez's theory of natural law is "*atheistic* (that is, not 'law' properly speaking, since it does not depend on the will of God, and so is not produced by a Legislator)" (3; see also 16, 66, 67, 72, 74, 133 and 197). Therefore, Grisez's moral theory presents an extreme version of autonomous ethics, with morality based on man's will rather than on God's will (38, 66, 85, 166-167). This means that, although God and his will might be significant at the level of grace and revelation, the will of God is

⁷³ In fact, there are very few references to the works of Finnis and, especially, Grisez in Di Blasi's book to back up his pointed criticisms of their work. Also, although the English translation is dated 2006 and is presented by Di Blasi as an "revision" of his original Italian version (see *ibid.*, xvii), there is no reference in *God and the Natural Law* to any work by Grisez beyond the year 1993 or by Finnis beyond 1998.

⁷⁴ Di Blasi makes a couple of very positive references to Hitinger's 1987 book: see *ibid.*, 7-8 and 203. It is worth noting that Di Blasi makes no reference to Grisez's 1988 reply to Hitinger. He also explicitly links his own criticisms of Grisez and Finnis to those of Ralph McInerny, who wrote a very positive forward to the English translation of Di Blasi's book, and who contributed to its arguments directly: see *ibid.*, xx and 203. Di Blasi's criticisms are substantially the same as those of Stephen A. Long, another Thomist: see his "St. Thomas Aquinas Through the Analytical Looking-Glass," *The Thomist* 65 (April 2001): 259-300, and "Natural Law or Autonomous Practical Reason: Problems for the New Natural Law Theory" in *St. Thomas Aquinas and the Natural Law Tradition*, ed. J. Goyette, M.S. Latkovic and R.S. Myers (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004): 165-193.

⁷⁵ Again, as in the outline of Hitinger's criticisms above, references to pages in the original source are given in brackets in the main text in this section. Also, an attempt is made to indicate explicitly logical connections between Di Blasi's criticism, which are only implicit in his text. Di Blasi aims his criticisms at what he calls the "neo-classical theory", not Grisez in particular.

irrelevant for ethics at the natural level (67). A major cause of this lack of relevance of God's will in Grisez's moral theory is that his argument for God's existence is too narrowly confined to an overly austere *via negativa*, and thus he ends up with a God trapped in the metaphysical domain, with no role to play in the moral domain, as far as natural reason can discover (67, 72, 133, 138). Further, Grisez's moral theory lacks any reference to man having an ultimate end, which is to know and love God, and resemble God in so doing (15, 22, 30, 61).

Di Blasi also claims that Grisez's moral theory is a form of intuitionism, and thus lacks any reference to the importance of facts of nature, especially human nature, which are seen to be merely factual and of no ethical relevance (3, 13, 22, 29, 61, 62). Grisez's moral theory is thus thoroughly subjectivistic, lacking any reference to an objective hierarchy of values (15, 173, 174). Finally, Grisez's moral theory also suffers from "problems of consistency ... [and] argumentative gaps" (15). This leads to "incurable ethical conflict" in which free choice is impossible because, according to Grisez's theory, all our free choices necessarily must intend damage to human goods (22, 30, 63, 64).⁷⁶

Di Blasi's criticisms are very similar to Hittinger's and to other Thomists such as Ralph McInerny, Stephen A. Long, and Benedict M. Ashley.⁷⁷ As such, the points made above

⁷⁶ This criticism is not elaborated by Di Blasi in this book, and it does not directly concern us here. Here we will say only that it would seem that Di Blasi ignores Grisez's action theory and its understanding of voluntariness, especially the place of side-effects in our willing, a point that Grisez has explained and justified often: for example, see chapter nine of *Christian Moral Principles*.

⁷⁷ See notes 64 and 70 above. McInerny's most recent criticisms of Grisez's natural law theory can be found in his piece "Grisez and Thomism," in *The Revival of Natural Law: Philosophical, theological and ethical responses to the Finnis-Grisez School*, ed. N. Biggar and R. Black (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2000), 53-72. Ashley's criticisms are to be found in his piece "What Is the End of the Human Person?: The

regarding Hittinger apply to Di Blasi and these other Thomists too. Still, Di Blasi's criticisms allow us to clarify some more aspects of Grisez's work.

8.2.2a *Is Grisez's moral theory atheistic?*

Di Blasi does not deny that Grisez's theory acknowledges that God is "the *ultimate* source of moral duty".⁷⁸ His main point in accusing Grisez's theory of being "*atheistic*"⁷⁹ is that, although this theory does admit that God is the creator and even the ultimate guarantor of the natural law, neither God nor his will has any significance or role in the detailed principles and directives of the natural law. God's will is seen by Grisez's theory as just a fact, an *is*, and it is central to Grisez's understanding of the natural law that one cannot derive any *ought* from any *is*, even the *is* of God's commands or will.⁸⁰ Grisez's moral theory begins with human experience and human autonomy, rather than God's will (which Di Blasi holds to be the correct starting point of the natural law). Di Blasi maintains that "according to [Aquinas], man is morally good *only* when he wants something *because* he knows that God wants it."⁸¹ Di Blasi claims that Grisez's theory presents the natural law as complete and sufficient without any reference to God or his will, because people are obliged to do what is good purely for the sake of the basic

Vision of God and Integral Human Fulfillment," in *Moral Truth and Moral Tradition*, ed. L. Gormally (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1994), 68-96. McNerny and Ashley are less sharp and negative towards Grisez than are Hittinger, Di Blasi and Long.

⁷⁸ *God and the Natural Law*, 72, emphasis added.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 3, emphasis in original.

⁸⁰ See *ibid.*, 133.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 73-74, emphasis added.

human goods, “*simply* because practical reason grasps them as goods”.⁸² Rather than putting the basic goods at the foundational level of the natural law, Di Blasi, following his rereading of Aquinas, wants to put God and his will there: “Knowledge and love of God ... are for Aquinas the most basic philosophical presuppositions of the concept of natural law.”⁸³

Di Blasi thinks that Grisez leaves God out of the foundational principles of the natural law because the existence of God is not self-evident, whereas the primary principles of the natural law are self-evident.⁸⁴ In contrast to this, Di Blasi maintains that God’s existence is known by everyone, even though, as Aquinas recognised, it is not self-evident. People know God in his creatures.⁸⁵

At times, Di Blasi speaks of this knowledge of God and his will as if it were very clear and conscious, constituting an *explicit* and *necessary* basic motivation for all our acts.⁸⁶ In doing this, Di Blasi seems to claim that an explicit reference to God and his will, as constituting man’s primary obligation to pursue the ultimate good of obeying and loving

⁸² Ibid., 15, emphasis in original. It is not clear exactly what Di Blasi means by this phrase, but, in light of his overall argument, it seems that it is a claim that Grisez understands the basic human goods to be “good” in a very narrow, subjectivistic way, because he does not see these goods as explicitly embodying the will of God the supreme Legislator, but as good in their own right.

⁸³ Ibid., 37.

⁸⁴ See *ibid.*, 74.

⁸⁵ See *ibid.*, 37.

⁸⁶ See *ibid.*, 133; also 1 and 78.

God, is the first premise of all natural law reasoning.⁸⁷ This is to be a major theme throughout Di Blasi's book. He claims that Grisez's theory lacks this explicit reference to God's will as the basis of the natural law. Thus Di Blasi seems to hold (although he does not use these terms) that the first principle of morality should be formulated only in explicitly *religious* terms, rather than the philosophical terms used by Grisez and his school. Di Blasi even goes as far as to seem to deny that an atheist can do anything good:

... in Thomas's ethics, even were it possible for an atheist to do exactly what God wants (in a 'material' way), he and his actions would not thereby be morally good, that is, [in] conformity to the divine will.⁸⁸

However, Di Blasi also speaks often as if the knowledge of God and his will necessary for one's acts to be morally good is only required to be *implicit*.⁸⁹ For example, he says:

Aquinas's demanding claim concerning the ethical role of God's will can be justified only if the *ultimate* meaning of the moral good to which man aspires can somehow be seen to reside in obedience to God's will, so that only an intentional reference to God can make (morally) good man's pursuit of any other good. This position presupposes in Aquinas a concept of the natural knowledge of God so wide and pervasive that it can be applied to everyone – even to someone who denies God's existence or appears not to know Him.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ See *ibid.*, 190, where Di Blasi outlines a syllogism showing the moral obligation to perform sensible acts of worship, in which the primary premise (which he claims saves the argument from the naturalistic fallacy) is "the natural normativity of the ultimate end". A similar primary premise is given for the syllogisms demonstrating the morality of using things properly (191) and of treating people properly (192). Di Blasi holds that in every instance of the natural law, our obligation to order our acts towards our ultimate end (i.e. God) is the primary premise of moral reasoning, a primary premise that is left out of Grisez's theory, thus rendering it atheistic.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁸⁹ See *ibid.*, 86, 89-90, 98.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 133, emphasis in original. Di Blasi seems to allow that the less-than-ultimate meaning of the natural law can be grasped without reference to God and his will.

Here, Di Blasi seems to acknowledge that an atheist can do what is truly good, and, indeed, can even be said to know God and his will to some extent. Di Blasi does not claim that everyone will be aware of their knowledge of God:

When we speak of ‘natural knowledge’ of God, we are referring primarily to knowledge of first intention. Consequently, not everyone need fully realize *reflectively* what he knows and what exactly God means for him.⁹¹

Thus, it would seem that Di Blasi contradicts himself, in that he sometimes seems to require us strictly to have an explicit knowledge of God and his will in order for our actions to be morally good, but he also says that the necessary knowledge of God can be very minimal, indeed only implicit, and even below our level of consciousness.

Di Blasi’s insistence on the necessity of explicit reference to and knowledge of God’s will in natural law is central to his criticism of Grisez’s moral theory, which Di Blasi claims omits any reference to God’s will. However, Di Blasi’s claim that our natural knowledge of God’s will need only be implicit seems to be quite compatible with Grisez’s theory and its place for the good of religion as at least implicitly at stake in all our choices and commitments. Indeed, quite a lot of what Di Blasi has to say in his own constructive moral theory could, with some modifications, find a place in Grisez’s theory, once we get rid of his occasional insistences on an explicit reference to God’s will as required for any natural law to be grasped by man.⁹² In any case, Di Blasi’s approach is

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 99.

⁹² As an example of a substantial part of Di Blasi’s theory that could find a place in Grisez’s own theory, see Di Blasi’s section on the elements of common human moral experience that point to our need for God, *ibid.*, 139-142. The experiences outlined by Di Blasi include the human search for true and lasting happiness, the human desire for eternity, the human need for secure truth, the human need for ultimate justice, the human desire for importance, and the human experience of objective duty. Such experiences of need could very easily be seen as grounding our grasp of the good of religion.

incoherent in this respect, as it cannot seem to settle on whether our knowledge of morality as willed by God is required to be explicit or implicit.

8.2.2b Di Blasi overlooks the role of religion in Grisez's theory

Di Blasi's claim that Grisez's theory has *no* place for God's will seems very odd, in any case. Di Blasi seems to totally ignore the role of religion in Grisez's natural law theory, a role treated in detail in previous chapters of this present work. If one can know or believe that God wills that one do a particular action (or avoid an action), this fact is certainly important practically, according to Grisez's moral theory. One has then an additional motive, and a very powerful one, to do that good action (or avoid that evil action).⁹³ As God is the source of the natural law, and indeed of all created reality, we can know that any action that we grasp naturally as morally good is willed by God. And it is clear that if we wish to be in harmony with the transcendent Source of meaning and value, and we ought to wish for this harmony whenever it is at stake, then we must choose to do what is compatible with the intentions of that Source, which we will most reasonably understand as a personal Being who desires our good. Thus, anyone who wishes to know and follow the natural law will wish, *as an integral part of this*, to pursue and instantiate the good of religion, which includes one's love of God and his will, insofar as one can know God and his will naturally. Of course, Grisez holds that one's knowledge and love of God will be hugely enhanced by one's coming to know divine revelation and one's acceptance of this revelation, and entering into a covenantal relationship with God, by Christian faith.⁹⁴

⁹³ See, for example, ss. 2.4.6 ; 2.5.5c – 2.5.5d; 4.6; 6.1.5 – 6.1.6; 7.2.2 – 7.2.4 and 7.4.6 – 7.4.7 above.

⁹⁴ See, for example, ss. 3.4 – 3.8 above.

Clearly, however, God's will is not known and relevant only *after* one has made the act of faith. People without Christian faith can know something of God and his will naturally, and this knowledge can be a very significant aspect of their practical reasoning and moral life. Indeed, this natural knowledge of, and practical appreciation of, God and his will is a necessary motivational foundation for the freely chosen and reasonable human act of faith. Grisez's moral theory is not atheistic in any way; his philosophy and theology are not sealed off from one another, but intrinsically linked, and both have a central place for the transcendent Source of all reality, meaning and value.

8.2.3 Does Grisez's theory have a place for God as a Legislator?

Di Blasi's natural law theory emphasises God as Legislator of the natural law in a way that seems quite different from Grisez's theory. In Di Blasi's view, the natural law is "produced by a Legislator" (i.e. God) and so "depends on God's will",⁹⁵ but he claims that in Grisez's theory the natural law is produced by man, and so is not really law as such, and is certainly not divine in any way. For Di Blasi, God promulgates the natural law through the creation of human nature, specifically the natural inclinations that point us towards the goods perfective of us, and, through them, to our ultimate end, which is God.⁹⁶ We are obliged to follow the natural law precisely because it is God who is the lawgiver, and his will is truly wise and loving. Di Blasi seems to think that Grisez's theory is quite different.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 3. See also *ibid.*, 84-85.

⁹⁶ See *ibid.*, chapter 3, especially 176.

Certainly, Grisez is anxious to avoid legalism, especially any suggestion that moral norms oblige us precisely and only because they are imposed on us by an all-powerful God.⁹⁷ Grisez emphasises that moral norms and principles are truths that guide us towards our good, truths that therefore motivate us with their intrinsic attractiveness; they are not to be reduced to rules imposed extrinsically by a powerful but arbitrary God. Di Blasi seems to agree with this point of Grisez's, however, and says a number of things in this regard that could very easily find a place in Grisez's moral theory.⁹⁸ He clearly sees God's will as wise and loving, and his creation of our human nature and the whole of nature as an act of love done for our good. Thus far, his approach is similar to Grisez's.

However, Di Blasi tends to see the natural law as a means to an end, the ultimate end of our being like God, of our loving God, and to explain this in a manner that suggests that he is reducing the natural law to a kind of technical knowledge. It is almost as if the laws given by God in the natural law are a kind of 'manual' for us to get the best out of our 'equipment', with sin being a matter of ignorance of how to act effectively in pursuit of a determinate end.⁹⁹ Thus, Di Blasi uses the metaphor of looking after a car to describe the moral life:

Choosing particular goods in view of the ultimate end is like choosing, in view of the good overall condition of a car, whether this is the best time to change the tires or to check the oil. Although tires and oil are in themselves different and incommensurable things, they nonetheless fall under a single criterion of choice,

⁹⁷ See *Christian Moral Principles*, 12-13, 101-102 and 278-279.

⁹⁸ Di Blasi notes that Grisez's criticism of the neo-scholastic moral theology, which was legalistic and saw God's will as extrinsically imposed on man, is "very well done" (*God and the Natural Law*, 60) and "certainly justified" (*ibid.*, 61), although he claims that Grisez goes too far in his own theory by dividing practical from theoretical reason and knowledge (see *ibid.*, 61-62).

⁹⁹ See *ibid.*, 206: "... moral evil may be characterized as an *error* concerning the ultimate end...".

given the objective and partial functions that they fulfil in the car. The term ‘good’ is always relative to something or someone (in the sense that something is always good for something or someone).¹⁰⁰

The problem with this, according to Grisez’s theory, is that it reduces the various basic human goods to only one good, the good of a narrow “religion”, and it reduces morality to a technical skill or set of skills (or to technical know-how).¹⁰¹ All the other basic goods become merely means to the one good, harmony with God (which is perhaps understood to include naturally the beatific vision too, thus confusing grace and nature). It is not surprising, therefore, that Di Blasi, although he does acknowledge the various human goods as having importance, tends to emphasise love of God as if it is an alternative to love of self and love of the various human goods:

Moral duty, in fact, does not arise from the ‘desire of one’s own good,’ but precisely from the capacity to transcend it (or sacrifice it) for love of God. This love, furthermore, raises the natural love of self and of others to an ethical level, putting them on an equal footing (inasmuch as both are means to loving God, Who loves each person He has created in the same way), and removing from them the intentional motivation of concupiscence (‘I love myself and others, ultimately, because God loves everyone in the same way’).¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 200. See also *ibid.*, 82, 172-174.

¹⁰¹ This also reduces the third order (the existential) to the fourth order (of technical/artistic effectiveness, of culture) – see s. 2.6 above. P. Lee, “Germain Grisez’s Christian Humanism,” *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 46 (2001): 137-151, explains Grisez’s approach nicely: “The relation of the morally good act to the end or ultimate good which measures it is not a means-end relation. Moral goodness is not the relation of effectiveness of an external action to an external goal, even if that goal be the overall fulfilled human being. Rather, morality primarily concerns the will, and moral goodness consists in the relation of the act of will to all of the basic goods of persons, both in oneself and in others. So the relation of the morally good act to its standard or criterion – integral human fulfillment – must be one of harmony or openness rather than one of productivity or effectiveness... Thus, the difference between the morally good action and the morally bad action must be between the fullness of being due the will and a falling short of that being.” (*Ibid.*, 140).

¹⁰² *God and the Natural Law*, 152. See also *ibid.*, 79, 147-152, 174, 196-197.

Grisez rejects the idea that we have to choose between loving God and loving the basic human goods of ourselves and others; rather, he emphasises that we can, and ought to, choose to love both. Di Blasi does not totally disagree with Grisez, arguably, insofar as even Di Blasi seems to see at times that one's love of the human goods is a way of loving God who is the creator of all goods, and who wills our good,¹⁰³ but Grisez is much clearer in his insistence that the various human goods are intrinsically good, with a goodness that is created by God but which is not to be reduced to religion or to God.

8.2.4 *Is Grisez's theory merely intuitionism?*

Like Hittinger, Di Blasi accuses Grisez's theory of being a form of intuitionism, with the basic goods seen as merely elements of our minds disconnected from reality. Di Blasi is extreme in his criticisms in this regard, claiming that in Grisez's moral theory "in ethical questions we must not refer *in any way* to nature"¹⁰⁴, and saying that the neoclassical approach has "rejected any connection between the good known by practical reason and the *facts* of nature".¹⁰⁵ Then Di Blasi makes the following extraordinary point about the basic human goods: "Consequently, the only way to enhance our knowledge of them is to reflect on the intuitions themselves."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ See *ibid.*, 188, where Di Blasi cites with approval Aquinas's dictum that "We do not offend God except by doing something contrary to our own good". Much of Grisez's moral theory is encapsulated in this saying: see *Christian Moral Principles*, 115-119 and 460-461.

¹⁰⁴ *God and the Natural Law*, 29, emphasis added.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 62, emphasis in original.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

This claim completely ignores what Grisez has said about the first principles of natural law being starting points only, the knowledge of which needs to be developed and enhanced by sound reasoning and accurate knowledge, including theoretical knowledge.¹⁰⁷ This point has been noted frequently here.¹⁰⁸ The many pages of theology written by Grisez make no sense whatsoever if all one needs to know the meaning and value of religion is to think about one's thoughts. Clearly, Grisez's theory does not discount the importance of knowing the facts about ourselves, our capacities, our possibilities, our relationships, our history, our environment, our society, and our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Knowledge is one of the basic goods, an *essential* aspect of our integral fulfillment, an *essential* principle of the natural law. Grisez's theory does not envisage us as being stuck in our minds, relying on mere intuitions for our practical and moral knowledge and decision making. Di Blasi's remark that according to Grisez's moral theory we can enhance our knowledge of the basic principles of the natural law only by reflection on our thoughts shows how far he is from understanding Grisez's position and approach.

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, "Practical Principles," 111. It is also worth noting that in his book-length treatments of specific moral issues, such as abortion (1970), euthanasia (1979), and nuclear deterrence (1987), Grisez presents in great detail the factual aspects of the issue. A deep concern for facts is also evident in his treatment of specific moral issues and questions in volumes 2 and 3 of *The Way of the Lord Jesus*.

¹⁰⁸ See ss. 2.5.5b; 3.1.4; 3.2.4a; 3.3.4; 4.3; 4.5.6; 6.1.7b and 7.4.4 above.

8.2.5a Di Blasi's 2001 article: *Many ultimate ends or just one?*

Di Blasi criticised Grisez further in a 2001 article.¹⁰⁹ His main criticism is that Grisez's theory fails to acknowledge that there is only one ultimate end for man: the beatific vision of God by human beings as human. Instead, Grisez's theory posits several natural ultimate ends for human beings precisely as human: the diverse and irreducible basic human goods. Di Blasi rejects the idea that there could be diverse and irreducible goods because the very fact that diverse things are "good" indicates that they are somehow unified.¹¹⁰ He claims that Grisez's insistence that the basic human goods are irreducible and diverse categories of good is pure equivocation on the word "good", as when one uses the word "bill" for "the beak of a duck and for the demand for payment".¹¹¹ When Grisez writes about basic human goods, the word "good" as applied to each of these goods does not refer to anything similar at all; these "goods" have nothing in common except the word "good", just as the bill of a duck and the bill presented to me by my plumber have nothing in common except the word "bill". Di Blasi insists that the word

¹⁰⁹ F. Di Blasi, "Ultimate End, Human Freedom, and Beatitude: A Critique of Germain Grisez," *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 46 (2001): 113-135. This article is a response to an article by Grisez in the same edition of the *American Journal of Jurisprudence*, which was analysed in detail above: see s. 6.1. It seems likely that Di Blasi wrote in response to an earlier version of Grisez's article, and that Grisez was able to revise his final, published article in light of Di Blasi's response: see G.V. Bradley and J. Finnis, "Editorial Introduction," *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 46 (2001): 1-2, and also the final footnote in Grisez's article. Once again, Di Blasi acknowledges the intellectual support of Ralph McInerny (see "Ultimate End, Human Freedom, and Beatitude," 113, n. 1) and refers positively to Hittinger's critique of Grisez (see *ibid.*, 119, n. 26).

¹¹⁰ See *ibid.*, 117, n. 17.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* Here, Di Blasi is quoting from Ralph McInerny, *Aquinas and Analogy* (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 94. Although McInerny has been a sharp critic of Grisez's natural law theory, the original reference here is not directed at Grisez.

“good” must be applied univocally to the various types of goods; otherwise, one falls, as does Grisez, into equivocation and inconsistency.¹¹²

Di Blasi seems to have a point here. To call diverse goods “good”, as Grisez does, indicates that they have something in common, and are not totally diverse. Grisez’s emphasis on the incommensurability and diversity of the basic human goods might lead readers to think that these goods are totally different from each other, and indeed, entirely separated from each other. This would be a weakness in his theory.

However, Grisez does explain that he uses the word “good” of the diverse categories of good “by analogy”.¹¹³ He clearly acknowledges that they have something in common: their goodness, the fact that they offer the human person opportunities to flourish, to *be* more, to participate in a some sort of benefit that fulfils us as human persons.¹¹⁴ As well as emphasising the fact that the goods are diverse and irreducible, Grisez refers also to how all intelligible goods share a kind of “community in intelligible goodness”, which is the “common aspect of their directiveness [that] corresponds to the will’s natural openness to goodness”.¹¹⁵ The fact that the basic human goods have something in

¹¹² Di Blasi, “Ultimate End, Human Freedom, and Beatitude,” 117, n. 17.

¹¹³ See “Practical Principles,” 110 and 120. Even though Grisez (along with his co-authors) uses the phrase “by analogy” here, and even though the book by McInerney quoted by Di Blasi is called *Aquinas and Analogy* (see note 108 above), Di Blasi overlooks analogy, and deals with the issue in terms of a choice between only equivocal or univocal uses of a term. This is a false dichotomy.

¹¹⁴ See *Christian Moral Principles*, chapter five, question A, for Grisez’s understanding of the terms “good” and “bad”. Although he does not use the term “by analogy” there, it is clear that he uses the term “good” precisely by analogy to indicate various types of fulfillment pertaining to the diverse domains of reality, including the existential.

¹¹⁵ “Practical Principles,” 135.

common is indicated by the fact that they are all specifications of the first principle of practical reasonableness, which refers to “the good”.¹¹⁶ Di Blasi tends to overlook the role of the first principle of practical reasoning in Grisez’s theory, where it is foundational.¹¹⁷ Grisez does not seem to be speaking equivocally in referring to basic human *goods*.

However, neither is Grisez speaking univocally about them. He wishes to emphasise that there are diverse categories of goods, not just one overall, dominant good. If there was one overall dominant good, such as religion, for example, then we would not be able to choose to do wrong (or to do right). If our choices were always between alternatives that could be completely reduced to one type of (ultimate) good, then we would have to “choose” the alternative that offered the highest proportion of this good, or the most intense embodiment of this good, or its most efficient instantiation, or its most satisfying realisation. Thus we would be proportionalists of a sort, but proportionalism is an incoherent way of treating free choice, as its method of evaluating choices renders free

¹¹⁶ See *Christian Moral Principles*, chapter seven, question C on the first principle of practical reasoning.

¹¹⁷ Thus, Di Blasi fails to see that his understanding of “the ultimate end” as a formal principle, which he claims follows Aristotle’s and Aquinas’s views, (see Di Blasi, “Ultimate End, Human Freedom, and Beatitude,” 114-118) is not totally dissimilar to Grisez’s understanding of “the good” mentioned in the first principle of practical reasoning. Grisez acknowledges that all our deliberate choices are for one end: the good (i.e. human fulfillment). He also acknowledges that our understanding of the content of this fulfillment can be very varied, and even mistaken, and always open to development. The oneness of “the good” is also acknowledged in the concept of “*integral* communal fulfillment”: see s. 6.3 above. (“Integral human fulfillment” indicated this singularity of willing too, but it is now superseded by integral communal fulfillment in Grisez’s theory.) Clearly, *pace* Di Blasi, Grisez recognises that there is a unity in all our willing. It is important to note, however, that Grisez does not consider that the ultimate end can or must fully satisfy the will, as Di Blasi claims Aristotle requires by his third criterion for the ultimate end formally considered: see *ibid.*, 118 compared to Grisez, “Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment” *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 46 (2001), 28-35 and Grisez, “The True Ultimate End of Human Beings: The Kingdom, Not God Alone,” *Theological Studies* 69, no. 1 (March 2008): 46-53.

choice impossible.¹¹⁸ If all that matters in choice is ultimately the single good of religion, or God, for example, as Di Blasi frequently insists, we could not freely choose an option that offered less or none of this good, and freely ignore an option that offered more of it.

Here it is helpful to refer to the car metaphor, which Di Blasi uses once again in this article, as he did in his book.¹¹⁹ Using a car and its maintenance as a metaphor for the moral life, Di Blasi claims that we can and must commensurate the various goods at stake in choices just as we can commensurate the various parts of a car with respect to the overall good of the car. The problem is that it is impossible to render an account in the terms of this metaphor of how one can freely choose to do evil (and thus it is impossible to account adequately for how we can freely choose to do good). It would seem that the metaphor implies that one can do moral wrong only by being (technically) ignorant. How could one culpably fail to look after one's car, if the only good that one can know about, and have an interest in, is the good of one's car as a whole? What reason could one have to neglect to have the oil changed, for example, unless one has some other kind of good that can distract one from the good of one's car as a whole, motivating one to pursue some other kind of good (the good of spending one's money on health, for example, or on sport) even though one knows that one ought to look after the good of one's car? One could spend too much money on tires and not enough on oil if one was ignorant of the technical means of looking after one's car effectively, but how could one fail *culpably* to

¹¹⁸ See *Christian Moral Principles*, chapter six, especially 151-154. An implication of what is said here is that Di Blasi tends towards a kind of proportionalism of sorts, at least insofar as he seems to reduce moral goodness to (technical) knowledge and immorality to ignorance, and to present morality as ultimately concerned with choosing the most effective means to an (ultimate) end, rather than as partially constitutive of our ultimate end.

¹¹⁹ See Di Blasi, "Ultimate End, Human Freedom, and Beatitude," 116, and also n. 100 above.

look after one's car (i.e. knowing the technical requirements, but still failing to act accordingly) if only one's car matters? By insisting on the ultimate end as the only real good at stake in free choices, (and by putting it as the first premise of practical reasoning, as we saw in our analysis of his book above), Di Blasi is unable to account for the reality of free choice and human responsibility.

Grisez, by contrast, is able to account for free choice and human responsibility, because he acknowledges that there are several types of good that can offer us competing rational benefits, benefits that are incommensurable. One can freely choose to pursue a benefit, but one is not forced to do so by an awareness that only this benefit really matters. One remains able to choose another alternative, even if it is an immoral alternative, because the goods at stake are diverse. Even the good of moral goodness is not so dominant that we cannot freely choose immorally for some other good (i.e. for one or more of the basic human goods, considered in isolation from the whole set of basic human goods operating as an integral whole).¹²⁰ The importance and reality of free choice provides one reason why Grisez insists that neither religion nor God can be, or must be, the ultimate efficacious reason why we make all our concrete choices. It is also a reason why he insists on the distinction between practical reason and moral reason, and why he considers the first principle of practical reason to mean by "good" not only moral good, but also all the diverse and irreducible kinds of good that can appeal rationally to us as human beings. One implication of this is the religion is not the only good at stake in our choices, nor graspable as the ultimate good 'trumping' all other human goods.

¹²⁰ See "Practical Principles," 121-125.

8.2.5b Grisez's understanding of "Ultimate End"

Di Blasi places so much emphasis on Grisez's understanding of the basic human goods as ultimate ends that he overlooks completely what Grisez (along with Finnis and Boyle) had to say about other meanings of "ultimate end" in their 1987 article "Practical Principles, Moral Truth, and Ultimate Ends".¹²¹ In section X of that article, Grisez clearly pointed to *three* meanings for the term, not just one as Di Blasi seems to think.¹²² The second meaning referred to the fact that when we freely choose, our choices are for the sake of one or more basic human goods, which provide us with our final reasons (i.e. ultimate ends) for efficacious willing. Di Blasi seems to read into this the idea that Grisez thinks that a person's life cannot have any single natural end of *any* sort, not even God or religion, but must have several ultimate ends, each of which is completely different from the others, and irreducible to any common factor. In fact, in section X of "Practical Principles, Moral Truth, and Ultimate Ends", Grisez states that a human person *can* have

¹²¹ Di Blasi is not the only respondent to Grisez's work in the same issue of the *American Journal of Jurisprudence* who overlooks the diverse meanings of "ultimate end" in Grisez's theory. Scott McDonald, "Aquinas's Ultimate Ends: A Reply to Grisez," *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 46 (2001): 37-49, does so too, but not to the same extent. McDonald recognizes that there are diverse meanings for the term "ultimate end" (see 40), but insists that Aquinas meant it mainly in one way, as the final and totally fulfilling end that leaves nothing else to be wanted or desired (see 38-40). Grisez rejects the idea that our ultimate end must satisfy us so totally that nothing else can be wanted, and thus he disagrees with Aquinas and McDonald (and Di Blasi), but his understanding of "ultimate end" is more nuanced and rich than McDonald or Di Blasi give him credit for.

¹²² Section X of "Practical Principles, Moral truth, and Ultimate Ends," *American Journal of Jurisprudence*, 32 (1987): 99-151, at 131, is called: "Ends Ultimate in *Three* Diverse Ways" (emphasis added), and is divided into *three* sections, the first dealing with integral human fulfillment, the second with the basic human goods, and the third with the happiness for which people settle. Section X of the article begins Part III of the article, focusing on "Ultimate Ends" as the third part of the title itself indicates. Di Blasi seems to have read only section X (b) and overlooks the rest of Section X, and indeed much of the whole third part of the article, in which he would have found the answer to some of his problems with Grisez's theory. Obviously, he cannot have known about later development of Grisez's theory, in which the concept of "integral communal fulfillment" is presented as what ought to be one's single, concrete ultimate end in all one's choices and commitments: see s. 6.3 above.

a single ultimate natural end for his life as a whole, and indeed he argues at some length that a person *should* have a single ultimate natural end for his life.

What Grisez means by this is seen initially by examining the first and third meanings for “ultimate end”. The first meaning of “ultimate end” presented by Grisez and his co-authors in 1987 was that of “integral human fulfillment”, an ultimate end which rectifies the will. Integral human fulfillment referred to an ideal, a perfect human community flourishing in all aspects (i.e. with respect to all the basic human goods). To the question of whether this ideal, perfect community can be “the ultimate natural end of all human persons and communities”, Grisez answers explicitly: “In a way it is.”¹²³ We cannot effect fully such a perfect, all-embracing human community by our willing, but all our morally good willing wishes for such an ideal, and so is compatible with such an ideal, and thus integral human fulfillment can provide a single ultimate end for all our willing, an ideal end that morally rectifies our wills.

Grisez also mentions a third meaning for “ultimate end”, which again Di Blasi overlooks. This refers to “the happiness for which people settle” and it is closely related to integral human fulfillment. It approximates to integral human fulfillment, in that it is a reality that we *can* efficaciously will, as it is within our grasp, at least in principle. This “happiness for which people settle” is a more or less integrated whole life, and it ought to be a fully

¹²³ Ibid., 132. See also the very last sentence of this section, at 133. Di Blasi discusses integral human fulfillment, and acknowledges that it is similar to what he sees, following Aristotle and Aquinas, as the formal aspect of the ultimate end. Still, Di Blasi is put off by the fact that integral human fulfillment is an ideal, and thus he fails to see its practical relevance as an end. Arguably, this is because he fails to grasp the relationship between the first principle of practical reasoning and integral human fulfillment. He also fails to see how integral human fulfillment is related to “the happiness for which people settle”: see Di Blasi, “Ultimate End, Human Freedom, and Beatitude,” 122, n. 23.

integrated, morally good life.¹²⁴ As such, it can provide each person with a natural ultimate end for his life, one which enables him to conscientiously pursue all of his commitments effectively, and to enjoy a level of harmony in his life as a whole, and not only in his choices one by one. The unifying focus of such a life, and such a happiness, is the good of religion.¹²⁵

So Grisez posited (prior to 2008) a single natural ultimate end for human life in two senses: one is the ideal of integral human fulfillment and the other is the practically achievable religiously integrated life. Nevertheless, his strong emphasis on the basic human goods as ultimate ends (of our choices and commitments) perhaps distracted readers from noticing that he acknowledged and promoted a single natural ultimate end in these two senses.¹²⁶

However, most recently Grisez has presented a new development of his moral theory, one in which “integral communal fulfillment” is presented as man’s concrete natural ultimate end.¹²⁷ Perhaps he did this to respond to the criticism made by Di Blasi and others that he

¹²⁴ See *ibid.*, 136. Unfortunately for Grisez’s theory, the phrase “the happiness for which people settle” is a rather awkward one, and it does not stand out as clearly as “integral human fulfillment” or “the basic human goods” in his moral theory. Nevertheless, it is central to the argument of the whole of Part III of “Practical Principles”. Grisez’s new concept of “integral communal fulfillment” seems to replace “integral human fulfillment” and “the happiness for which people settle”, combining elements of both.

¹²⁵ See *ibid.*, 136, 139-141; see also, Grisez, “Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment,” 17, which is the article being criticised by Di Blasi (in its earlier version, presumably).

¹²⁶ An example of this is found in Di Blasi’s rather odd accusation that Grisez would consider playing baseball or civil marriage to be the ultimate end of someone’s life as a whole. Di Blasi is confusing the three meanings of “ultimate end” in Grisez’s theory: see Di Blasi, “Ultimate End, Human Freedom, and Beatitude,” 119.

¹²⁷ See s. 6.3 above.

did not accept a concept of a concrete single ultimate end. His previous notion of religion as man's concrete ultimate end was perhaps too open to misunderstanding to be fully adequate as a concept of man's concrete ultimate end. He also seems to have been unhappy with the concepts of "integral human fulfillment" and "the happiness for which people settle" in his theory. Integral communal fulfillment takes their place.

Integral communal fulfillment is what the first principle of practical reasoning and all the other principles of the natural law direct us towards ultimately. It is a fulfillment that includes the full range of distinct and diverse human goods without reducing them to one "supergood", such as religion or God. It includes God and human persons, and non-human persons, in a flourishing community. It is a fulfillment that is openended, and not a static perfection leaving nothing else to be done or willed. Also, it is a concrete ultimate end that one ought to freely commit oneself to as one's end, not one that is automatically sought in all one's choices anyway.¹²⁸

8.2.6a Natural and supernatural

Di Blasi thinks that Grisez makes too deep a break between our natural and supernatural ends.¹²⁹ Di Blasi argues that the beatific vision will include all human goods, because it will be our loving contemplation of the God who is the source of all goods, and so it will

¹²⁸ Thus, Grisez certainly rejects Di Blasi's, and Aquinas's, concept of an ultimate end that completely satisfies the human will so that nothing else is ever to be wished for or done. And he rejects the concept of an ultimate end that is automatically willed in all our choices, rather than one that we have a choice about willing.

¹²⁹ See "Ultimate End, Human Freedom, and Beatitude," 113.

include and transcend all human goods.¹³⁰ Also, Di Blasi argues that man has a natural capacity for seeing God, and a natural desire to do so, even though he is able to do so only with God's direct supernatural grace.¹³¹ Thus, Di Blasi seems implicitly to call into question Grisez's insistence that "religion" is only a human good and that it is distinct from the beatific vision, which is a specially given divine gift transcending our human nature.¹³²

It is true that Grisez makes a very sharp distinction between the natural end of man and his supernatural end, to use Di Blasi and Aquinas' terminology, but is it true that he proposes that they are totally separate, as the term "deep break"¹³³ would suggest? Grisez distinguishes between our human fulfillment and our divine fulfillment to emphasise the transcendent nature of our sharing in God's life, and its gratuitousness as grace: we cannot effect this fulfillment, and it goes beyond our nature as humans. It would seem that he is following a definite theme in Catholic faith and theology in thus emphasising God's grace as gratuitous and necessary for our salvation.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ See *ibid.*, 128.

¹³¹ See *ibid.*, 125. In all these arguments, Di Blasi sees himself as following Aquinas' lead, which he thinks Grisez ought to do too rather than criticising Aquinas.

¹³² The term "implicitly" is used here because Di Blasi overlooks the explicit role of religion in Grisez's theory. This neglect of religion vitiates much of Di Blasi's critique, as the good of religion is central in Grisez's moral theory, as this present work has argued.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 113.

¹³⁴ See Peter F. Ryan, "Fulfillment as *Human* in the Beatific Vision? Problems of Fittingness and Gratuity," *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 46 (2001): 153-163, for a discussion of how difficult it is to reconcile God's grace as both gratuitous and fitting at the same time. Ryan sees Grisez as achieving this reconciliation by emphasising that our human interest in the good of religion gives us a reason to wish for the beatific vision even though this vision is not owed to us as human for our fulfillment (see especially *ibid.*, 162).

But Grisez also indicates how our own willing, choices and actions are related to this gift of God. The relationship is not one of cause to effect, but there is a dynamic relationship nonetheless. Grisez says that our sharing in God's divine life is *mediated* by our human sharing in the good of religion specified by our Christian faith, by which we share humanly in friendship with Jesus and are interested in accepting all his gifts to us, including a share in God's own life.¹³⁵ Indeed, he says that the beatific vision *consummates* the good of religion.¹³⁶

Di Blasi does not deny the necessity of grace. In fact, he emphasises, following Aquinas, our natural inability to see God in himself and our absolute need for God "both to make Himself present to our intellect and make our intellect similar to Him".¹³⁷ Although there are differences between Grisez's approach and Di Blasi's approach (and that of Aquinas), the differences are not quite so great as either of them seems to think. Surely Di Blasi in the quote just given goes very close to saying what Grisez says: that we must be given a share in the divine nature, as a gift of God's grace, in order to be able to see God in himself. In addition, both Di Blasi and Grisez acknowledge that man desires to know God naturally and can know God naturally, albeit only to a very limited degree.¹³⁸ It would seem that Di Blasi's position is not hugely different from Grisez's in every respect.

¹³⁵ See "Practical Principles," 147, and also "Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment," 26-27, and s. 6.1.9c above.

¹³⁶ See Grisez, "The Doctrine of God and the Ultimate Meaning of Life", 133, analysed at s. 6.2.3b above.

¹³⁷ Di Blasi, "Ultimate End, Human Freedom, and Beatitude," 125.

¹³⁸ See *ibid.*, 123-127 (for Di Blasi on these points). Di Blasi seems to deny that Grisez allows for man to have any natural desire to know God or any natural ability to do so, but, although Grisez does emphasise

8.2.6b *The inclusive nature of the beatific vision*

Di Blasi criticises Grisez also for what he sees as Grisez's overly narrow understanding of the beatific vision. Di Blasi understands the beatific vision to be an ultimate end that includes and transcends all the various human goods. He does not think there is any need to distinguish between the beatific vision and some other kind of fulfillment of the human person in heaven. He therefore rejects Grisez's positing of two aspects of our fulfillment in heaven: integral human fulfillment and the beatific vision.¹³⁹

Again, one wonders if the two approaches are fully contradictory. Are they not two different but, at least to some extent, complimentary ways of speaking about the same mysterious reality, a reality that we cannot fully comprehend? It is true that God is the source of all that is good, and so our loving contemplation of God can be understood to include, whilst transcending, our enjoyment and fulfillment in all the human goods. Thus, the beatific vision would include our bodily resurrection and the communion of the saints and angels. So, Di Blasi has a point.¹⁴⁰ However, it is also true that an emphasis on the

our natural lack of desire for the *fullness* of knowledge of God in himself that is proper to the beatific vision, and our total lack of any natural ability to achieve this vision, he does clearly recognise our natural desire to know God and to be in harmony with him, and our limited but real ability to do so. Hence the role of religion (along with the role of knowledge) in Grisez's moral philosophy and theology, as presented and analysed in the present work. Unfortunately, as Di Blasi ignores the role of religion in Grisez's theory, he fails to see how his own understanding of the natural human way of coming to "see" God (by our capacity of abstraction) is very similar to Grisez's understanding of how we can know of God: see *ibid.*, 126 compared to Grisez in *Beyond the New Theism*.

¹³⁹ It is doubtful that the new development of Grisez's theory, "integral communal fulfillment", would change Di Blasi's criticism in this respect, as Grisez still insists on both distinctly human and divine aspects to our fulfillment as persons in the kingdom. Still, maybe Grisez's last paragraph of his 2008 article ("The True Ultimate End") would give Di Blasi pause: see s. 6.3.6d above.

¹⁴⁰ See Di Blasi, "Ultimate End, Human Freedom, and Beatitude," 129-135.

beatific vision could be understood in a narrow way, which neglects and undervalues the full range of human goods, including bodily life and human communion, and which also renders free choice and commitment impossible. Grisez thinks that such a narrow understanding can be seen in Aquinas, though not without signs that Aquinas made efforts to avoid a too narrow understanding of the beatific vision.¹⁴¹ Di Blasi's approach has its value in stressing the inclusive nature of the ultimate end which is God, who is the Source of all goodness, and who includes all the human goods in his own goodness, and who should be loved before all things and above all things; Grisez's approach has its value in helping us to avoid merging or confusing the human and divine, or reducing the variety of human goods to a narrowly (mis)understood good of religion, or good of contemplation (knowledge), or divine goodness. Perhaps Grisez's approach can include Di Blasi's (and Aquinas's) once the distinctness and integrity of the various human goods are not reduced to religion, divine goodness or God.¹⁴²

6.3 Rufus Black, *Christian Moral Realism* [2000] ¹⁴³

We turn now to look at a non-Catholic and non-Thomistic critic of Grisez's moral theory, Rufus Black, who has examined Grisez's work at book length.¹⁴⁴ Black brings the moral

¹⁴¹ See Grisez, "Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment," 27-36, especially 32, n. 65. See also John Finnis, *Aquinas*, 315-319, where he distinguishes between a narrow and a broad way of understanding Aquinas's treatment of the beatific vision, which was analysed above in s. 7.3.6.

¹⁴² See s. 6.3.6d below for Grisez's most recent remarks on this matter.

¹⁴³ R. Black, *Christian Moral Realism: Natural Law, Narrative, Virtue, and the Gospel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

theory of Grisez and his collaborators, most especially Finnis, into dialogue with those of Oliver O'Donovan and Stanley Hauerwas, two non-Catholic moral theologians who are strongly critical of natural law theory in general, and Grisez's 'new natural law' theory in particular. Black presents the criticisms of O'Donovan and Hauerwas and adds some of his own, but his approach is mainly a positive one, finding Grisez's moral theory to be more than capable of answering criticisms and meeting challenges from O'Donovan's explicitly theological ethics and Hauerwas's Christian narrative approach. Black considers Grisez's approach to be a form of 'Christian moral realism' which can be, and should be, integrated with the complimentary approaches of O'Donovan and Hauerwas.

8.3.1 O'Donovan's and Hauerwas's criticisms of natural law

O'Donovan and Hauerwas take a very negative view of natural law theory because they do not think it leads to a *Christian* ethics, but prevents the development of such an ethic.¹⁴⁵ This is particularly true of the approach of Grisez and Finnis in their insistence that we cannot derive an 'ought' from an 'is'. Hauerwas wonders how any such approach can present a morality with any place for theology "with all its claims about how reality

¹⁴⁴ Black speaks often of 'the Grisez school' (Grisez, Finnis and Boyle), and also refers to Grisez or Finnis individually when he treats aspects of their approaches that differ, but here the theory is referred to usually as simply Grisez's. We have space here to deal with only some aspects of Black's very impressive constructive interpretation of Grisez's theory. We do not deal with his treatment of the modes, for example, nor with his analysis of the relationship between narrative and principle.

¹⁴⁵ See *ibid.*, 7-9, where Black summarises O'Donovan's and Hauerwas's criticisms of natural law generally and the theory of Grisez and Finnis in particular. Black makes reference to S. Hauerwas, *Vision and Virtue* (Notre Dame: Fides Publishers, 1974), 69-70, which criticises natural law theory in general and O. O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 2nd ed. (Leicester: Apollos, 1994), x, which criticises Finnis' approach in particular. A further specific criticism by Hauerwas of Grisez (and an article in which it is found) is mentioned in *Christian Moral Realism*, 61, in which Hauerwas seems to be saying that specific moral norms are presented by Grisez as self-evident, but this is ably answered by Black (61ff), is off our point, and need not detain us here. Black also makes reference to S. Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983) as another source of sharp criticisms of natural law theory's purported lack of Christian foundations and distinctness: see *Christian Moral Realism*, 136.

‘is’”.¹⁴⁶ O’ Donovan argues that the approach of Finnis (and, we may presume, Grisez too) cannot be truly Christian as it seems it can allow no effective role for theoretical knowledge about God, the resurrection, the incarnation, eschatological matters, and other divinely revealed facts about reality, to shape how we are to live ethically.¹⁴⁷ Black presents O’ Donovan as taking a rather ‘scholastic’ approach to ethical theory in that he denies the truth of the claim that no ‘ought’ can be derived from an ‘is’, and holds that the moral ‘ought’ for Christians must arise out of the ‘is’ of the order of creation, which is grasped by us in our theoretical knowledge of nature’s teleology and the fittingness of our acts to given realities.¹⁴⁸

O’ Donovan has raised also the objection to natural law ethics that, if it were true, then we would expect all people to know the contents of that law (i.e. all specific moral norms) clearly and easily. However, this is not the case, due to the Fall’s effect in causing widespread and inescapable confusion, as can be seen in historical and contemporary moral disagreements, and so natural law theory is incorrect.¹⁴⁹

The answers given in the two previous sections of this chapter also serve to answer O’ Donovan’s and Hauerwas’s criticisms insofar as they are similar to those of Hittinger and

¹⁴⁶ *Christian Moral Realism*, 7.

¹⁴⁷ See *ibid.*, 9. Black goes on to add the names of Alasdair MacIntyre and Henry Veatch to those who raise criticisms about natural law theory’s supposed inability to recognise the importance of facts about the human person and human nature: see *ibid.*, n. 23. (MacIntyre and Veatch support natural law theory.)

¹⁴⁸ See *ibid.*, 119, making reference to O. O’ Donovan, “Evangelicalism and the Foundation of Ethics” in *Evangelical Anglicans*, ed. R.T. France and Alastair E. McGrath (London: SPCK, 1993), 99.

¹⁴⁹ See *Christian Moral Realism*, 126, referring to O’ Donovan, *Resurrection*, 85.

Di Blasi. However, it is still worthwhile to look at what Black has to say from his own point of view in answering O' Donovan and Hauerwas, as he tries to show that Grisez's approach is a realist approach that allows facts, especially religious facts, to play an important and necessary role in ethics. Black's own criticisms of Grisez's theory are looked at too, as is the fact that he misunderstands and overlooks the role of religion in that theory.

8.3.2a Theoretical knowledge is presupposed in ethical thinking

Black argues that Grisez's understanding of the basic principles of natural law as self-evident, and his distinction between theoretical and practical knowledge, with ethics seen as primarily practical, do not lead necessarily to the conclusion that theoretical knowledge has no place in good ethical theory or in effective ethical practice. Grisez and Finnis have acknowledged clearly that our grasp of the self-evident first principles of practical reasoning *presupposes* experience and theoretical knowledge, or some kind of awareness of what is the case, as the data on which our practical insights work.¹⁵⁰

We can apply this to religion. A person will not grasp the practical principle regarding religion without experiences such as that of feeling vulnerable and in need of more-than-human help and protection, or feeling guilt at one's moral failings and the need for more-

¹⁵⁰ See *Christian Moral Realism*, 48. Black refers to Finnis's work in this regard, but we could also add reference to "Practical Principles," 100, where Grisez, Finnis and Boyle state that their moral theory "presupposes many theses of metaphysics and philosophical anthropology", concerning free choice for example, and that "Just as theoretical knowledge, true opinion, and experience enhance the initial insight into the substantive goods, so they deepen understanding of the reflexive goods" (109).

than-human forgiveness. In short, one will not be aware of the good of religion unless one feels tension with the more-than-human.¹⁵¹

Also, one will not grasp the good of religion, even at its most basic, without some knowledge or belief that it is possible, or might be possible (and, thus, worth at least trying), to pursue harmony with the transcendent principles of reality.¹⁵² Perhaps we might say, more strictly, that one must at least not consider pursuit or instantiation of a basic good to be *impossible* if one is to grasp it as a basic good (for one's own pursuit).

8.3.2b *The binoculars analogy*

Black concludes, noting the experience and knowledge/awareness presupposed by practical thinking, that ethics is not purely practical, but has a theoretical side too.¹⁵³ This

¹⁵¹ See ss. 3.3.3; 4.1.2; 4.1.3; and 4.4 above. Such feelings presuppose frustrated actions for the sake of basic human goods other than religion.

¹⁵² See the recent article by J. Finnis, "Foundations of Practical Reasoning Revisited," *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 50 (2005): 109-131, at 123 and 129-130. Finnis clearly states there that theoretical and practical reason usually work together in human reasoning. So one who grasps the point of knowledge, for example, has already "the awareness not only of the urge (inclination) to question and also the experience of satisfaction when a question is answered, but also the 'theoretical' insight that knowledge is possible" (130). One needs natural inclinations but also knowledge of possibilities if one is to grasp the basic goods. One's knowledge of possibilities can be deepened and enhanced when one follows through on one's initial practical insight into the basic goods, and this will in turn enhance and deepen one's understanding of the worth of the basic goods. Still, one needs at least some knowledge that it is possible to pursue a good if one is to see any point in trying to do so. Grisez, too, acknowledges this in "Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment," 3-36, at 10, where he points out the prior necessity of one's "immediate intellectual awareness" of the following: spontaneous behaviour instantiating a good or goods; one's inclination to do such things; the satisfaction experienced in its fulfillment; and one's ability to engage in such behaviour and to find such fulfillment. Thus Grisez seems to agree with Finnis that one needs to be aware of the real possibility of pursuit of the goods *before* one can become aware of them as goods to be pursued freely (or, at least, *at the same time* as one becomes aware of them as goods). However, Grisez uses the phrase "immediate intellectual knowledge" rather than "theoretical knowledge", as he seems to see this knowledge as distinct from reflective intellectual knowledge, whereas Finnis uses the phrase "theoretical knowledge" (though with the word "theoretical" initially in quotes, perhaps to indicate the same kind of distinction that Grisez makes).

¹⁵³ See *ibid.*, 49, making reference to Finnis, *Fundamentals of Ethics* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1983), 2-3. Sometimes Black seems to confuse ethics with practical reasoning, or, in

means not just that ethics can be studied as a theory, but that such theoretical study can enhance our understanding of ethics and also the goods that form the foundation for practical thinking itself. Thus ethics is not exclusively practical, though it is primarily practical. Black uses the image of a pair of binoculars to get across the idea that one needs to use both practical and theoretical knowledge, which correspond to the two lenses of a binoculars, to understand or see reality fully (and so to choose and act practically).¹⁵⁴

Black's use of the binoculars image, suggesting that correct and adequate human understanding is both practical and theoretical, is echoed in his comment on how we are to use the Bible in practical reasoning.¹⁵⁵ We can read statements of moral principle in the Bible either in a theoretical frame of mind or in a practical frame of mind, as these statements have both theoretical and practical truth. They can be read either as facts about ethics and reality (i.e. at the level of theory) or as moral norms directing the reader to choose in a certain way (i.e. at the level of practice). Read in a purely theoretical frame of

other words, to confuse natural law theory with the natural law itself. He tends to overlook the fact that ethics as a study is more properly theoretical than is the natural law itself.

¹⁵⁴ See *ibid.*, 60. Black also uses the parallel image of a pair of spotlights (one practical knowledge and the other theoretical) at *ibid.*, 178. He wishes to emphasise that practical and theoretical knowledge work together in unity, although they are distinct ways of knowing. We need both. Practical thinking does not work in isolation from theoretical thinking. We might add here that the good of knowledge is an integral part of fully practical thinking, which is always to be done in a way that is in contact with reality. Another natural law theorist, Mark Murphy, takes independently a similar approach to analysing the natural law: see M.C. Murphy, *Natural Law and Practical Rationality* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Press, 2001). Murphy develops a dialectical argument (see 20f and 42f) to support his list of basic goods, a list very similar to Grisez's. This dialectical argument uses information concerning the correct functioning of the human being, which Murphy identifies with its flourishing (21-33), to back up his identification of various forms of flourishing that can be known by practical reason in its own distinctive manner (see 34-40 and 100-138). Murphy overlooks the fact that Grisez and Finnis too acknowledge the value of dialectical arguments and use some themselves. He bases his own approach on what he calls "the real identity thesis", which holds that theoretical statements and practical statements are essentially about the same states of affairs, considered from different points of view or with different aims in mind, and so theoretical knowledge can back up practical knowledge (see 40-45 and 137-138).

¹⁵⁵ See *Christian Moral Realism*, 177-178.

mind, such statements will not found a moral train of thought, but read in with practical principles inspiring and guiding one's interpretation, moral precepts and examples in the Bible can specify one's moral reasoning and choosing. Ideally, one should read Biblical statements with a concern for both their practical and theoretical truth.

8.3.2c *Dialectical arguments can support and purify practical thinking*

Black points out Grisez's acknowledgement that, although one's primary grasp of practical principles is essentially practical, it is also possible to use dialectical theoretical arguments to provide evidence for the truth of practical knowledge as possible and universal.¹⁵⁶ Dialectical arguments from anthropological studies and their findings about the basic inclinations of human beings, and the very possibility of anthropological study itself, which presupposes that people act for intelligible goods in their human behaviour, help to support Grisez's account of the basic goods, and thus "provide an *additional* reason for accepting"¹⁵⁷ his account. Such studies easily indicate the universality of the good of religion, for example.¹⁵⁸

Black goes further: "The Grisez school also uses theoretical reason to *correct* what they consider to be false accounts of practical reason."¹⁵⁹ He gives the example of body-self

¹⁵⁶ See *ibid.*, 52. Black states correctly that this aspect of Grisez's work "is often overlooked", see n. 24.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 54, emphasis in original.

¹⁵⁸ This is not an application that Black makes. However, it is interesting that Black presents a table of basic human goods found in Grisez's theory, in one column, and in O' Donovan's approach, in the other, and religion features in both lists: see *ibid.*, 53. Black mentions that O' Donovan arrives at his list of goods from a more "theoretical direction" than Grisez: *ibid.*, 51.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 55, emphasis in original. O' Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, xii, notes this too, but thinks it proves that an ought can be deduced from an is. Black, on the other hand, considers practical thinking

dualism, which prevents a person grasping the intrinsic good of life. We can apply this to religion here and point out that a theoretically correct understanding of the spiritual aspect of human understanding and willing helps greatly in our attempts to grasp and pursue the good of religion, whereas a materialistic philosophy hampers or prevents this. We could say that Grisez's theoretical work in *Beyond the New Theism* is a good example of how cogent and correct theoretical reasoning, which critically assesses and rejects incorrect and unsound reasoning, gives us knowledge that helps us to grasp the principle directing us to pursue the good of religion.¹⁶⁰ It is necessary if a person is to grasp the good of religion as a real good *for him or herself* that he or she is not prejudiced by radical empiricism.¹⁶¹ Thus, some theoretical knowledge is a necessary presupposition for one to form the primary principle regarding religion. Or, more strictly, we can say that it is necessary at least to be free of unsound or incorrect theoretical views, which good theoretical reasoning and knowledge corrects.

8.3.2d Theoretical knowledge assists practical thinking and action

Not only is theoretical knowledge *presupposed* by practical reasoning, and can *support* practical knowledge and *correct* false accounts of it, as we have seen, but knowledge of

and knowledge to be distinct from, though related to, theoretical thinking and knowledge, and to be properly basic, not derived.

¹⁶⁰ See ss. 2.5 and 2.6 above.

¹⁶¹ Arguably, a radical, atheistic empiricist could still grasp what it is that other people pursue when they pursue religion, but he or she could not grasp religion as a potential benefit for him or herself, except in the most hypothetical or conditional way (i.e. "If there were a God or gods then it would be good for me to act in harmony with him or them ...").

what is the case concerning human nature “can *assist* the task of practical knowledge”.¹⁶² Knowledge of anthropological studies, and of our own personal inclinations at the individual level,¹⁶³ can help us to grasp the range of basic human goods, or, in other words, the range of possibilities and opportunities for human flourishing that we can pursue and instantiate in and through our actions. Here, we can mention as a further example (of how factual knowledge assists good practical reasoning) Grisez’s extensive moral theology.¹⁶⁴ It greatly helps people, individually and communally, in their efforts to pursue and instantiate harmony with God, to know by divine revelation that this God is a trinity of Persons reaching out towards man in various ways, offering redemption, reconciliation, covenant, and friendship to us. And that this God offers our own good works, which are ours but also his gift, as one way of being united with him.

Thus, Grisez’s theology is not something isolated from his ethics, from his natural law theory, but something that specifies it, giving it relevant content, as we have seen

¹⁶² *Christian Moral Realism*, 57, emphasis added. This is probably the main function of theoretical knowledge in practical reasoning according to Black’s interpretation of Grisez’s theory as a form of Christian moral realism.

¹⁶³ Black lists a number of examples of human dispositions that ground each of the various principles directing towards the basic human goods. The only principle missing from his list is that concerning religion: see *ibid.*, 58.

¹⁶⁴ Black deals with Grisez’s theology mainly in chapter three of *Christian Moral Realism*, where he shows how the modes of responsibility are transformed (or, in his preferred term, “transfigured”) into the modes of Christian response, and thus Grisez’s theory is not only a realist one but a thoroughly Christian realist one. Black seems, however, to overlook just how much of Grisez’s applied ethics is explicitly theological, arguing that Grisez has mainly engaged in a philosophical, creation-based natural law ethics rather than a Christian ethics, probably in order to address secular humanism on the urgent life-issues such as abortion: see *ibid.*, 140. This hardly seems fair to the bulk of the treatments of ethical issues in vols. 2 and 3 of *The Way of the Lord Jesus*. Still, it is not totally surprising that Black should criticise Grisez for this: see ss. 5.1.1 and 5.3.9 above. A reviewer of Black’s book also was critical of Grisez’s lack of integration of his theological ethics into his ethical analyses: G. Hass, “Review of *Christian Moral Realism*,” *Studies in Christian Ethics* 16 (2003): 93-96, at 95.

frequently in our previous analyses of Grisez's works.¹⁶⁵ Black argues that the criticisms of O'Donovan and Hauerwas concerning the supposed lack of interest in religious facts besetting natural law theory are more than adequately answered when one realises that the principles of natural law are specified, and need to be specified, by the factual truths of divine revelation.¹⁶⁶

8.3.2e *The basic human goods are grounded in given human nature*

Black sees no problem in recognising that in Grisez's theory the basic goods are what they are because "of the given nature of the human person".¹⁶⁷ If human nature were different, the goods would be different.¹⁶⁸ The basic *human* goods "define the nature and parameters of *human* flourishing or fulfillment."¹⁶⁹ Black argues strongly, therefore, that Grisez's approach is a form of moral realism, in which the basic goods that form the foundation of practical thinking are aspects of objective reality, which can be known to be true, rather than mere subjective realities.

¹⁶⁵ See, e.g., ss. 3.1.4; 3.3.4; 3.4.1; 3.4.2; 3.5.4; 4.7; 4.9.2; 5.1.1b; 5.1.7; 5.3.7 and 6.1.9 above.

¹⁶⁶ See his summary: *Christian Moral Realism*, 180-181. This is not to say that divine revelation is just a series of facts. Divine revelation appeals to both our theoretical and practical reason: see ss. 5.1.2 – 5.1.4 above.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 58. Perhaps Black is somewhat inaccurate in using the term "given" to describe human nature or nature in general as the foundation for ethical thinking, as he seems to overlook the strong emphasis in Grisez's account of human nature that this nature is not simply "given", but open to development through free choice and action, not to mention his insistence that practical thinking is about what is potentially beneficial and *to be developed through choice and action*, not what is simply "given": see, for example, *Christian Moral Principles*, 105 and 182-3, and "Practical Principles," 116.

¹⁶⁸ Black uses the example from science fiction (*Star Trek*) of Vulcans who lack emotions, as a contrast to humans whose good naturally includes emotional peace and order: see *Christian Moral Realism*, 52.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 50, emphasis added.

8.3.2f Do we come to know moral realism by theoretical reason only?

However, Black seems to depart from Grisez when he says that we come to know this objective moral realism by theoretical reason and not practical reason.¹⁷⁰ Practical reason identifies the goods as to be pursued and instantiated, but it is theoretical reason that considers and judges whether the goods are actually good, according to Black.

He thinks that the truth of the first principle of practical reasoning, for example, can be supported by an adaptation of the self-referential argument used by Finnis to argue (dialectically) for the truth of the goodness of knowledge. Thus, Black suggest, albeit briefly, that one who argues against the truth of the first principle of practical reasoning (“Good is to be done and pursued”) is engaging in a very impractical, pointless exercise, a self-defeating exercise, like a sceptic arguing against the good of knowledge.¹⁷¹ This self-referential argument is undoubtedly true. However, it could be argued that for an argument from self-referential inconsistency to succeed, it must rely on the persons arguing to have *already* a practical grasp of the first principle of practical reasoning and its specifications (or, at least, some of them). In other words, one cannot rely first on an argument from self-referential inconsistency to establish or prove the truth of the first

¹⁷⁰ See *ibid.*, 58. It is not entirely clear from Black’s approach whether he means that it is not practical reason alone that can uncover the objective truth of the goods, or whether it is by theoretical knowledge alone what we come to know this truth. The binoculars and spotlights images suggest that we need both practical and theoretical knowledge to know truth fully, but Black also seems to say that it is *theoretical* knowledge of the practical principles, added to other evidence, that enables us to know the truth of the basic human goods: see *ibid.*, 59-60.

¹⁷¹ See *ibid.*, 63-64. Black does not contradict himself later (88-89) when he says that “it has long been thought that moral sceptics have coherently dissented from” the first principle of practical reasoning. This is said in the context of pointing out that the principle is not an analytic truth, which it would be illogical to dissent from. Self-referential inconsistency is not the same as logical inconsistency. On self-referential arguments, which characteristically show that an argument is self-defeating because of its inherent pointlessness, see J. Boyle, G. Grisez and O. Tollefsen, *Free Choice: A Self-Referential Argument* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), 122-138.

principle of practical reasoning because one has to rely on that principle's truth for the self-referential argument itself. A sceptic can realise that his scepticism about the truth of the first principle of practical reasonableness is unsound (because it is pointless to affirm it) only because he already knows the truth of the first principle of practical reasonableness. To put this in Grisez's terms, one needs to draw the attention of the sceptic to his natural, simple volition, which he, in affirming his scepticism, is somehow overlooking or denying, in order to show him that his scepticism contradicts his own willing, and is thus self-defeating and pointless. A dialectical argument of this sort can clarify the truth of the first principle of practical reasonableness, but it does not establish it in the first place. So it is far from clear whether Black is right that one can know the truth of the first principle of practical reasonableness by theoretical reasoning alone, or even primarily by theoretical reasoning. Practical reason is presupposed in any self-referential argument, which is how one ought to argue for the first principle of practical reasonableness.¹⁷²

8.3.2g The primary principles and theoretical reason

What about the specifications of the first principle of practical reasonableness, the eight primary principles directing us to pursue the basic human goods? Take the principle directing us to pursue and instantiate the good of religion, for example. Is it known to be true by theoretical reason, even whilst it is picked out precisely by practical reason as a

¹⁷² The point that one argues for the truth of the first principle of practical reasonableness by self-referential argument is supported by the fact that this principle is similar but not identical to the theoretical principle of non-contradiction: see *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 94, 2. Self-referential arguments uncover *practical* self-contradictions in the affirmation of certain theses that are theoretically not self-contradictory or absurd. Someone denying the first principle of practical reasonableness is not saying something absurd but is doing something impractical.

good to be pursued and instantiated? Black seems to think so.¹⁷³ He draws on a distinction made by Grisez, Boyle and Finnis between two aspects of the purposes for which people make free choices to act, namely the intelligible benefit for which one acts (the *good*), and the concrete, imaginable aspect of the purpose of our action (the *goal*).¹⁷⁴

Black says:

Although the Grisez School does not bring this out explicitly, practical reason is concerned *only with benefits* and not with goals. As a logical operation, practical reason is concerned with reasons for action – with the “intelligible aspect of a basic purpose” – and not with actual reality (the “concrete and imaginable”). Reality, on the other hand, is the subject of theoretical knowledge and theoretical reason. Every purpose, therefore, will necessarily involve both theoretical knowledge and practical reason.¹⁷⁵

Black seems to be inaccurate here. Surely it is incorrect to say that practical reason is not concerned with the concrete, imaginable aspects of our purpose in acting. Black is radically separating emotional motivation (which is concerned with the concrete, imaginable aspects of purposes, one’s *goals*) from rational motivation (which is practical reason, concerned with *benefits* or *goods* to be pursued and instantiated in or through one’s actions). However, Grisez’s theory holds that these two forms of motivation, both of which are necessary for choice and action, are “dynamically united”¹⁷⁶ in all our human actions. True, a person’s rational motivation is not concerned ultimately with having certain feelings, but with participating in an *intelligible* good or goods (i.e. with

¹⁷³ Black does not treat religion in particular, but deals with the basic goods in general.

¹⁷⁴ See “Practical Principles,” 104.

¹⁷⁵ *Christian Moral Realism*, 97, emphasis in original. Black’s point here is similar to the view found in Jean Porter, *Nature as Reason* (see n. 5 above). Porter interprets Grisez to be saying that, once experienced, the goods are “immediately grasped by the intellect as good in themselves, *apart from their emotional appeal or their instrumental value*” (37, emphasis added). Thus she ends up describing and criticising Grisez’s approach as Kantian (see 130f, 237 and 247). What is said in the following sections serves as a reply to Porter’s criticism as well as Black’s.

¹⁷⁶ “Practical Principles,” 105.

intelligible benefit or benefits). And it is also true that rational motivation is not concerned ultimately with the unique and limited concrete aspects of a purpose for acting: Rational motivation is intellectual understanding, which, characteristically, transcends the unique and concrete and particular. One's *understanding* of the goods is somewhat abstract in that it transcends the sentient aspects of goals, projecting open-ended possibilities to be instantiated and pursued through action. However, it is not an accurate interpretation of Grisez's theory to say that he considers rational motivation, which is based on understanding of good(s), to be concerned with intelligible goods in isolation from concrete specifics, and in isolation from emotional aspects of a purpose.

Recall how Grisez explains the grounding in inclinations (emotional motivations) of our grasp of any primary practical principle directing us to pursue a substantive basic human good.¹⁷⁷ One grasps a primary principle (directing towards a substantive good) only when one is immediately intellectually aware of at least some of the following: one's natural inclination towards this good, one's spontaneous action motivated by this inclination, one's satisfaction found in acting thus, and the objective possibility of acting in this way that is shown in one's action and its emotional fulfillment. Only in light of this immediate intellectual awareness (or what we might call our *experience*, which can be seen as

¹⁷⁷ See note 152 above and its reference to Grisez's work. We are examining "simple willing" here, which is the most basic willing, the foundation or root of all practical reasoning. Black seems to overlook the place of simple willing as the foundation of practical reason, seeing Grisez's whole approach as starting with choosing, rather than with simple willing (of the basic goods). Simple willing is not a choice; choice presupposes simple willing. Further, Black sometimes seems to confuse the theoretical development of ethics (which is concerned with willing, and so sometimes looks inwards) with practical reasoning itself (which is concerned with the goods, and so looks outwards). See *Christian Moral Realism*, 127.

distinct from theoretical knowledge, which can be developed from it),¹⁷⁸ can one grasp the practical insight that it would be good for one to pursue deliberately the substantive benefit or good that our natural inclination draws our attention towards. Insights into reflexive benefits or goods, in their turn, are dependent on our intellectual awareness (though perhaps not any *developed* theoretical knowledge, strictly speaking) of insights into substantive goods and frustrated actions for their sake. Thus, practical knowledge is possible only in light of emotional motivations. This much Black would agree with.

We also need to bear in mind what Grisez says about the place of emotional pleasure in human fulfillment.¹⁷⁹ Black seems to overlook this. Grisez holds that emotional satisfactions (which he calls “sentient goods”, which fulfill our sentient nature) are a part of our integral fulfillment as humans. Actions for only emotional satisfactions or for disordered emotional satisfactions are immoral because they disregard the good of the

¹⁷⁸ We should remember that Grisez is keen to deny that any theoretical *knowledge* is necessary for a person to have practical knowledge. This seems to mean that one need go no further than the “immediate intellectual awareness” that he speaks of here in order to grasp at a minimal level of awareness the primary practical principle directing one to pursue a good. It does not seem to mean that one need have no knowledge of *what is the case*, which would render inexplicable how one could come to have practical knowledge, unless such knowledge is innate or purely intuitive, which Grisez denies. However, if one considers “theoretical knowledge” to include simple awareness of what is the case, then Grisez seems to be contradicting himself. On the one hand he seems to be saying that one needs no knowledge of what is the case in order to know what is to be done (i.e. to have practical knowledge); on the other hand, he holds that some awareness of what is the case is necessary in order to know what is to be done. This section seeks to clarify matters with regard to this issue, which has caused substantial difficulties both for the present author and Grisez’s critics. It seems that Grisez sees the “intellectual awareness of what is the case” that is presupposed by practical knowledge as distinct from “knowledge” as such, which Grisez understands as going beyond immediate intellectual awareness. Thus, immediate awareness of what is the case is not the same, according to Grisez’s moral theory, as theoretical knowledge of what is the case.

¹⁷⁹ Grisez deals with this in *Christian Moral Principles*, chapter five, q. B, chapter seven, q. G and chapter twenty-four, q. A. There can be a type of intellectual pleasure, which Grisez calls the “joy of accomplishment”, which is a kind of volitional satisfaction that adds to one’s fulfillment when one instantiates a good. This is why the term “emotional pleasure” is used here: to distinguish sentient satisfaction from intellectual satisfaction. Emotional pleasure is related directly to one’s achievement of one’s goals, to feeding one’s sentient appetite; intellectual pleasure is related to one’s instantiation of goods, to feeding one’s rational appetite. Grisez holds that the latter *can include* the former.

whole person, or, in other words, our integral fulfillment as human persons. However, all actions, including all morally good actions, are done partially, though necessarily, for emotional motivations, and emotional satisfaction can be *understood* (not just emotionally desired and expected) as part of the fulfillment willed in one's action.¹⁸⁰ Emotional satisfactions, which are expected as part of one's goals, are therefore willed as part of one's human fulfillment. One's rational motivations can and should include one's emotional motivations.¹⁸¹

Thus, Black is wrong to say that practical reason is concerned with benefits but not with goals, with reasons for action but not with concrete and imaginable aspects of a purpose. A person can be concerned reasonably with emotional satisfactions arising out of achieving his goals as part of his whole fulfillment as a human person. Black is wrong to imply that Grisez's theory separates emotional and rational motivations radically. He is also wrong to imply that practical reason is not concerned with reality, which Black seems to associate, or even identify, with concrete goals. Surely Grisez's theory does consider practical reason to give us knowledge of the real, and does consider benefits to be real goods.

¹⁸⁰ Any statement that emotional fulfillment is "only a part" of our integral fulfillment as human beings might distract one from the fact that they are nevertheless a necessary part of this integral fulfillment, insofar as it is truly integral, and we are partially sentient/emotional beings by nature.

¹⁸¹ Grisez says "sensible goods are only partial aspects of the intelligible goods which fulfill a human person as a whole", *Christian Moral Principles*, 120. Grisez, Boyle and Finnis put it like this: "Rational motives motivate toward some fulfillment of the person as a whole; emotional motives motivate toward some fulfillment of the person's sentient part. But although they are distinct from one another, emotional and rational motivations are dynamically united", "Practical Principles," 104-105. Usually, and perhaps unfortunately, Grisez and his collaborators make this kind of point in order to criticise approaches to morality that overemphasise acting according to emotional motivation. Here, we are doing the opposite: criticising approaches that under-emphasise or overlook the integral place of emotional motivation and fulfillment in practical and moral thinking. The most adequate treatment of emotions by Grisez is found in *Difficult Moral Questions*, Appendix 1.

8.3.2h Practical reason is concerned with reality: anticipated reality

Black seems to be correct, however, in saying that practical reason is not concerned directly with *actual* reality. *Practical* knowledge is not knowledge of actual reality but of anticipated reality. Practical knowledge is not knowledge of what is the case, but knowledge of what is-to-be the case through or in one's actions. Practical knowledge enables one to bring something into actual reality. Grisez's theory clearly states all this. But it does not hold that reality is constituted only by actual reality; this would entail that only theoretical knowledge could be knowledge, and that precisely practical knowledge is impossible. The precise point of practical knowledge *as practical* is that it is concerned with bringing into actual reality (through or in one's acting for the sake of some good) a real benefit that is initially grasped only as anticipating the actual reality.¹⁸² Once one has made one's choice and carried out one's action, one can then know the benefit as actual, and experience intellectual and emotional satisfaction as part of one's fulfillment in that benefit. The benefit is not only real when it is actual; it is real, though in a particular sense, when it is anticipated. This is why one can have *knowledge* of the benefit in two ways: theoretically (as actual) and practically (as anticipated).

¹⁸² See "Practical Principles," pt VI (at 115-119). One should remember that more than one good and more than one benefit can be at stake in any one choice, and that practical reason is also concerned with commitments and one's whole life, not just with single choices. The main text here speaks in simplified terms, in terms of singulars. Another treatment of practical reason as bringing things into reality is found, following a somewhat different interpretation of Aquinas, in Josef Pieper, *Living the Truth: The Truth of All Things and Reality and the Good* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989).

8.3.2i Religion is an anticipated good that one can know as true

It follows from this that knowledge of the truth of any primary principle of the natural law, such as the principle directing us to pursue the good of religion, can have two aspects: theoretical and practical. One knows *theoretically* the benefit of harmony with God as an actual benefit after one has instantiated it (by one's deliberate choice), or after one becomes aware of another person or other persons instantiating it and being fulfilled by it. One knows *practically* the benefit of harmony with God as a potential benefit only when one anticipates it as a benefit to be pursued and instantiated in or through one's own action. Grisez holds that the former knowledge (theoretical) is not a premise for deducing the latter. One can know theoretically that other people pursue religion as a good (for themselves, or for others through their own action), but one cannot know it *as a practical matter for oneself* until one anticipates it as a benefit for oneself (or for others through one's own action). Practical knowledge is necessarily anticipatory, and thus prescriptive. This is the necessary truth about existential reality that the first principle of practical reasonableness picks out. Practical knowledge is distinct from theoretical knowledge, which is necessarily contemplative and thus descriptive.¹⁸³ Theoretical knowledge is not prescriptive as it is not anticipatory.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ The word contemplative is used here in the sense of observing, not in the exact sense of the "contemplative" religious life. However, the distinction between practical and theoretical knowledge, and the necessity of both for human living and fulfillment of human nature, are reasons why Grisez so strongly rejects Aquinas's view of the beatific vision as our ultimate and completely fulfilling end as human beings. To hold this position is to collapse practical knowledge (and the fulfillment it enables in and through human action) into theoretical knowledge. In effect, it would be to make the strictly contemplative life the only worthwhile vocation for Christians and for all people. One would not be able in that case to discern correctly any other personal vocation for oneself, or freely and rightly choose any other way of life.

¹⁸⁴ This is overlooked by both Hittinger and Di Blasi, as we saw above in ss. 8.1 and 8.2. It remains true, of course, that one can have theoretical knowledge of practical knowledge, but this is not the same thing as practical knowledge itself, and presupposes practical knowledge precisely as practical. This point is overlooked by J. Garcia, "Topics in the New Natural Law Theory," *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 46 (2001): 51-73, at 53-62 where he criticises Grisez's position that *ought* cannot be deduced from *is*. Robert

We could say then that practically grasping religion as a basic human good is what we do when we interpret our experience, or our immediate intellectual awareness, of tension with the transcendent (experienced emotionally) in a practical frame of mind shaped by the first principle of practical reasonableness. In this specific situation, in this specifically practical frame of mind, the first principle of practical reasonableness is specified by one's *practical* reason as the primary natural law principle directing us to pursue and instantiate the good of religion (as an anticipated benefit to be realized progressively through and in our choices for its sake). One knows the goodness of religion to be practically true: one anticipates that it would be good for one to pursue it, and instantiate it (should that be possible). One does not yet know the good of religion as an actual benefit in which one actually is fulfilled (in or through one's choosing for it) until after one makes some attempt to instantiate it. Thus practical knowledge is not known to be true in the same way as theoretical knowledge.

Black seems to think that the realism of Grisez's moral theory must be shown by theoretical knowledge only. The argument presented here is that Grisez's theory sees realism as having two aspects. One is theoretical realism, where one comes to know the truth of what is the case in the typically theoretical way. Dialectical arguments for the goodness of the basic human goods are of this kind. But the more basic kind of realism in

Sokolowski, "What is Natural Law? Human Purposes and Natural Ends," *Thomist* 68 (2004): 507-529, at 527-528, makes the related point that practical reasoning is primary and philosophy secondary, in that philosophy always has to work with what is first lived in practice (i.e. choices, actions, virtues, etc). Even with regard to theology, where there is a certain priority of theoretical knowledge over practical reason, the natural practical level is still assumed by grace (though healed and elevated by it).

Grisez's moral theory is practical realism, by which one comes to know as real benefits, though potentially so, the various basic human goods that one grasps by distinctly practical insights when one forms the primary practical principles of the natural law in one's practical thinking.

That a careful and sympathetic critic such as Black should be wrong in his interpretation of Grisez's moral theory in this respect suggests that the dynamic unity of emotional and rational motivation is an aspect of Grisez's work that has not been made clear enough, and needs development.

8.3.3 *The argument against natural law from diversity*

O'Donovan criticises natural law theory saying it is falsified by the fact that people do not agree on morality, whereas if natural law theory were true, we would expect there to be wide-spread agreement.¹⁸⁵ Black offers a useful reply to this objection to natural law theory, making use of Grisez's theory to do so.¹⁸⁶

It is only to be expected that there will be a considerable amount of moral diversity historically and globally. One reason for this is that there is a range of basic, diverse, and incommensurable human goods and it is possible to organise life around such goods in a variety of ways. We ought not to expect that life will be lived exactly the same way, even

¹⁸⁵ See n. 143 above.

¹⁸⁶ See *Christian Moral Realism*, 107-114. Black offers his analysis as a reply to J.L. Mackie in particular, who has not criticised Grisez, but who is sceptical of realist, cognitive ethics. The objection to natural law based on moral pluralism or diversity is a common one, and Black's reply based on Grisez's moral theory offers a good response, which is only outlined here.

by people who agree on moral norms and who know the natural law accurately and confidently. How one lives in pursuit of the basic human goods will be affected by one's circumstances and conditions, and these can vary from place to place and time to time. Further, not only are the basic human goods incommensurable, but many moral norms are non-absolute, so one need not expect to see absolute uniformity in the way that people judge right and wrong.

Added to this is the fact that Grisez's moral theory, which is a natural law theory, does not discount the possibility, and even the probability, of moral error. This can occur due to bias and oversight, fanaticism for one of the goods to the detriment of the others, uncritical spontaneity, selfishness, and other moral weaknesses and failings. Such moral errors, which can be wide-spread, can be rationalised and embodied in cultural and social structures that affect how people think about morality. Thus, moral diversity arises partially from moral error, which natural law theory can account for easily.

Added to this is the reality of factual errors, such as scientific errors. In the past, for example, it was thought by many that there were witches, who could do preternatural evil, and who had therefore to be dealt with very harshly.¹⁸⁷ We today do not believe that witches exist, and so we consider witch-hunting and killing to be wrong. We are not acting on new moral principles as such, but on the same principles as people long ago knew, applied differently in light of our factual knowledge. Wide-spread diversity in

¹⁸⁷ This is my own example.

beliefs and opinions, which is not discounted by the natural law,¹⁸⁸ will lead to diversity of moral applications of the basic principles of the natural law. The natural law does not guarantee that people will know the facts accurately or comprehensively, or apply the natural law soundly and wisely in all circumstances.

Thus it is not surprising that there is some diversity concerning the natural law. This is caused by the following: the incommensurability of the basic human goods; the diversity of historical, cultural, and geographical conditions within which people pursue the goods; moral errors of reasoning due to sin; and moral errors of application due to errors of fact and belief.¹⁸⁹

8.3.4 Black's treatment of the good of religion

Black mentions the good of religion only briefly, which is somewhat surprising, when one considers that the good of religion is a kind of 'bridge' between Grisez's natural law theory and his moral theology (as this present work has argued).

¹⁸⁸ Black makes the point that the Fall has affected man's knowledge of facts very substantially, even more than it has affected man's awareness of the primary principle of the natural law. He thinks that O'Donovan goes too far in holding that the effects of the Fall have made it impossible for man to grasp the basics of the natural law: see *ibid.*, 129-130.

¹⁸⁹ Joseph Boyle, too, addresses the issue of moral diversity and whether it disproves the existence of a natural law: see J. Boyle, "Natural Law and the Ethics of Traditions," in *Natural Law Theory: Contemporary Essays*, ed. R.P. George (Oxford: Clarendon press, 1992), 3-30, at 18-28. Boyle does not mention the role of errors of fact or belief in contributing to moral pluralism. He does mention that natural law theorists hold that it is only the most basic principles that all people are expected to know and follow in their practical reasoning, and that people most often do so without any articulated or developed understanding of these principles. People can be expected to differ concerning the more derived and complex principles and norms and applications. There is a need, therefore, for sound moral philosophy (and, we might add, theology) and for sound dialectical arguments and theoretical knowledge if people are to know the natural law fully, soundly, and confidently, and apply it wisely.

In a couple of places, Black criticises Grisez's theory for not adequately accounting for our moral obligation to respect the natural world, and to receive its 'gifts' with gratitude.¹⁹⁰ Black suggests that a new basic good needs to be added to Grisez's list: harmony with the natural world.¹⁹¹ In saying this, Black seems to overlook entirely the fact that Grisez has twice mentioned action to protect the natural world (to save an endangered species) as an instance of the good of religion.¹⁹² It is true that Grisez criticises pantheistic understandings of nature, as Black acknowledges,¹⁹³ but Grisez does not consider pantheism as the only way of connecting the good of religion to the good of the natural world. Black acknowledges this latter point, and quotes from Grisez to show that he clearly recognises our moral obligation to respect nature *as Christians*,¹⁹⁴ but he does not seem to see that Grisez's *philosophical* understanding of the good of religion can include the good of harmony with nature. Black mentions the possibility that a religious understanding could help us to realise our responsibilities towards the natural world, but he seems to see this as possible only if we see this harmony as a kind of friendship, and so understand 'religion' in a clearly theistic manner. What Black

¹⁹⁰ See *Christian Moral Realism*, 82 and 132-135.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 134.

¹⁹² See Grisez, "A Contemporary Natural Law Ethics" in *Moral Philosophy: Historical and Contemporary Essays*, ed. William C. Starr and Richard C. Taylor (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1989), 125-43, at 128, and J. Finnis, J.M. Boyle and G. Grisez, *Nuclear Deterrence, Morality and Realism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 280. The role of religion and its relevance for environmentalism is also completely overlooked in Michael Northcott, "The Moral Standing of Nature and the New Natural Law", in *The Revival of Natural Law*, 262-281.

¹⁹³ See *Christian Moral Realism*, 131, with a reference to Grisez, *Living a Christian Life*, 772-4. In *Christian Moral Realism*, 132, Black states that Grisez considers a pantheistic attitude to lead to neglect of genuine human needs in favour of the 'needs' of nature seen as sacred, and that such an attitude is a result of the Fall and consequent human lack of accurate and genuine belief in God.

¹⁹⁴ See *Christian Moral Realism*, 133, quoting from *Living a Christian Life*, 779-780 and 775.

overlooks is that Grisez's philosophical moral theory can include and place a high value on the insights of natural theology, including a strong argument for the transcendent Source of meaning and value as personal (or quasi-personal, insofar as it will transcend what we understand as persons). Thus, even at the natural law level, Grisez's moral theory can support our human obligation to respect nature and be grateful for its gifts as an aspect of our being directed by a primary principle of practical reason to pursue and instantiate the good of religion. Love and reverence for God and respect and gratitude for nature can and should go together, according to Grisez's natural law theory and his moral theology.¹⁹⁵

8.3.5 *Personal vocation and religion*

Black treats the topic of personal vocation in some detail, seeing it as a very positive aspect of Grisez's approach. However, he sees it as a theological concept, with no "secular analogue" in Grisez's natural law theory.¹⁹⁶ Grisez has developed his moral theory recently, seeing personal vocation as something that reason unaided by faith can recognize, based on a philosophical acknowledgement and understanding of the transcendent Source of meaning and value. Such an acknowledgement and understanding could be more or less rich and sophisticated. Once we understand a more-than-human Source as the source of the natural law directing us to human fulfillment, and as the

¹⁹⁵ See ss. 4.9.1, 5.1.6c and 5.3.8 above.

¹⁹⁶ See *Christian Moral Realism*, 156 and 269. Black thinks that Finnis has a "secular analogue" to personal vocation, in his intermediate practical requirement that one have a coherent plan of life, but he treats Grisez's understanding of it as one that relies totally on revelation and faith. Of course, Black was not aware then (in 2000) of how Grisez would develop his understanding of personal vocation in "Natural Law, Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfillment," (2001) and subsequent writings, as examined in chapter six above, so it is perhaps not surprising that he treated personal vocation purely as theological.

source of this fulfillment's very possibility, we can come to see that our personal, individual talents and opportunities are gifts from that Source, and can grasp our responsibility to discern, accept and carry out faithfully our personal vocation. Of course, Christian faith deepens our understanding of personal vocation, specifying it richly; but faith is not strictly necessary for us to recognize personal vocation as an important aspect of the natural law. As argued above, personal vocation is a specification of the good of religion.¹⁹⁷ Because Black fails to adequately understand and appreciate the primary principle directing us to pursue religion as a foundational principle of the natural law, which is specified by Christian faith as a Christian understanding of personal vocation, he fails to see how the personal vocation aspects of Grisez's Christian ethics flows from, and specifies, his philosophical ethical theory.

8.4 Conclusion to the chapter

Grisez's moral theory has been strongly criticised. It has been accused of being atheistic, in that it has no place for God as Legislator. Further, its philosophical understanding of God has been criticised as being too thin to form a motivating object for the good of religion. It has been accused of relying completely on revelation and faith to give religion content, and to give morality its foundation. Against this kind of criticism, we have pointed out that Grisez's theory, even at the philosophical level, recognises God as the personal Source of meaning and value, the Source of the natural law itself, as well as the Source of all reality, including human fulfillment. Thus, anyone who grasps the good of

¹⁹⁷ See s. 6.1.6 above.

harmony with this Source will grasp the duty and happiness of obeying and loving God, whose will is wise and loving. Grisez's theology specifies this in the light of divine revelation, but this is a revelation that specifies and develops our natural knowledge of God, rather than replacing or denying that knowledge.

Grisez's theory has also been criticised for being a form of mere intuitionism, with no place for factual knowledge. This chapter has shown that this criticism is based on a misunderstanding of the place of self-evidence in Grisez's theory. Grisez holds that in the natural law only the most basic practical principles are self-evident, as the starting points of practical thinking and action. These principles are grounded in human nature and are drawn to our attention by our immediate awareness of our spontaneous behaviour seeking substantive goods (including our inclinations towards these goods and our fulfilments in them). Grasping these principles is possible even for children, but our knowledge of them and how to instantiate the goods to which they direct us can be developed and needs to be developed. Theoretical knowledge plays a big role in this development, and so it is practically relevant, although it is not strictly the same as practical knowledge. Thus, the natural law and natural law theory have an essential place for theoretical philosophical reflection on human nature, on the purpose of life as a whole, on the ultimate end of man. They also have an essential place for divine revelation, faith and theology to purify and perfect our natural knowledge.

Grisez's theory does not present the basic human goods as isolated from each other, or as concerned with self-fulfillment only, or as concerned with fulfillment in this world only.

The goods are necessarily interrelated. Religion can play an architectonic role unifying one's life as a kind of cooperation with God, willing all that God wills, which includes not only one's own fulfillment, but that of others too, as loved by God. Religion can also motivate our respect and gratitude for nature itself as God's creation. Many, if not most, of Grisez's critics have misunderstood or overlooked the nature and importance of religion in his moral theory.

Grisez's most recent development of his theory clearly recognises that man can have and ought to have a single concrete ultimate end in all his choices and commitments: integral communal fulfillment. All one's choices to pursue and instantiate the basic human goods ought to be made, at least implicitly, to contribute towards this ultimate end, which is a community of all persons flourishing in all their fundamental goods. Grisez has moved from presenting religion as unifying the moral life to presenting integral communal fulfillment as providing that unity. Whether or not this marks a complete change of trajectory in his theory's development will be discussed in the final chapter.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter synthesises the main ideas presented and analysed in the previous chapters and answers the question: What is the role of religion as a basic human good in the moral theory of Germain Grisez? It also points out some aspects of Grisez's theory that need to be developed. In particular, it discusses whether, and to what degree, Grisez has moved away from his previous understanding of the good of religion as an architectonic (i.e. overarching) and integrating good in his recent presentation of "integral communal fulfilment" as man's concrete ultimate human end.

Grisez's moral theory is a natural law theory. Its structure follows that of the natural law itself. Its foundations are those of the natural law: the basic forms of human flourishing that Grisez calls the basic human goods, towards which we are directed by the primary principles of the natural law. Religion is the object of one of these primary principles.

9.1 Religion as a basic human good

9.1.1 Religion is a field of human opportunity involving existential harmony

In Grisez's moral theory, "the good of religion" refers to a kind of human fulfilment. Religion is a good, an intelligible benefit, a field of human opportunity. It is a way that a person or persons can *be* more. The kind of fulfilment (*being* more) that it refers to is a

kind of harmony or peace. This harmony or peace is realised in one's willing: one's choices and/or commitments (and one's disposition too). Thus the good of religion is a reflexive good, a good that bends back on itself, so to speak.¹ Whenever one chooses to act for some good, including goods other than religion, one's choice can either possess the quality of harmony/peace or lack this quality. One's willing can be either peaceful and harmonious, or conflicted and discordant. The former is not only more pleasant and satisfying, but can be understood to be worth pursuing, promoting, protecting, cherishing.²

One's will or choice cannot be in harmony with itself, but rather with something or someone else (plural or singular). There can be harmony between aspects within the self (particularly focussed on one's emotions and one's will): inner peace. There can be harmony between one's judgements, choices, and actions: inner consistency. There can be harmony between human persons: social harmony. Beyond these forms of harmony, there can be harmony that reaches wider than the human. This is harmony between one's own will/choices and the will or choices of the "more-than-human" Source or principle of reality. This last form of harmony constitutes the benefit sought in the good of religion. The four forms of harmony are interrelated: a person who violates one tends to violate the others, and a person who instantiates one tends to instantiate the others.

¹ When one chooses to pursue a *reflexive* good, one chooses to choose, that is, one chooses in a manner conscious that one is choosing in a certain way (rather than in some other way).

² For simplicity's sake the term "pursuing" and its cognates are usually used here rather than continually referring to "pursuing and instantiating and protecting and ...". Also, often the singular is used, but it should be remembered that a good or goods can be pursued by an individual or individuals or groups. Note too that both emotional and intellectual motivation operate together in human motivation, and this is clearly acknowledged in Grisez's moral theory. One's motivation to pursue the good of religion is not cold and unemotional, but includes emotion (though it is not to be reduced to emotion or emotions that one simply happens to have). According to Grisez, emotions often operate beneath our consciousness.

The good of harmony is an existential fulfilment. It fulfils us as beings who are able to make free choices and commitments. It enables us to flourish as “free choosers”,³ and is itself an intrinsic aspect of this very flourishing. Participating in harmony leads to further flourishing in harmony. It leads also to flourishing in other goods, substantive goods: life/health, knowledge/aesthetic experience, and work/play (and marriage too).⁴ Although they are intrinsically good, and so can be sought for themselves, existential goods are not sought necessarily for their own *exclusive* benefit as existential. At least implicitly, and often explicitly, they are distinctive and fulfilling aspects of one’s choosing to pursue substantive goods. Harmonious choosing, in which one flourishes with regard to existential/reflexive goods, is the only way that one can be fully reasonable and truly practical, participating in, promoting and enjoying the integral fulfilment of the human person.

At this stage, the good of religion is identified in very broad terms. These terms can and should be specified and made much more detailed. But it is possible to grasp the point of pursuing harmony with the more-than-human in very minimal terms. The principle directing one to pursue and instantiate the good of religion is a very simple principle. Religion can be instantiated more or less fully, more or less effectively. It is not a matter of either perfect instantiation or none at all. For example, questioning whether there is a more-than-human Source of reality, with a view to choosing in harmony with it if there is

³ As the following chapter makes clear, the term “free choosers” does not refer to arbitrary choosers, or indifferent choosers. Flourishing as a free chooser requires loving all the goods integrally and religiously.

⁴ This is another way of saying that the existential order of reality is necessarily related to the other three orders: the physical, the logical and the cultural. See s. 2.6 above.

such a Source, is a minimal but real instantiation of the good of religion. At its most simple and minimal, willing the good of religion involves an openness, an aliveness, to the field of opportunity of harmony with the more-than-human.

The field of opportunity specified by “religion” is a distinct but opened one. In the life of each of us, it is not clear at first exactly what the good of religion involves. One’s understanding of how to participate in harmony with the more-than-human can and should develop as one’s knowledge and understanding of various aspects of reality grows. This will include knowledge and understanding of one’s self, one’s practical opportunities, the nature of the world in which one lives, and the nature of the more-than-human Source of reality. Not only individuals but groups and cultures can and do grow in this kind of understanding of religion. Though it is one’s individual responsibility, one ordinarily pursues religion as part of a group and culture.

It is also possible to make mistakes and errors with respect to religion, to go wrong in one’s development. This can happen at the individual and/or social or cultural levels. To pursue and instantiate the good of religion fully, to be fully practical and reasonable, one ought to avoid such mistakes and errors and seek religion in a way that is completely open to the good of knowledge and to true and lasting harmony with the more-than-human Source of reality. Although it can be pursued and instantiated imperfectly when it is pursued in a very subjective fashion, religion is not essentially a purely subjective reality, as it involves harmony with an objective reality beyond the self. Religion is not

the same as inner peace or inner consistency; like social harmony, religion calls us to reach beyond the self.

9.1.2 Religion is the object of a primary practical principle of the natural law

The natural law is not essentially about restrictive rules; its foundational principles direct us towards intelligible human goods. The natural law concerns how we are to be fully practical in our willing so that we might flourish. The most general and primary principle of the natural law is the first principle of practical reasonableness: The good is to be done and pursued and evil avoided. This principle shapes the whole natural law. All the precepts of the natural law are specifications of this most general principle.⁵

The primary principle directing us to pursue religion is one of the most basic specifications of the first principle of practical reasonableness. Thus: religion is to be done (instantiated or realised) and pursued, and lack of religion avoided.⁶ Practical principles are prescriptive rather than descriptive. They are directive truths. They direct towards fulfilments in or through our choices and actions. These fulfilments are intelligible and human; they can be understood as beneficial to us precisely as human persons. Thus, goods attract the will, which is our responsiveness to practical reasons.

⁵ This is not to say that all the precepts of the natural law are derived or deduced from the first principle of practical reasonableness. This principle is not a premise from which one can deduce the other precepts, but operates somewhat like the principle of non-contradiction, which is not a premise for deduction, but the basis of all deduction. Similarly, the first principle of practical reasonableness is the basis of all practical reasoning, but not a premise for all practical derivations or norms.

⁶ Henceforth this will be called the religion practical principle.

Religion is not understood necessarily to be a fulfilment of only the self. One can grasp the point of others pursuing and participating in the good of religion; one could freely and happily choose to encourage or enable others to do this. Further, insofar as the good of religion involves willing in harmony with the more-than-human Source of meaning and value, a person who instantiates religion wills in line with this Source, and wills the good of others insofar as this Source wills their good. (Such a person also wills the good of the self insofar as the Source wills it.) Thus the good of others is directly linked to one's own participation in the good of religion. Religion is part of a common good,⁷ not a merely private good.

The religion practical principle is a primary principle. It is self-evident: it is not derived or deduced from any other principle or truth. It marks a starting point of practical thinking concerning harmony with the more-than-human. It is a simple principle, although it can be specified in complex ways. Even a child could grasp the religion practical principle.⁸ However, one has to have experience before one can grasp this principle. It does not spring out of thin air; it is not innate; it is not a data-less intuition. It is a practical insight grounded in experience of tension with the more-than-human Source of reality.

The religion practical principle is not the only primary principle of the natural law. Religion is not the only basic human good. There are several primary practical principles,

⁷ Throughout this chapter, the term "common good" is not used to refer to a political reality, as it is often used in Catholic Social Teaching, but to refer to a wider reality: benefits or fulfilments that can be shared by persons.

⁸ This refers to a child past the age of reason.

directing towards several basic human goods. Each of these principles is a basic specification of the first principle of practical reasonableness. Each directs towards an irreducible and distinct form of human fulfilment, a benefit worth pursuing and instantiating in or through one's actions. These basic human goods are incommensurable. One cannot reasonably argue that any one of them is in all ways better or worse than any other. Nor can one argue that they are equal to each other.⁹ They simply cannot be compared in that way. The word "good" is used analogously in Grisez's moral theory to refer to several irreducible and diverse forms of human flourishing, united as "good" in that they are forms of human flourishing or good. (They are also united in that they are participations in the divine goodness of the Source of all reality, including all fulfilments.) Practical reason is concerned with pursuing more than one kind of human flourishing. Practical reason is not concerned with pursuing only religion, for example, or only existential goods, or only substantive goods, or only one of the substantive goods. Practical reason directs towards a range of forms of human flourishing, which correspond to the various aspects of human nature and potential.

It is worth emphasising how Grisez's natural law theory clearly includes religion in its very foundations. According to him, the natural law is a religious law. Religion is not added at a later stage of practical reasoning of the natural law as a philosophically-derived truth or as a truth of faith, although both philosophy and faith serve to specify

⁹ This is an error often made. It can seem puzzling how Grisez can hold that play and religion, for example, are both basic goods and incommensurable with each other, if one assumes that this means that play is equally good to religion. However, "incommensurable" does not mean "equal". Grisez does not claim that play and religion are equally good: he rejects the idea that one can commensurate them at all, whether to say that one is superior to the other in all respects, or to say that they are equal. His point is that they are both goods, and both basic goods, diverse and irreducible to one another (or to any other good or goods).

religion in necessary and valuable ways. Although Grisez does not present the natural law as an exclusively or narrowly religious law,¹⁰ he definitely sees it as a religious law. To be integrally practically reasonable is to be concerned with the more-than-human dimension of reality. This is so not only with regard to *knowledge* of this dimension, which is the concern of one of the substantive basic human goods (knowledge), but with practical concern to choose and act in *harmony* with it, which is the concern of an existential basic human good (religion). Grisez's moral theory is not atheistic; his understanding of the natural law is not a narrowly secular one.¹¹

9.1.3 The good of religion is grounded in human nature and objective reality

There is a range of diverse human goods because human nature is complex, and so human fulfilment is too. The basic human goods are grounded in human nature and are pointed to by human inclinations or tendencies. If humans were different, then their flourishing would be found in a different form or forms. Religion is a benefit for human persons because of what they are. In particular, religion is a benefit for human persons because they can make free choices concerning harmony with the more-than-human Source. If free choice was impossible for man, there could be no good of religion for him. Also, if there was no more-than-human Source of reality, or if there was no way of man knowing or guessing that this Source existed and that he could relate to this Source in

¹⁰ In particular, Grisez rejects any notion of the natural law being a form of Divine Command ethics, where moral goodness and faith are reduced to blind obedience, or obedience motivated only by fear.

¹¹ It is to be remembered too that Grisez, like Aquinas, sees the natural law as our participation in the eternal law. Arguably, Finnis has developed this aspect of the theory more explicitly than Grisez has: see ss. 7.1 and 7.2 above.

some way, then there would be no good of religion. Given reality provides the basis for all practical reasoning and all human fulfilment.

However, the good of religion is not deduced from human nature or from truths about the more-than-human Source. The good of religion is grasped in practical reasoning as a primary *practical* principle, interpreting experience in a precisely *practical* frame of mind. This practical frame of mind is not concerned with describing reality or understanding it theoretically; it is concerned with doing actions for the sake of a benefit/good.¹² This benefit/good is anticipated by practical knowledge, which enables the person to bring the reality into being in or through his choices/actions. All that is needed as a condition for one to grasp practically the potential benefit of religion, at least at its most initial and minimal, is immediate awareness of simple experience.

The experience in question is that of tension with the more-than-human Source. This experience is virtually universal among humankind. We all experience tensions of some sort with a more-than-human dimension of reality. For example, we act for the sake of goods such as life and health and find ourselves failing and/or bound to fail, and in need of more-than-human help. And we find ourselves failing morally, feeling guilt and helplessness, and needing more-than-human forgiveness and healing. This moral failure is understood to be a letting down of self and other human persons, but also to be a letting

¹² Of course, practical reasoning with regard to the good of knowledge is concerned with description and understanding of given reality. Knowing and understanding objective reality is precisely what the good of knowledge instantiates. So it is true to say that this form of practical thinking is concerned with theoretical knowledge as an intrinsic good. However, not all forms of practical thinking are so concerned (although all practical thinking will usually be concerned with knowledge as an instrumental good enabling one to effectively instantiate whatever good one is interested in). Man is not essentially only an observer of reality; man is also a "doer" who can bring realities into being in and/or through choices and actions.

down of reality in its more-than-human dimension. We understand ourselves to violate the law of nature and nature's God.¹³ There are many ways of understanding what the more-than-human Source is, some more reasonable than others,¹⁴ but, virtually universally, man has been aware of the more-than-human Source of reality and of his responsibility to try to act in harmony with this Source in order to respect it, find forgiveness and peace, and achieve success in his own endeavours.

9.1.4 The religion practical principle and theoretical knowledge

However, some people might be unable to grasp the religion practical principle. Although no theoretical knowledge is necessary for one to be able to grasp the initial insight into the good of religion (and so even older children can and do grasp it), it is clear that some kinds of opinion and belief effectively block one's ability to grasp the religion practical principle. People who believe in materialism or determinism, for example, will not be able (insofar as they are logical) to grasp the good of religion as a practical benefit for themselves. (They will be able perhaps to understand how others might consider religion to be a benefit for *themselves*. Obviously, they will consider such people to be in error.) Suppose such materialists or determinists were to object to Grisez's theory and say that there is no such basic human good as religion and that the religion practical principle is not self-evident. What might be Grisez's response?¹⁵

¹³ This echoes the American Declaration of Independence.

¹⁴ Clearly Grisez considers Christian faith to be the true religion, the most adequate way to understand the good of religion and the most effective way to pursue it. But to say this is not to overlook the value of inadequate but partially true understandings of religion and instantiations of religion, often in institutional and cultural forms.

¹⁵ We ignore here the possibility that some materialists, might acknowledge a kind of materialistic "religion" or "god", focussed on scientific progress, or evolution, or civilisation, or some sort of more-than-

Grisez would not try to demonstrate from more basic principles that religion is a human good. Such a demonstration is impossible, as there are no more basic practical principles from which to demonstrate the goodness of religion;¹⁶ nor can the religion practical principle be deduced from theoretical truths. However, it is possible to argue soundly against materialism and determinism. In fact Grisez has already done so in some detail (in *Beyond the New Theism* and *Free Choice*, in 1975 and 1976 respectively). Thus we can say that Grisez would use self-referential and/or theoretical arguments against anyone who rejected the good of religion on the basis of a materialistic or determinist philosophy or worldview. If such arguments were effective, the person who initially could not grasp the religion practical principle because of theoretical errors in his thinking, would now be free of such errors and able to form the practical insight into the good of religion. In the cases of the materialist and determinist, sound theoretical knowledge is a condition for their being able to grasp the religion practical principle (at least, for their own good).

Thus, Grisez's contention (following the lead of Aquinas) that the primary principles of the natural law are self-evident needs to be qualified. It is true that these principles are self-evident for people who have the necessary ordinary experiences and who do not

human ideal or dream. Perhaps many do. Sound theoretical knowledge helps such people not to grasp religion as such, but to grasp it accurately and effectively.

¹⁶ However, as the religion practical principle is a specification of the first principle of practical reasonableness, one could argue using a self-referential argument for the truth of that principle as part of one's dialectical argument for the truth of the religion practical principle. Such a self-referential argument would show that any affirmation of the falsity of the first principle of practical reasonableness would be impractical, pointless, fruitless – and so it would necessarily defeat itself and confirm the truth of that principle. Thus, there is a certain kind of pointlessness in arguing that it is not worthwhile to pursue harmony with the more-than-human Source of reality. However, one would need to do more than offer this self-referential argument to convince a materialist that there really is a transcendent Source of reality.

suffer from relevant unsound opinions or beliefs; but it is not true that these primary principles are self-evident to people who suffer from relevant unsound opinions or beliefs. The latter need more than just immediate awareness of ordinary experience in order to grasp the primary practical principles (or at least some of these principles). For some people, theoretical knowledge *is* a necessary condition for grasping some or all of the basic human goods.¹⁷

It could also be said that in the context of developing or understanding natural law *theory*, it is often necessary to have sound theoretical knowledge in order to confidently grasp the primary practical principles as goods and to list them in a structured and comprehensive manner (as Grisez does). This is because, in the context of natural law theorising, one is often self-critical and open to considering doubts, difficulties, and objections to one's theory, and so one needs sound theoretical knowledge (and one avoids unsound opinions and beliefs). By contrast, a person who is simply going about his ordinary practical life, in a non-theoretical context, will grasp the primary principles in a very simple manner, with perhaps little or even no reference to theory at all. It is this latter, thoroughly practical grasp of the natural law that is presupposed by all natural law theorising.

¹⁷ This is one reason why there is moral diversity and why natural law theory can easily account for this diversity. People can be mistaken about theoretical concerns, and this affects their ability to grasp the natural law, even in its most basic principles, which are in principle self-evident.

9.2 Specifications of religion

9.2.1 *Specification of religion by theoretical knowledge*

There is another role for theoretical knowledge in Grisez's natural law theory and in the natural law itself: specification. The concept of specification is central in Grisez's moral theory. It refers to the process or action whereby a general principle or truth is made more specific, given a more detailed character, identity, and/or application.¹⁸ It has already been pointed out how the religion practical principle is a specification of the more general first principle of practical reasonableness (as are the other primary practical principles directing towards the other basic human goods). The religion practical principle in its turn needs to be specified by theoretical knowledge if one is to pursue and instantiate it effectively in concrete circumstances.¹⁹ When one initially grasps the good of pursuing harmony with the more-than-human Source of reality, one usually knows very little about how to go about this pursuit. The good of religion motivates one to find out more and more about religion and how to instantiate it effectively, including finding out the objective truth concerning the more-than-human Source of reality. This can involve philosophical knowledge and natural theology, and/or the religious teachings or opinions (and rituals and practices) found in a particular religion. Such opinion and belief (and practice) can be more or less adequate, more or less objectively true, but one rightly

¹⁸ Grisez does not define the concept of specification. The definition used here draws from Grisez's use of the term and from definitions found in several online dictionaries: see the website "dictionary.com" at <http://dictionary.reference.com/> [accessed on 20th August 2008].

¹⁹ One can be alive to the good of religion in a general kind of way, with no concrete option or options in mind, but often one is interested in the good of religion with a concrete option or options in mind. Although it can seem somewhat abstract in moral theory, the religion practical principle is a very concretely operative truth in practice. It involves memory, perception and imagination regarding goals that are emotionally desired, as well as intellectual understanding of the fulfilments possible through pursuing these goals.

settles only for what one honestly considers the most adequate opinions or beliefs. Thus, there is a “thrust towards objectivity” built into the good of religion, so to speak.

Clearly Grisez holds that Christian faith in divine revelation is the richest and truest specification of the good of religion (and the good of knowledge in relation to the good of religion).²⁰ Unlike the initial grasp of the good of religion at its most general, the truth of Christian faith is not self-evident, however, but something that can be argued for and demonstrated (within limits, of course).²¹ One offering such arguments or demonstrations hopes that his listeners will be motivated, by their practical insights into the basic human goods, to attend to the arguments and respond positively. The most obvious good in this respect is knowledge, but, as this work has shown, knowledge is not the only good, and religion is also relevant here, as are other basic human goods. For example, the fact that Grisez puts aesthetic experience in with knowledge as one of the basic human goods suggests that one can be motivated by love of beauty along with one’s love of truth²² – and one’s love of both beauty and truth can work alongside one’s motivation to pursue

²⁰ We might add here that one needs also the good of excellence in work and play to be specified in relation to the good of religion. One needs to know what kinds of activity are effectively productive of harmony with God and what kinds of activity are in themselves worthwhile as embodiments of harmony with God. Good planning of liturgy, for example, aims at the goods of work and play with regard to religion.

²¹ The point here is not that one can demonstrate faith to be true, but one can show that it is reasonable and can deal with various objections and doubts regarding specific difficulties (such as the historical reliability of the Gospels, the possibility of miracles, the nature of papal infallibility, and so on).

²² The point that one can be motivated by love of beauty as well as truth is not always as clear in Grisez’s moral theory as one might wish, but it is compatible with it and suggested by it. It is more clearly found in other philosophical and theological approaches, however, which compliment Grisez’s approach. An example is the approach of Pope Benedict XVI. See his talk to priests, deacons and seminarians in Bressanone, Italy, 6th August 2008, “Reason needs beauty, says Pontiff,” online at [zenit.com](http://www.zenit.com), at <http://www.zenit.org/article-23409?l=English> [accessed 21st August 2008]. The original text of this talk (Q and A) by the Pope is found in full on the Holy See website, as “Meeting of the Holy Father Benedict XVI with the Clergy of the Diocese of Bolzano-Bressanone,” (compiled by Libreria Editrice Vaticana), at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2008/august/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20080806_clero-bressanone_en.html [accessed 21st August 2008].

harmony with God. One of the most important truths in Grisez's moral theory is that the basic human goods work in an interrelated way, not in isolation from one another. Or at least they do when one is thinking fully practically and morally.

9.2.2 *Specification by moral truth*

This leads us to acknowledge another kind of specification of the good of religion: its being specified by moral truth. Pursuing the good of religion simply as one basic human good is not sufficient if people are to be fully reasonable, fully practical, completely fulfilled. One must pursue the good of religion *integrally*, that is, with integrity, with a love of not only the good of religion but all the goods of persons. This means, for example, that one must not reduce the good of religion to the good of inner consistency and consider it sufficient to be merely sincere and authentic in one's pursuit of religion. No, one must be open to the good of knowledge too, as was emphasised in the previous section. Moral truth is found in the integrity with which one pursues the good. One is morally and practically required to understand and pursue and instantiate religion in a manner consistent with all the modes of responsibility, or, in other words, in a manner consistent with right reason, with prudence. With regard to the morally good understanding and pursuit of religion, one must avoid laziness and inertia, over-enthusiasm and impatience and narrow individualism, greed and lust and other inordinate desires, unreasonable fear, partiality towards oneself or others, superficiality, revenge and hatred, and any fanaticism or desire to do evil for the sake of good.²³ Any instantiation of religion will be imperfect when it is marred by such disordered emotions or tendencies. Pursuit of religion needs to be fully reasonable if it is to be true and lasting participation

²³ See Appendix two for a list of the modes of responsibility, which are referred to here.

in this good. Although the good of religion is seen in Grisez's moral theory (and, he holds, in the natural law itself) as something distinct and irreducible to other goods (and therefore incommensurable with them), it is wrong to focus exclusively on religion or to consider it sufficient to pursue it as a single good in isolation from the rest. Religion is one good among others; it is part of an *integral* whole.

9.3 Integrality and religion as an architectonic good

Thus, integrality is a central concept in Grisez's moral theory (and in the natural law itself). Attention to the very nature of the good of religion helps to highlight this concept. For religion is concerned with harmony with the transcendent Source of reality, meaning and value. And this Source can be understood, and should be understood, even at the philosophical level, as personal and as willing human fulfilment for us (insofar as this Source is the source of the natural law itself, including the primary principles directing us towards our fulfilments, and the source of those very fulfilments themselves). Divine revelation supports this philosophical understanding, and develops it. To be in harmony with God who creates all things so that they can flourish as parts of his creation, and who wills the fulfilment of all things in Jesus Christ, is to be alive to the integrality of all the goods (as parts of a created whole). When one wills as God wills, one wills the full range of basic human goods for all the persons one can benefit (or, at least, one avoids willing directly against any good and to the detriment of any person). This is why a fully reasonable and practical pursuit of the good of religion must be specified by moral truth, which is characterised by integrity, and must be as objective as possible, specified by the

substantive goods, including theoretical knowledge. One cannot pursue or instantiate harmony with God if one pursues religion as an isolated good. Religion necessarily opens out towards the other goods because God is the Source of all goods, the Source of practical reason itself, and the Source of all fulfilments (which are various forms of *fullness of being*).

This is the main reason why religion is not just a distinct good in its own right, so to speak, and worth pursuing for its own sake, but also, precisely in being the good that it is, can function as an *overarching* good, an *architectonic* commitment that unifies one's whole life, integrating it around harmony with God in a way that is fully alive to the goodness of the "non-religious" goods.²⁴ Various terms can be used to express this character of the good of religion. It can be said to provide a *superordinate* or *supervenient* motivation in addition to the more direct motivations provided by the non-religious goods. Thus, for example, one can have more than one reason to promote the good of life: the intrinsic good of life in itself, plus the good of willing as God wills and thus instantiating harmony with the God of life.²⁵ Religion can be said to *pervade* or *suffuse* one's whole life as an interest at stake in all one's choices. Religion can be said to be *transparent* for the other goods, both the basic human goods and moral goodness. Thus a person who instantiates the good of religion has an added facility in understanding the goodness of other instantiations of goods, and is less likely to overlook or ignore their

²⁴ The word non-religious is placed in quotes here to indicate that there are no truly or fully non-religious goods as such, as this whole argument entails, even though diverse goods are good in their own distinctive way, and so should not be reduced narrowly to religion.

²⁵ Obviously, one can have more than two motives for promoting the good of life. The other goods can provide motives too, especially the other existential goods.

goodness. Religion can also be understood to be concerned with *the common good of friendship with God*, a common good that includes and cherishes all forms of goodness for all persons. This understanding of religion is probably only fully available to the eyes of faith, as philosophical understanding is limited with regard to friendship with God. But even philosophically it is possible to approach towards an understanding of religion as a kind of friendship with the more-than-human.

In coming to understand one's life as friendship with God, one comes to see that all one's choices and commitments can and should express one's friendship with him. One should always act in a way that promotes the common good of one's friendship. One understands life to be *cooperation with God*, embodying love of God in all one's choices and commitments. There is no part of life that is non-religious, no choice in which religion is not at least implicitly at stake.

Thus religion can *unify life*, providing it with *an overall harmony* that is itself a good worth pursuing and instantiating. The good of religion as architectonic makes clear the fact that Grisez's moral theory (and the natural law itself) is not concerned just with single acts as right or wrong. It is also concerned with commitments, including the overall commitment of one's life as a whole to always be in harmony with God and avoid sin. It is possible to live out such a religious commitment in many diverse ways.²⁶ What is important is that one makes the commitment to live out one's whole life in harmony

²⁶ This is another reason why there is moral diversity and why natural law theory can account for this diversity. Some moral diversity is legitimate and coherent. However, one has to advert also to factual errors and errors in moral reasoning and application to account fully for moral diversity, and natural law theory can do this with no difficulty. Illegitimate moral diversity, and its causes and effects, provides one reason why the natural law needs divine revelation and grace to support, clarify, extend and perfect it.

with God in a way that fully respects God as the transcendent Source of reality, meaning and value. This can be understood to include not only following the natural law in all one's choices, but also discerning, accepting and carrying out faithfully one's personal vocation. This concept has an important place in Grisez's moral theory, and it is closely related to religion. It involves discerning how one can live harmoniously with God by using one's unique talents, interests and opportunities to the best of one's ability to serve the good of oneself and others, and to honour and love God. Again, this is a concept that can be known to an extent by philosophy, but is most clear in the light of faith.

9.4.Christian faith specifies the natural law

Much of Grisez's work is moral theology. This is a further specification of the natural law, of practical reasoning. In light of divine revelation, accepted in faith and hope and love, by which one enters into the new covenant, into friendship with Jesus and membership of his body, the Church, one is able to understand and appreciate and live by the natural law in a new way. One is able to grasp the attraction of the basic human goods in a more hopeful and sustained manner, and thus one's will is strengthened. One is given an eternal perspective on things, a "God's eye perspective". One has the benefit of the grace of the scriptures and tradition, prayer, the sacraments, and the Christian community (especially the saints), through which God reaches out to help us on the way.

Because man lives in a sinful condition, he needs divine revelation and living faith in order to know the good and to live by it.²⁷ The bare natural law is not enough in practice: it calls out, so to speak, for a specification relevant to reality. Although reason can know the basics of the natural law, which is a law constituted by right reason directing towards integral fulfilment of human persons, this is a reason that opens out towards the specification to be found in the Christian faith. Natural law theory opens out towards moral theology (or Christian ethics, as it is sometimes called), which supports, purifies, heals, extends and perfects the natural law.

This means that every element of Christian ethics has a natural basis, a more general natural law aspect that is specified in the light of revelation and the new covenant. (And vice versa: every element of the natural law is specified by faith.)²⁸ The good of religion is found in Christian ethics too, but in a specified form. It is essentially human friendship with Jesus. It involves following “the way of the Lord Jesus” as the common good of our friendship with Jesus, who is both man and God. The modes of responsibility of the natural law are specified as the modes of Christian response.²⁹ The primary principle of Christian life is love, which disposes us to make all our choices in union with Jesus’ choices, to cooperate with him, and the Father and Spirit, in their work of redemption and sanctification (and re-creation). In all their choices, Christians intend (in hope) the

²⁷ It should also be said that Christians need God’s grace of forgiveness and reconciliation when they fail to live by faith and by the natural law, as so often is the case.

²⁸ This is one aspect of the saying: grace builds on nature.

²⁹ See Appendix Three below for a list of the modes of Christian response.

kingdom of God. The Christian finds harmony with God, the good of religion, in human unity with Jesus, through the theological virtues of faith, hope and love.

Grisez also maintains that there is a further dimension to the gift of God's love. It not only motivates us to be morally good in a new, more hopeful and realistic way (in light of revealed truth), but it offers us a share in the divine nature. This special gift of grace (which is additional to the other, natural gifts of grace, so to speak) transcends human choices, acts, and fulfilments, and unites us with God in a special, transcendent manner, which is perfected in the beatific vision in heaven. This divine fulfilment is beyond the human fulfilments of the natural law, beyond basic human goods, including religion. Still, religion plays an important role in helping man to desire this divine fulfilment and to act, albeit indirectly, for it. By our friendship with Jesus, which is the richest instantiation of religion possible, and is itself God's gift to us, we are humanly fulfilled but also we are interested in accepting the special further gift offered to us by Jesus: our adoption as sons and daughters of God (in Christ) and our sharing in the divine life and love. Religion thus mediates our fulfilment in divine goodness, a fulfilment that transcends our merely human participation in divine goodness. This is a controversial and challenging aspect of Grisez's moral theology.

9.5 Areas of Grisez's moral theory that need to be developed

9.5.1 *The relationship of the natural and the supernatural*

Several aspects of Grisez's moral theory need development. Two have already been mentioned: the role of theoretical knowledge in helping some people to grasp the primary practical principles³⁰ and the importance of beauty as a compliment to truth.³¹ Another area was mentioned in the previous section. This concerns Grisez's treatment of the relationship between the natural and the supernatural, or, in other words, between nature and grace. This is a difficult area of theology and has challenged theologians over the centuries, with no fully clear and coherent understanding achieved yet (and, perhaps, ever). So it is hardly surprising that Grisez's theology is somewhat incomplete and even incoherent in this regard. We can discuss these difficulties in his theology with reference to religion, as it is at the heart of his theology.

Religion is seen by Grisez as a human good, a humanly fulfilling benefit, which we can pursue and instantiate in and/or through our human choices, acts and commitments (albeit only with God's constant direction and help). Our divine, supernatural fulfilment, which is our sharing in God's own life and love, is seen by Grisez as quite distinct from any human fulfilment, including religion even at its most richly specified (i.e. as human friendship with Jesus). Human persons' fulfilment includes both human fulfilment and (as a special gift beyond our natural potential and nature) divine fulfilment. This two-fold

³⁰ See s. 9.1.4 above.

³¹ See n. 22 above.

fulfilment³² is found ultimately in the kingdom of God. What is the relationship between the two kinds of fulfilment? Is our divine fulfilment intrinsically related to our human fulfilment? Or is the relationship an extrinsic one?

An extrinsic relationship is suggested by parts of what Grisez writes. He treats our divine fulfilment as very different from our human fulfilment, and insists that we cannot act for this divine fulfilment, except to receive it as a pure gift from God. Our divine fulfilment is not the actuation of any human potential, nor the fulfilment or perfection of our human nature. Thus it is not, for example, the perfection of the good of religion.

One sound implication of this is that divine fulfilment is not to be thought of as replacing human fulfilment or as an alternative to it. Thus, Grisez rightly seeks to safeguard the integrity and intrinsic goodness of the various human goods and integral fulfilment of human persons. This is one reason why he criticises Aquinas's views on our ultimate end being the beatific vision understood (narrowly) as a perfection of our intellects (i.e. the good of knowledge). Grisez wants all good aspects of our humanity to be given the proper attention in Christian ethics. Thus he insists that heaven will include rich and varied human fulfilment, including bodily resurrection and the communion of saints and angels, purified of all sin and freed from all decay and death.

But heaven will include more than that: it will include the beatific vision too. Grisez understands the beatific vision to be a fulfilment that transcends any human fulfilment. We are interested in the beatific vision only because of our friendship with Jesus who

³² This term is not used by Grisez, except in relation to Aquinas's views on human fulfilment.

offers us this gift in offering us a share in the divine life and love (i.e. because of the good of “religion-mediating-divine-love”, so to speak). With Grisez presenting the beatific vision as utterly non-human, however, it would seem that our acceptance of this gift is the acceptance of an extrinsic gift, one that is not connected in any way with our human fulfilment, except accidentally as one gift that Jesus happens to offer us (as an aspect of our friendship with him, or, in other words, as an aspect of the good of religion specified by living faith).

But elements of Grisez’s moral theology seem to contradict this extrinsic concept of the beatific vision. Grisez holds that good human acts, in particular our act of faith, but also our general disposition to moral goodness, are required for us to receive God’s grace. With God’s constant help, we cooperate in our own salvation and sanctification.³³ Further, Grisez holds that the gift of God’s love poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which is the beginning of our divine fulfilment, also has a humanly intelligible effect on our human acts. God’s love, by which we are united with God, enables us to be alive to the basic human goods and to pursue moral goodness in a new and better way. We are able to see as God sees, rising above merely human and sinful limitations and weaknesses, and thus able to pursue and instantiate the goods more effectively and integrally. This all suggests that the beatific vision is intrinsically related to human goods and fulfilment.

³³ In this Grisez is following the traditional teaching of the Church on grace.

In addition, it is difficult to see how the good of religion, which involves harmony with God and at its best, friendship with God, is not related intrinsically to love of God, which involves unity with God. Surely the latter is a perfection of the former?³⁴ Certainly there is a strong element of discontinuity between the two kinds of fulfilment. One participates in the good of religion through and in human choices and acts, whereas God's love (fulfilment in divine goodness) is a special gift to us, which we cannot achieve or instantiate by or in our own human actions. We need God's help for even our human actions and fulfilments, but we need extra help, so to speak, help beyond what we are naturally capable of doing or accepting, to be able to live in God's love, sharing in divine intimacy. Thus divine fulfilment is supernatural, not natural, grace, not nature. But, nevertheless, it does seem reasonable and necessary to think of our divine fulfilment by analogy with human fulfilments, as in the Bible: perfect vision, divine-human marriage,³⁵ a kingdom of peace and love, eternal life, dwelling in everlasting light, the heavenly Jerusalem, and so on. Grisez himself even speaks of it as a "consummation" of the

³⁴ Grisez makes the point that the apostles' vision of Jesus (by which they saw the Father – cf. Jn 14. 9-10) was not the same as the beatific vision. Rather, it corresponded to the human good of religion. This is true, but isn't it also true that the apostles' seeing Jesus (and thus the Father) is *intrinsically* related to their seeing God in the beatific vision? Isn't the latter a perfection of the former (by God's special grace)? To say this is not to deny that there is discontinuity between the two types of vision, but it is to deny that the two types of vision are only accidentally or extrinsically related. See Grisez, "Natural Law, God, Religion, and Human Fulfilment," *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 46 (2001): 3-36, at 26.

³⁵ In relation to this biblical analogy of marriage, we might offer the following tentative suggestion. Just as marriage marks a difference in quality and not just in degree compared to the pre-marriage love of the man and woman, so too the beatific vision is qualitatively different from human fulfilment. However, marriage is still a perfection of pre-marriage love, and is intrinsically related to it, although it is discontinuous from it too. So too perhaps we might consider our divine fulfilment in the beatific vision to be a perfection of our human fulfilment, even though it is qualitatively different from it. This perfection is not a perfection of our intellects only (as Grisez rightly insists) but a perfection of our full humanity that is integral and comprehensive, and includes the bodily goods. Also, we might say that this perfection transcends our merely human imagination and understanding, whilst not being radically discontinuous with them. If we see that beatific vision as *totally* discontinuous with our human imagination and understanding, it would seem impossible to grasp why Jesus would offer such a gift to us. Such a gift would be unintelligible and would not be an aspect of our human friendship with Jesus. Accepting it would be a kind of blind faith, not a reasonable human choice.

natural, human friendship we have with Jesus.³⁶ So it seems that there is an intrinsic relationship between our human fulfilment and our divine fulfilment. Perhaps the best we can do is to say that this is an area of mystery, in which there are elements of continuity and discontinuity, and so the natural and supernatural aspects of Grisez's moral theology are *both* intrinsically and extrinsically related. What is necessary is to avoid any moral theology that holds that grace and nature are entirely intrinsically or entirely extrinsically related. Grisez's moral theology avoids these two extremes, but perhaps at times he seems to veer too strongly towards the extrinsic extreme. Perhaps he might clarify his theory in this area. In doing so, it could be that he will find that his moral theory, whilst not exactly the same as that of Aquinas, is more like it than he seems to think at present.³⁷

9.5.2 Religion as a virtue and virtue ethics in general

Another aspect of Grisez's moral theory which could be expressed in a manner more like that of Aquinas, with no loss to Grisez's distinctive approach, is virtue. Here is more accurate to speak of ambivalence and incompleteness, rather than incoherence as such. Grisez says many positive things about virtue and virtues and their importance in the moral life. His presentation of the modes of responsibility, for example, mentions moral virtues frequently, as embodying the modes in various ways (i.e. as embodying moral goodness or right reason).³⁸ Grisez clearly values virtue and the virtues.

³⁶ See s. 6.2.3b above.

³⁷ And so Grisez's theory would be more like Finnis's, as seen in s. 7.3.6 above.

³⁸ See Appendix Four below. Grisez does something similar in the chapter on the Christian modes of response, in which the natural virtues are specified by faith: see *Christian Moral Principles*, chapter twenty-six.

However, Grisez does not see virtues as the foundational principles of morality; instead, the first principle of practical reasonableness, the principles directing towards the basic human goods, the first principle of morality, and the modes of responsibility are these foundational principles. Also Grisez is clearly worried about any reduction of the Christian moral life to the cultivation of virtues viewed as mere self-perfections, or a reduction of the Christian life to personal achievement of perfections in isolation from seeking the kingdom in faith, hope and love. It seems clear too that the various writers in what we might call the “Grisez school” are concerned about a reductive or narrow virtue ethics. In this reductive virtue ethics, prudence is allowed a role whereby moral absolutes are rendered null and void due to a supposed ability of prudence to creatively discern how to live a morally good life by a sort of moral instinct or aesthetic evaluation, without principles or rules or law.³⁹ These are reasonable concerns.

But still, especially in the recent works of Grisez himself, there seems to be too negative a tone concerning virtue and virtues, which is out of place in his moral theory. Also this negative tone unnecessarily makes it more difficult to harmonise Grisez’s moral theory with other approaches, and perhaps puts off people who are positively inclined towards a virtue ethics approach (that includes the natural law). One sign of this ambivalence towards virtue in Grisez’s approach is his (and Finnis’s) lack of attention to religion as a virtue as treated by Aquinas in some detail. So one area where Grisez’s moral theory might be usefully developed is by integrating Aquinas’s treatment of the virtue of religion into Grisez’s theory. Another thing Grisez might think of doing is to revise his

³⁹ See John Finnis, *Moral Absolutes: Tradition, Revision, and Truth* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1991), 101-105.

opinion that attention to virtue ethics and the psychology of virtue development is not useful with regard to moral theory and practice. Such a negative appraisal seems unnecessary and overly exclusive. Surely Grisez could easily integrate a concern with virtues as shaping how we live the moral life into his theory. One thing that is necessary in this regard is for Grisez to more clearly deal with a form of voluntariness that is operative in virtuous living: habitual willing that is “determined” by one’s freely shaped character.⁴⁰ To acknowledge this would not be to overlook or deny the importance of free choice as a basic principle of morality.

9.5.3 *The design argument*

There is a third area in which Grisez might draw closer to Aquinas and to various other moral theologians and philosophers. This concerns the design argument. In his 1976 book *Beyond the New Theism*, Grisez developed a very strict cosmological argument for the obtaining/existence of God. This led to a very austere concept of God, which was only speculatively a personal concept. Grisez did not fully exclude other approaches to demonstrating God’s existence in this book, but he was certainly not very warm towards them. In later works, beginning with “Practical Principles, Moral Truth, and Ultimate Ends” (1987), Grisez developed an extension of this cosmological argument in which God was more confidently to be understood as a person (or like a person). This argument involved seeing God as the Source of not only the existence of the natural law but also of its directiveness towards human fulfilment. This new development of Grisez’s argument

⁴⁰ This form of willing is similar if not identical to what Grisez calls “executive willing” in *Christian Moral Principles*, chapter nine (241-243). My point is that Grisez ought to give more attention to the forms of willing or voluntariness other than free choice, such as simple willing/aliveness to goods, disposition, interest, habitual willing, and “executive willing”. (The latter is a rather ugly phrase of Grisez’s, but it is difficult to think of a short alternative.)

was never presented by him or any other of the Grisez school in any detail, certainly not compared to his original cosmological argument. So this is one area that could be usefully developed now. In particular, it could be investigated whether and to what extent the new development is a kind of design argument (supplementing the original cosmological argument). Grisez has not presented it as a design argument, but it seems to be one. To argue from the existence of the natural law would be a cosmological argument, but to argue from the character of the natural law (i.e. as directive towards fulfilment) is a design argument, in my opinion. Thus, Grisez seems to have moved closer to accepting Aquinas's five ways, in which elements of a design argument approach can be found in the fourth and fifth ways.⁴¹ To investigate this area of Grisez's moral theory would help to develop understanding of how natural law theory is related to the design argument. Another aspect of this is that how one is to understand philosophically the good of religion, which is closely bound up with Grisez's "design development" of his cosmological argument, would be clarified by such an investigation.

9.5.4 Integral communal fulfilment and religion

Finally, we come to the question of whether Grisez has repudiated his early thoughts on religion, which have been presented and analysed in the present work. We have already discussed this,⁴² but we look briefly at it once again here because it might seem to be a question mark hanging over this whole present work.

⁴¹ See ss. 7.3.6a and 7.3.6b above, where Finnis's treatment of Aquinas in this regard is analysed briefly. My point here is not that Grisez agrees with everything that Aquinas says in his five ways, but that he is closer to Aquinas than he thinks.

⁴² See ss. 6.3.5 and 6.3.6 above. The work in question is G. Grisez, "The True Ultimate End of Human Beings: The Kingdom, Not God Alone," *Theological Studies* 69, no. 1 (March 2008): 38-61.

Grisez does not repudiate his understanding of religion as an architectonic good (i.e. a good providing an unifying and enriching overarching commitment shaping one's life as a whole). Our whole lives can be "marked by cooperation with God" when we "give God his due" by praising and thanking him, and also discern, accept, and carry out our personal vocations (consistent with the general guidance of the natural law).⁴³ These two aspects of the good of religion seem to correspond, at least partially, to the specific, explicit and more narrow concept of "religion" (centred in prayer and worship) and the wider, more implicit concept (centred in doing all one's actions for a supervenient religious motive).⁴⁴ Grisez definitely does not restrict the meaning of religion to a narrow concept of worship and explicitly conventional religious acts. The good of religion is specified in one's personal vocation (consistent with the natural law), which is one's unique and personal way of cooperating with God. Cooperating with God necessarily involves willing in harmony with him. What is it that both the self and God wills in this cooperation, this pursuit and instantiation of religion? Grisez's new answer is "integral communal fulfillment".⁴⁵

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁴⁴ This correspondence is not exact, however. One can give God his due by cooperating with him in one's whole life, not just by explicit prayer and worship. Prayer and worship embody cooperation with God. And also one can explicitly cooperate with God, rather than just implicitly doing so.

⁴⁵ See *ibid.*, 55-57.

Integral communal fulfilment is the common good willed by God and all persons who will the good of religion.⁴⁶ Grisez now presents integral communal fulfilment as the ultimate concrete end that people ought to intend in all their choices. He no longer presents religion as the ultimate concrete end of man.⁴⁷ However, as integral communal fulfilment is the common good intended whenever one participates in the good of religion as an architectonic good, it does not seem that Grisez has repudiated his earlier understanding of religion. What he has done is added to it. One is still called to unify one's whole life within a religious perspective, by willing as God wills, cooperating with God in friendship and harmony. However, what one wills in this overall religious commitment is not just the good of religion, but integral communal fulfilment.⁴⁸ We could say that one intends integral communal fulfilment *through* the good of religion (which is thus transparent for integral communal fulfilment). Therefore, integral communal fulfilment does not fully replace religion as the overarching commitment of one's life. Grisez's use of the concept of integral communal fulfilment emphasises that the good of religion is not a narrow good excluding the various and diverse goods of other persons.⁴⁹ Grisez seems wary now of presenting religion as the ultimate end we should intend in all our choices and commitments because this might suggest that the other goods are somehow not important or permanently valuable. In a sense, Grisez

⁴⁶ This linkage between the good of religion and integral communal fulfilment is present only implicitly in Grisez's work.

⁴⁷ See *ibid.*, 57, n. 58.

⁴⁸ Of course, Grisez never claimed that one was to pursue the good of religion in isolation from the other goods. What his new concept of our ultimate end does is to make this even more clear.

⁴⁹ We should remember that Grisez now includes more than human persons in our ultimate end: we are to intend the good of other humans, but also other created persons such as angels, and the person of God too (insofar as we can cooperate with him, honour him, please him, and manifest his glory).

seems to be worried that putting religion to the fore might lead to God “swallowing up” distinct created goods and persons. This is also a reason why Grisez rejects the idea that our total happiness, which quenches all our desires and willing, is found in God alone (in the beatific vision). Grisez wishes to emphasise that our ultimate human happiness, a happiness that is perfect but ongoing and developing, is found in created goods and in community, distinct from, though somehow within, our “joyful intimacy with the divine Persons”.⁵⁰

The term “communal” in integral communal fulfilment refers to a community that includes God. We cannot intend God’s fulfilment in a simple and direct way, because God is perfect. However, analogously and by relational predication, we can understand our actions to “benefit” God by carrying out his will, pleasing and honouring him, benefitting his creatures (including ourselves) and so manifesting his glory. Intending integral communal fulfilment necessarily includes loving God as well as loving our neighbour.⁵¹

Although God is included in the community of integral *communal* fulfilment, the phrase itself does not directly mention God, and it could be read in a secular or non-religious way. The other two terms, however, clearly state that the community in view is to be *integrally fulfilled*. And integral fulfilment includes the good of religion, which is, at its

⁵⁰ Ibid., 61, final sentence of the article.

⁵¹ It also includes caring for the environment, which could be thought to be part of the community that God is to fulfil ultimately in the new heavens and new earth, see *ibid.*, 60. See also *ibid.*, 58: “Resurrection will be both communal and cosmic”. This is another area of Grisez’s theology to be developed.

best, a friendship with God in which one wills God's good: his name being hallowed, his kingdom coming, his will being done on earth as in heaven. By keeping in mind the rich meaning of religion and its important role in Grisez's moral theory, and in the natural law itself, we can avoid reading Grisez's new emphasis on integral communal fulfilment as the ultimate end of man as in any way being a secular or atheistic version of philosophical ethics. As long as religion is accorded the kind of important role that this present work examining Grisez's moral theory has analysed and presented, then it will be clear that integral communal fulfilment finds its transcendent Source in God, who is the creator and Lord of the community of persons to be fulfilled. Also, we will more clearly see then the relationship between integral communal fulfilment and the kingdom *of God*, which is a wonderful and rich specification of the integral communal fulfilment that God offers to us when we follow, implicitly or explicitly, the way of the Lord Jesus.⁵²

⁵² So it could be said that highlighting the role of religion is necessary if integral communal fulfilment is to be understood in a way that reflects how the natural law opens out towards being specified as a Christocentric ethics, centred on Jesus who followed a religious personal vocation and who calls each one of us to do the same in union with him.

First Principle of Practical Reasonableness:

The good is to be done and pursued, and evil avoided.

The Specifications of the First Principle of Practical Reasonableness:

Regarding the substantive basic human goods:

- 1. Life and health are to be instantiated and pursued, and their privation avoided.*
- 2. Knowledge and aesthetic experience are to be instantiated and pursued, and their privation avoided.*
- 3. Work and play are to be instantiated and pursued, and their privation avoided.*

Regarding the reflexive/existential basic human goods:

- 4. Inner peace is to be instantiated and pursued, and its privation avoided.*
- 5. Inner consistency is to be instantiated and pursued, and its privation avoided.*
- 6. Social harmony is to be instantiated and pursued, and its privation avoided.*
- 7. Religion is to be instantiated and pursued, and its privation avoided.*

Regarding a basic human good that is both substantive and reflexive:

- 8. Marriage is to be instantiated and pursued, and its privation avoided.*

These are the foundational principles of the natural law, referring to the basic human goods that are to be pursued and instantiated in and/or through our choices and actions.

The First Principle of Morality:

In voluntarily acting for human goods and avoiding what is opposed to them, one ought to choose and otherwise will those and only those possibilities whose willing is compatible with a will toward integral human fulfillment.

[Grisez has replaced “integral human fulfillment” with “integral communal fulfillment” in recent development of his theory. So a new formulation of the first principle of morality might read:

Always choose in a way that intends integral communal fulfillment.]

The Modes of Responsibility:¹

1. *One should not be deterred by felt inertia from acting for intelligible goods.*
2. *One should not be pressed by enthusiasm or impatience to act individualistically for intelligible goods.*
3. *One should not choose to satisfy an emotional desire except as part of one's pursuit and/or attainment of an intelligible good other than the satisfaction of the desire itself.*
4. *One should not choose to act out of an emotional aversion except as part of one's avoidance of an intelligible evil other than the inner tension experienced in enduring that aversion.*
5. *One should not, in response to different feelings toward different persons, willingly proceed with a preference for anyone unless the preference is required by intelligible goods themselves.*
6. *One should not choose on the basis of emotions which bear upon empirical aspects of intelligible goods (or bads) in a way which interferes with a more perfect sharing in the good or avoidance of the bad.*
7. *One should not be moved by hostility to freely accept or choose the destruction, damaging or impeding of any intelligible human good.*
8. *One should not be moved by a stronger desire for one instance of an intelligible good to act for it by choosing to destroy, damage or impede some other instance of an intelligible good.*

¹ These are the modes as listed in *Christian Moral Principles*. In *Difficult Moral Questions*, Grisez modified this list somewhat, adding a mode requiring us not to act unreasonably from mixed motives, and suggesting that some of these modes might be reducible to others (number six to number five, for example). However, the substance of the original modes has not been changed and they still serve as a useful and concise outline of Grisez's understanding of the basic moral principles of the natural law.

The First Principle of Christian Ethics:

One ought to will those and only those possibilities which contribute to the integral human fulfillment being realized in the fulfillment of all things in Jesus.

[Grisez would probably amend this now to replace “integral human fulfillment” with “integral communal fulfillment”.

A shorter biblical formulation used by Grisez : *Seek first the Kingdom of God.*]

Specifications of the First Principle of Christian Ethics:**The modes of Christian Response.**

1. *To expect and accept all good, including the good fruits of one's own work, as God's gift.*
2. *To accept one's limited role in the Body of Christ and fulfill it.*
3. *To put aside or avoid everything which is not necessary or useful in the fulfillment of one's personal vocation.*
4. *To endure fearlessly whatever is necessary or useful for the fulfillment of one's personal vocation.*
5. *To be merciful according to the universal and perfect measure of mercy which God has revealed in Jesus.*
6. *To strive to conform one's whole self to living faith, and purge anything which does not meet this standard.*
7. *To respond to evil with good, not with resistance, much less with destructive action.*
8. *To do no evil that good might come of it, but suffer evil together with Jesus in cooperation with God's redeeming love.*

The First Principle of Morality: <i>In voluntary acting for human goods and avoiding what is opposed to them, one ought to choose and otherwise will those and only those possibilities whose willing is compatible with a will toward integral human fulfilment.</i>			
The Modes of Responsibility	Philosophical statement of them (from <i>Christian Moral Principles</i>)	Associated virtues	Associated vices
1 st	One should not be deterred by felt inertia from acting for intelligible goods.	ambition, energy, diligence, enthusiasm, industriousness	laziness, sluggishness, sloth, dilatoriness
2 nd	One should not be pressed by enthusiasm or impatience to act individualistically for intelligible goods.	team spirit; being co-operative; having a well-integrated set of commitments	going it alone; having a star complex; being over-committed
3 rd	One should not choose to satisfy an emotional desire except as part of one's pursuit and/or attainment of an intelligible good other than the satisfaction of the desire itself.	self-control, temperance, modesty, chastity, simplicity, discipline	lust, gluttony, greed, jealousy, envy, short-sightedness, impetuosity
4 th	One should not choose to act out of an emotional aversion except as part of one's avoidance of an intelligible evil other than the inner tension experienced in enduring that aversion.	courage, mettle, fortitude, resolution, tenacity, backbone, perseverance, guts	cowardice, squeamishness, irresolution, being a quitter, being a worrier
5 th	One should not, in response to different feelings toward different persons, willingly proceed with a preference for anyone unless the preference is required by intelligible goods themselves.	fairness, disinterestedness, impartiality, unselfishness, justice (but it is a wider concept in its fullness)	unfairness, bias, partiality, selfishness, favouritism, prejudice
6 th	One should not choose on the basis of emotions which bear upon empirical aspects of intelligible goods (or bads) in a way which interferes with a more perfect sharing in the good or avoidance of the bad.	having a sound set of values, sincerity, seriousness, clearheadedness, practical wisdom	self-deception, superficiality, insincerity, lacking a sense of values, frivolity, childishness
7 th	One should not be moved by hostility to freely accept or choose the destruction, damaging or impeding of any intelligible human good.	forbearance, patience, longsuffering, forgiveness, being easygoing, gentleness	vengefulness, vindictiveness, spitefulness, impatience, resentfulness, grudging, unforgiving
8 th	One should not be moved by a stronger desire for one instance of an intelligible good to act for it by choosing to destroy, damage or impede some other instance of an intelligible good.	reverence	craftiness, pragmatism, Machiavellianism, amoral expediency

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