

# Eschatology and the Human Person

The Second Annual Pinckaers Chair Conference  
2-3 December 2022

Aula Minor



ANGELICVM  
INSTITUTUM THOMISTICUM

# Schedule

## Friday, December 2

- 12:30 **Simon Francis Gaine, O.P. (Pinckaers Professor, Director Angelicum Thomistic Institute)** – “*Universal Salvation, Damnation, and the Task of Theology*”
- 13:30 Lunch Break
- 14:30 **Medi Ann Volpe (University of Durham, England)** – “*Disability and the Resurrection of the Body: Identity and Imagination*”
- 15:30 Coffee Break
- 16:00 **Rebekah Lamb (University of St. Andrews, Scotland)** – “*John Henry Newman and the Art of the End*”
- 17:00 Coffee Break
- 17:30 **Michael Baggot, LC (Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum)** – “*The Daring and Disappointing Dreams of Transhumanism’s Secular Eschatology*”

## Saturday, December 3

- 12:30 **Philip Neri Reese, O.P. (Angelicum Thomistic Institute)** –  
*“The Separated Soul and the Human Person”*
- 13:30 Lunch Break
- 14:30 **Paul Murray, O.P. (Angelicum)** – *“Looking Death Straight in the Eye’: The Wisdom and Witness of the Saints”*
- 15:30 Coffee Break
- 16:00 **Daria Spezzano (Providence College, USA)** – *“When Israel Came Forth from Egypt’: Aquinas on the Gifts of Judgment and Purgatory”*
- 17:00 Coffee Break
- 17:30 **Michael Sherwin, O.P. (Aquinas Professor, Angelicum Thomistic Institute)** – *“The Way is the End: Aquinas on Human Acts as ad finem”*

# Abstracts and Biographies

## *Friday, December 2*

12:30

**Simon Francis Gaine, O.P.**

completed his doctoral studies at Oxford University on the topic of uncreated and created grace and has served for many years as a Lector in Fundamental and Dogmatic Theology at Blackfriars, Oxford. He is the director of the



Angelicum Thomistic Institute and holds the Pinckaers Chair in Theological Anthropology and Ethics. He is the author of two monographs, *Will There Be Free Will in Heaven? Freedom, Impeccability and Beatitude* (London and New York: T and T Clark, 2003) and *Did the Saviour See the Father? Christ, Salvation and the Vision of God* (London: Bloomsbury T and T Clark, 2015). He is a member of the International Theological Commission.

*“Universal Salvation, Damnation, and the Task of Theology”*

There are two opposed views about the ultimate fate of human beings in Christian theology today. One is universalism, the idea that all human beings will be finally united with God in heaven, or at least may be. In either case hell will or may be empty. Hans Urs von Balthasar is among those theologians who count as a universalist, although he distanced himself from the idea that universal salvation is something we can believe by *faith*. Balthasar supposed that an empty hell is something we can instead *hope* for, though not believe in. The other view was dubbed by him as ‘infernalism’, the view that there will be some human

beings forever separated from God, even though we may not know who they will be, and so hell will definitely not be empty. This paper attempts to reframe the debate between Balthasar's universalism and infernalism through a Thomistic Christological lens, focusing on St Thomas's understanding of prophecy and our Lord's employment of this biblical charism. I suggest some ways in which the theological debate, thus reframed, can move forward, and how Thomism is among those theologies well placed to contribute to it.

13:30 Lunch Break

14:30 **Medi Ann Volpe** is a Catholic moral theologian and mother of four children, including a daughter with Down Syndrome. She is the Director of Research at Wesley House, Cambridge, and teaches theology and ethics at Durham University (UK). Her first book, *Rethinking Christian Identity* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), brings contemporary theological themes into conversation with voices from the classical Christian tradition. More recently, her work has explored the intersection of ecclesiology and spiritual formation, with a special interest in discipleship and Christian identity of children as well as people with intellectual disabilities. She has published in journals and handbooks, including the *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, *Modern Theology*, and the *Oxford Handbook of Catholic Theology* (which she co-edited with Lewis Ayres). She also serves on the board of the *Journal of Disability and Religion*.



*“Disability and the Resurrection of the Body: Identity and Imagination”*

What happens to disabilities in the resurrection? There is a significant body of theologians reflecting on disability and resurrection who worry that traditional Christian accounts undermine their personal identity by eliminating their disabilities. In this paper I begin by outlining their concerns about resurrection identity. I then consider ways in which a more detailed engagement with classical Christian accounts both suggests these worries are misplaced, and raises questions about the mysteriousness of resurrected life that are often neglected when questions of disability and resurrection are considered.

15:30 Coffee Break

16:00 **Rebekah Lamb** is a Lecturer (Assistant Professor) in Theology and the Arts at the School of Divinity in the University of St. Andrews. She specialises in Religion and Literature from the long nineteenth century to the present, with an emphasis on Victorian Roman Catholicism and theological aesthetics. She has published widely on these areas and, most recently, co-edited a special issue on St. John Henry Newman with *Religion and Literature*. She is a trustee of the Christian Heritage Centre (CHC) at Stonyhurst College.



*“John Henry Newman and the Art of the End”*

Newman's writings--especially his poems and sermons--are characterised by a central and abiding eschatological expectation. This expectation is made most fully present (albeit, in a hidden or humble mode) through his dedication to what is immediately at hand, to the present moment. It is clear this attention to the present matured into a profound spirituality which, derivatively, informed his aesthetic developments. My paper will account for some of the ways Newman's devotion to the Real Presence--and his understanding of the Eucharist in relation to Christ's promised return—informs his eschatological aesthetics, or what could be called his 'art of the end.'

17:00 Coffee Break

17:30 **Michael Baggot, LC, PhD** is currently an Assistant Professor of Bioethics at the Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum in Rome, Italy. He also teaches in the school's Faculty of Theology as a professor for the Joint Diploma in Leadership: Service through Virtues.



In addition, Fr. Baggot is a Research Scholar at the UNESCO Chair in Bioethics and Human Rights. He was an Adjunct Professor of Theology at the Christendom College Rome programme from 2018 to 2022. His writings have appeared in *First Things*, *Studia Bioethica*, *The National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly*, and *Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy*. He is the chief editor of and a contributor to the book *Enhancement Fit for Humanity: Perspectives on Emerging Technologies* (Routledge, 2022).

*“The Daring and Disappointing Dreams of Transhumanism’s  
Secular Eschatology”*

Although it is a largely secular movement, contemporary transhumanism borrows heavily from both Christian orthodoxy and its heresies to construct a vision for human transformation and happiness. The presentation traces the roots of transhumanism’s pseudo-religious soteriology and eschatology and then examines the underlying anthropological problems that drive the hoped-for salvation through digital immortality. Unfortunately, the admirable desire to extend life sacrifices an appreciation for the integral harmony of the human person’s animal and spiritual dimensions. Since human actions manifest the person’s intrinsic corporeality, the notion of detaching the human personality from the body through digitalization is doomed to produce replicas without achieving true immortality. The surprising pseudo-religious thrust of contemporary transhumanism’s secular eschatology presents an opportunity to rediscover the Catholic patrimony’s reflection on authentic divinization through the transhumanizing effects of divine grace. The presentation thus concludes with a Thomistic *theosis*-centered reorientation of secular transhumanism’s eschatological aspirations for immanent immortality toward true human flourishing.

## *Saturday, December 3*

12:30 **Philip Neri Reese, O.P.** is a Dominican friar of the Province of St. Joseph, currently assigned as a professor of philosophy at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas (Angelicum), in Rome. He is also the principal investigator for the Angelicum Thomistic Institute's new Project on Philosophy and the Thomistic Tradition. His publications include articles on scholastic metaphysics, ethics, and economics.



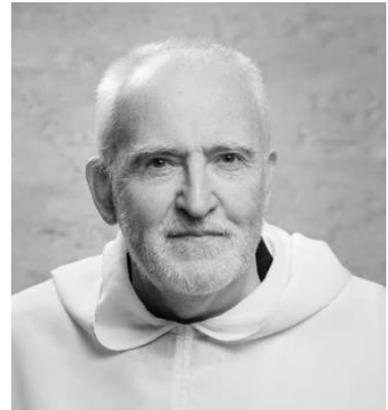
### *“The Separated Soul and the Human Person”*

The most heated and widespread of all the debates current among Thomistic philosophers is almost certainly the debate over whether the separated soul is a person - i.e., the debate over whether after I die, but before the resurrection, my soul is ME. The purpose of this talk is to both present and weigh in on that debate. I will begin by distinguishing between three questions that might be, and have been, asked: (1) the exegetical question, "did Aquinas think the separated soul is a person?"; (2) the systematic question, "should Aquinas have thought that the separated soul is a person?"; and (3) the speculative question, "is the separated soul a person?" I will then answer each of these questions in turn.

13:30 Lunch Break

14:30

**Paul Murray**, an Irish Dominican, teaches the literature of the mystical tradition at the Angelicum. Books include: *T.S. Eliot and Mysticism: The Secret History of Four Quartets* (1981); *God's Spies: Michelangelo, Shakespeare and Other Poets of Vision* (2019); *Saint Catherine of Siena: Mystic of Fire, Preacher of Freedom* (2020).



*“Looking Death Straight in the Eye’: The Wisdom and Witness of the Saints”*

What constitutes an authentic Christian understanding of death? The aim of the paper is to explore how, over the centuries, death has been viewed and approached by the Christian saints. Three sections comprise the work: (1) Facing Death: The Distinctive Christian Vision; (2) Scandal or Blessing? Christian Grief in the Face of Death; (3) Imagining the Unimaginable: Visions of the Afterlife.

15:30

Coffee Break

16:00

**Dr. Daria Spezzano** is Associate Professor of Theology at Providence College in Providence, Rhode Island. She holds a Ph.D. in Theology from the University of Notre Dame, and a Master’s in Liturgical Studies from the Liturgical Institute. Her book, *The Glory of God's Grace: Deification according to St. Thomas Aquinas*, was published by Sapientia Press in 2015. She has published



scholarly articles in *Nova et Vetera*, *Cistercian Studies* and the *Journal of Moral Theology*, and chapters in several edited volumes, including *Aquinas on Initiation and Mystagogy* (Peeters, 2019), *Reading Job with St. Thomas Aquinas* (CUA Press, 2020), *Thomas Aquinas, Biblical Theologian* (Emmaus Academic, 2021), and *Thomas Aquinas and the Crisis of Christology* (Sapientia Press, 2021). Among other projects, she is currently coediting a volume, *Christ, the Wisdom of God in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas*.

“*‘When Israel Came Forth from Egypt’: Aquinas on the Gifts of Judgment and Purgatory*”

Thomas Aquinas offers helpful insight to catechize contemporary Christians increasingly allergic to the notion of Christ’s eschatological judgment, which necessitates the purification of weak but chosen souls in purgatory. Underlying resistance to these teachings is a postmodern tendency to gnosticism and neo-pelagianism that seeks to avoid the need for Christ’s unique mediation, with a concomitant reluctance to recognize the gravity of sin. St. Thomas offers at least three insights that could be helpful in this addressing this problem. The first concerns why Christ must be our judge in his humanity, the second has to do with our need for judgment and purification, and the third concerns the nature of the judgment and the fruit of purification, when he will “bring to light what is hidden in darkness,” and “each one will receive his praise from God” (1 Cor 4:5). St. Thomas’s teaching on Christ’s power as judge of all the living and the dead, and on the necessity of post-mortem purification for most of the elect, certainly encourages holy fear. But it also shows positively why we need Christ’s wise judgment and our own purification, how

these gifts reveal the Father's love, and therefore why they give reason for joyful hope and gratitude.

17:00 Coffee Break

17:30

**Michael S. Sherwin, O.P.** is Professor of Fundamental Moral Theology, director of the Institute of Spirituality here at the Angelicum, and the Aquinas Professor at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas. Fr. Sherwin comes to the



Angelicum after almost twenty years of teaching at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland. He has also taught at the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology in Berkeley, California, where he received his initial formation as a Dominican and was ordained a priest in 1991. Author of articles on the psychology of love, virtue ethics and moral development, his monograph, *By Knowledge and By Love: Charity and Knowledge in the Moral Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (CUA Press, 2005) has become a standard Thomistic reference, while Alasdair MacIntyre has described Fr. Sherwin's published collection of essays, *On Love and Virtue* (Emmaus Academic, 2018) as "theological reflection at its best."

*"The Way is the End: Aquinas on Human Acts as ad finem"*

Thomas Aquinas follows Augustine and the Tradition in affirming the core Christian truth that we are all wayfarers (*viatores*) on earth, travelling toward our eternal homeland in

heaven. Nevertheless, St. Thomas also affirms that the Christian life already participates in an incipient and hidden way in the eternal life of the celestial kingdom. Specifically, good human acts are by their nature *ad finem* and thus participate in the end itself. In this sense, the way is the end. As elevated by God's grace, these acts produce the joys proper to the fruits of the Holy Spirit, which when perfected are the Beatitudes. St. Thomas asserts that the felicity caused by these acts of perfect virtue are a "certain imperfect beginning of future beatitude" (ST I-II 69.2), even though they exist in the presence of the sufferings proper to this present life. In this way, the Christian participates in the life of Christ, who is both the way and the end. This talk briefly traces Thomas Aquinas's account of these graced mysteries.



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