

Soli Deo Gloria or Beatitude: Aquinas, Calvin, and His Heirs on the Chief End of Man

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INTRODUCTION

In his book on the Beatitudes Thomas Watson observes, “Blessedness is the perfection of a rational creature. It is the whetstone of a Christian industry, the height of his ambition, the flower of his joy. Blessedness is the desire of all men. Aquinas calls it the ‘ultimate end.’ This is the ‘white’ every man aims to hit; to this centre all the lines are drawn.”¹

And yet the most famous of all catechism questions is answered, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever” (WSC 1). Notably Thomas Watson wrote what could be considered the most insightful commentary on Westminster Shorter Catechism Q1.²

This paper seeks to explore the question of how these two answers relate, and if they are compatible with one another as Thomas Watson seemed to think. If the two answers are mutually interpreting then understanding them both will shed greater light on the chief end of man.

MAN’S CHIEF END: FROM CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA TO THOMAS AQUINAS

The earliest Christian reflection on man’s chief end may be from Clement of Alexandria. Clement surveys the various opinions of the philosophers on man’s chief end before turning to Scripture’s teaching on man’s chief end. Clement summarizes the Scripture answer: “*Assimilation to God, then, so that as far as possible a man becomes righteous and holy with wisdom*, he lays down as the aim of faith, and the end to be that restitution of the promise which is effected by faith.”³

¹ Thomas Watson, *The Beatitudes: An Exposition of Matthew 5:1-12* (1660; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2014), 14.

² Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity Contained in Sermons upon the Westminster Assembly’s Catechism* (1692; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1983), 6-26.

³ Clement of Alexandria, “The Stromata, or Miscellanies,” in *Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria (Entire)*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 2:377. Clement is drawing on passages such as Romans 6:22 “But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification

In *The City of God* Augustine begins with a definition of the criteria for a chief end: “By definition, our supreme end is that good which is sought for its own sake, and on account of which all other goods are sought.”⁴ He then surveys the various options given by the philosophers before rendering his own conclusion:

[E]ternal life is the supreme good and eternal death the supreme evil, and that we should live rightly in order to obtain the one and avoid the other. Hence the Scriptural expression, ‘the just man lives by faith’—by faith, for the fact is that we do not now behold our good and, therefore, must seek it by faith; nor can we of ourselves even live rightly, unless He who gives us faith helps us to believe and pray, for it takes faith to believe that we need His help.⁵

Augustine then roundly rejects the ends the philosophers have proposed: “They seek in vain whether they look to serenity, to virtue, or to both; whether to pleasure plus serenity, or to virtue, or to all three; or to the satisfaction of our innate exigencies, or to virtue, or to both. It is in vain that men look for beatitude on earth or in human nature.”⁶ Instead he concludes, “For, when virtues are genuine virtues—and that is possible only when men believe in God—they make no pretense of protecting their possessors from unhappiness, for that would be a false promise; but they do claim that human life, now compelled to feel the misery of so many grievous ills on earth, can, by the hope of heaven, be made both happy and secure.”⁷

Augustine had already written in *The Trinity* that “all men have one common will to obtain and retain happiness,” though there is a great variety of ideas concerning what happiness consists in.⁸ After surveying these ideas Augustine concludes that the happiness that men seek cannot be found in this life. Thus Augustine observes, “if you ask them about immortality as about happiness, they all answer that they want it.”⁹

Peter Lombard, in his *Sentences* addresses the related question of why God made man.¹⁰ He begins by addressing God’s motivation for creation: “So great is his goodness that he, as the most highly good, wanted others to be sharers in his blessedness, by which he is eternally blessed: he saw that this could be shared and suffer no diminution at all. And so by goodness alone, and not by necessity, he willed to share that good, which he himself

and its end, eternal life”; Galatians 5:5, “For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness”; 1 Corinthians 11:1, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.”

⁴ Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God, Books XVII–XXII*, ed. Hermigild Dressler, trans. Gerald G. Walsh and Daniel J. Honan, *The Fathers of the Church* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1954), 183 [19.1].

⁵ *Ibid.*, 194–195 [19.4].

⁶ *Ibid.*, 195 [19.4].

⁷ *Ibid.*, 201 [19.4].

⁸ Augustine of Hippo, *The Trinity* (De Trinitate), *The Works of Saint Augustine*, ed., John E. Rotelle, trans., Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1991), 347 [13.2.7].

⁹ *Ibid.*, 351 [13.3.11].

¹⁰ The question of why God made man and what is man’s chief end are distinct questions, but they are related because it stands to reason that the purpose God had in making man either is or is closely related to what the human’s chief goal in life should be.

was....”¹¹ In order to truly share in God’s blessedness, however, the creature had to be rational.¹² This established Lombard concludes, “And if it is asked for what is the rational creature created, answer: to praise God, to serve him, to enjoy him. By these things, the creature profits, not God. For God, who is perfect and filled with the highest goodness, can be neither increased nor diminished. And so God’s making of the rational creature is to be referred to the Creator’s goodness and to the creature’s utility.”¹³

It is standing within this tradition that Aquinas says: “the last end of human life is stated to be happiness” (ST I-II Q1).¹⁴ Thomas then raises a problem noted earlier by Augustine: “But the strange thing is, seeing that all men have one common will to obtain and retain happiness, where does the enormous variety and indeed contrariety of wishes about happiness come from.”¹⁵ Thomas investigates whether happiness consists in “wealth,” “honor,” “fame or glory,” “power,” “any good of the body,” “pleasure,” “in any good of the soul” (that is, good to one’s inner self), or in “any created good” (ST I-II, Q2). He rejects each of options.

Thomas is clear from the beginning that by saying happiness is man’s chief end he is not excluding God as man’s chief end. He makes a distinction between “the thing itself which we desire to attain” and “the use or enjoyment of the thing desired.” With this distinction in mind Thomas observes, “In the first sense, then, man’s last end is the uncreated good, namely, God, Who alone by his infinite goodness can perfectly satisfy man’s will. But in the second way, man’s last end is something created, existing in him, and this is nothing else than the attainment or enjoyment of the last end” (ST I-II, Q3, A1).

Like Augustine, Thomas ultimately locates happiness in eternity, noting that while God enjoys happiness in “His very Being,” man can only have happiness in being “united to God.” Aquinas concludes, “And for this reason in the present state of life, perfect happiness cannot be attained by man” (ST I-II, Q3, A2). For Scripture support, Thomas turns to John 17:3 and Jeremiah 9:24: “*This is eternal life: that they may know Thee, the only true God.*” Now eternal life is the last end, as stated above (A2, ad 1). Therefore man’s happiness consists in the knowledge of God, which is an act of the intellect” (ST I-II, Q3, A4). “It is written (Jer 9:24): *Let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me.* Therefore man’s final glory or happiness consists only in the knowledge of God (ST I-II Q3, A7; cf. Q4, A7-8).

Having located man’s chief end as the happiness that comes from an eternal life that consists in knowing God exclusively, Thomas turns to establish the nature of this

¹¹ Peter Lombard, *The Sentences*, trans. Giulio Silano (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2008). 2:5 [bk. 2, dist.1, c. 3, n. 5].

¹² Ibid., 2:5 [bk. 2, dist. 1, c. 4, n. 1].

¹³ Ibid., 2:5-6 [bk. 2, dist. 1, c.4, n. 4].

¹⁴ All quotations of the *Summa Theologiae* are from Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae Prima Secundae*, 1-70, trans. Laurence Shapcote, ed. John Mortensen and Enrique Alcarón (Lander: WY: Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012). ST I-II Q.1 is taken up with whether man has a single last end. The matter of man’s end is also discussed at greater length in book 3, chapters 1-63 of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*. The basic argument, however, is the same as that in the *Summa Theologiae*.

¹⁵ Augustine, *Trinity*, 347 [13.2.7].

knowledge. He concludes that it is a speculative rather than a practical knowledge because (1) speculative knowledge is greater than practical knowledge, (2) it is sought for its own sake, and (3) it is the type of knowledge held in common with God and the angels" (ST I-II Q3, A5). Further, this is knowledge of God's very essence: "Final and perfect happiness can consist in nothing else than the vision of the Divine Essence."¹⁶ Thomas argues this in two points. First, man is not perfectly happy, so long as something remains for him to desire and seek; second, that the perfection of any power is determined by the nature of its object." For Scripture support Thomas appeals to 1 John 3:2: "*When He shall appear, we shall be like Him; and we shall see Him as He is.*" Transformation into the likeness of God is therefore part of this final happiness of knowing God. Righteousness is also a necessary requirement to this happiness: "Rectitude of will is necessary for Happiness both antecedently and concomitantly. Antecedently, because rectitude of the will consists in being duly ordered to the last end. Now the end in comparison to what is ordained to the end is as form compared to matter. Wherefore, just as matter cannot receive a form, unless it be duly disposed thereto, so nothing gains an end, except it be duly ordained thereto. . . . Concomitantly, because as stated above (Q3, A8), final Happiness consists in the vision of the Divine Essence, Which is the very essence of goodness. So that the will of him who sees the Essence of God, of necessity, loves, whatever he loves, in subordination to God." In making this point Thomas appeals to Scripture: "It is written (Matt 5:8): *Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God:* and (Heb 12:14): *Follow peace with all men, and holiness; without which no man shall see God*" (ST I-II Q4, A4).

Thomas's vision of happiness is highly intellectual. He rejects that the senses play any essential role in man's happiness, though he acknowledges they will be involved due to the resurrection of the body (ST I-II Q3, A3). Thomas also addresses whether the body is necessary for happiness. He grants that it is necessary for happiness in this life for in this world the intellect needs the body to function. "But as to perfect Happiness, which consists in the vision of God" Thomas concludes, that a body is not necessary "since the Apostle says (2 Cor 5:6): *While we are in the body, we are absent from the Lord;* and he points out the reason of this absence, saying: *For we walk by faith and not by sight.* . . . But the souls of the saints, separated from their bodies, are in God's presence. . . . Whence it is evident that the souls of the saints, separated from their bodies, *walk by sight*, seeing the Essence of God, wherein is true Happiness" (ST I-II Q4, A5).¹⁷

By saying that happiness is man's chief end, Thomas may, at first, sound as though he has an anthropocentric view of man's chief end in contrast to an Edwardsean theocentric chief end. But by making that happiness consist in the *beatific vision* Thomas ensures that the chief end is theocentric. In fact, before this discussion Thomas has already asserted, "the

¹⁶ Thomas does recognize the limitations of human knowledge, even in eternity: "[W]hatever is comprehended by the finite, is itself finite. Wherefore God cannot be thus comprehended by a created intellect" (ST I-II Q4, art. 3, ad. 1).

¹⁷ Thomas is not denying the bodily resurrection. "Although the body has no part in that operation of the intellect whereby the Essence of God is seen, yet it might prove a hindrance thereto. Consequently, perfection of the body is necessary, lest it hinder the mind from being lifted up" (ST I-II Q4, A6, ad. 2).

divine goodness is the end of all things,” noting, “It is said (Prov 16:4): *The Lord has made all things for Himself*” (ST I-II Q44, A4).¹⁸

Excursus: A Brief History of Happiness

Up to this point the word “happiness” has been used by both Augustine and Aquinas with reference to man’s chief end. The Latin word in the *Summa* translated “happiness” is *beatitudo*. Timothy McDermott observes, “The word translated *happiness* (or by some authors *bliss*) has more the sense of *happy state* or *blessed state*, meaning a state which has blessedly happened or turned out well, a state of goodhap rather than mishap. It corresponds to the Aristotelian word *eudaimonia*, which some modern scholars translate as *flourishing*.”¹⁹

From Augustine through Aquinas, theologians who identified man’s chief end as happiness operated within a broader ancient tradition. Julia Annas helps modern readers enter this ancient world by looking at a story told by fifth century BC philosopher Prodicus in which a man named Heracles is met by two women, one representing Pleasure and the other representing Virtue.²⁰ Heracles is seeking for happiness, and the two paths for achieving it are pleasure and virtue. According to Annas “Prodicus was one of the first philosophers to make explicit something important; we are all, in our lives, aiming at happiness.”²¹ Yet this ancient framing of the problem raises a problem for moderns:

Our modern conception of happiness is frequently understood in terms of pleasure and desire-satisfaction (something aided by the wide and confused way we use ‘happy’), and this can make it hard at first to see the appeal of ancient theories of happiness. If happiness is just getting what you want, then the ideas in the Choice of Heracles make no sense.²²

By contrast, “Happiness in ancient ethical thought is not a matter of feeling good or being pleased; it is not a feeling or emotion at all, it is your life as a whole which is said to be happy or not.”²³ So in contrast with a modern understanding in which moments of pleasure are happiness, in the ancient understanding moments of pleasure are often major obstacles to happiness with reference to life as a whole.²⁴

¹⁸ See also Michael J. McClymond and Gerald R. McDermott, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 220-21.

¹⁹ Timothy McDermott, ed., *Summa Theologiae: A Concise Translation* (Allen, TX: Christian Classics, 1989), 169.

²⁰ Julia Annas, *Ancient Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 38-39.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 40. Annas defends happiness as everyone’s last end: “The overall end which unifies all your concerns has to be *complete*: everything you do or go for is sought for the sake of it, while it is not sought for the sake of anything further. It also has to be *self-sufficient*: it does not leave out any element in your life that has value as part of living well. . . . And on the level of common sense or intuition, happiness is the only aim, plausible as an aim in your life as a whole, which is complete and self-sufficient.” *Ibid.*, 43.

²² *Ibid.*, 47.

²³ *Ibid.*, 42.

²⁴ Annas observes that “hedonism, the view that pleasure is our ethical end, is always on the defensive in ancient ethics.” There are only two Greek philosophies which make pleasure man’s chief

Miroslav Volf, looking at ideas about the good life from the theologian Augustine to the present, observed several shifts that took place in Western thought which explain the transition from the ancient conception of happiness (*eudaimonia*) to the modern conception.

Volf says that according to Augustine, “human beings flourish and are truly happy when they center their lives on God, the source of everything that is true, good, and beautiful. As to all created things, they too ought to be loved. But the only way to properly love them ‘in God.’”²⁵

But Volf notes a shift which took place “[a]round the eighteenth century”:

[A] different account of human flourishing emerged in the West. It was connected with what scholars sometimes describe as an 'anthropocentric shift'—a gradual redirection of interest from the transcendent God to human beings The central pillar of its vision of the good life was a universal beneficence transcending all boundaries of tribe or nation and extending to all human beings.²⁶

A second shift occurred in the late twentieth century:

Human flourishing came increasingly to be defined as experiential satisfaction. . . . Having lost earlier reference to 'something higher which humans should reverence or love,' it now lost reference to universal solidarity, as well. What remained was concern for the self and the desire for the experience of satisfaction. . . . Others are very much involved. But they matter mainly in that they serve an individual's experience of satisfaction. That applies to God as well

end, the Cyrenaics and Epicureans. The former had trouble defending the idea that always seeking immediate pleasure would bring happiness. The latter so redefined pleasure as seeking the tranquil life in the long term that it seems to no longer be maintaining a hedonistic position. Ibid., 44, 46-47. John Piper has famously described his theology as Christian Hedonism, and he defends his label in six points. In his first point, Piper insists that he does think that pleasure ought to be man's chief end. But in his second point Piper qualifies this by observing that he has his eye on eternal pleasure that is found in God—a pleasure that will require pain in the short run. I think that Annas at this point would aver that Piper has just redefined pleasure to the point that he is no longer talking about *hedonism* but is now talking about *eudaimonism* (cf. Annas, 47). In his third point Piper says that others, including C. S. Lewis, have used “hedonism” to describe the Christian life. But two of the examples involve a formulation along the lines of “if this is *Hedonism*,” which indicates that hedonism is an accusation being lodged rather than a label being championed. (In the third example, the author says, “The Christian way is not hedonism in the ordinary sense.”) Piper's fourth reason for the label is its “arresting and jolting effect.” It certainly is true that *Christian hedonism* is more jolting than *Christian eudaimonism*. But this is, in part, due to the inaccuracy of the label. Fifth, Piper objects that hedonism is a term that can be redeemed. Perhaps, but the distinction between *eudaimonism* and *hedonism* remains a useful distinction. Finally, Piper emphasizes that the adjective Christian signals the difference between hedonism as commonly understood and his special use of it. John Piper, *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist*. 10th anniversary edition (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1996), 287-90.

²⁵ Miroslav Volf, “Human Flourishing,” in *Renewing the Evangelical Mission*, ed. Richard Lints (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 16.

²⁶ Ibid.

as to human beings. Desire—the outer shell of love—has remained, but love itself, by being directed exclusively to the self, is lost.²⁷

Volf concludes that these shifts are “a history of diminution of the object of love: from the vast expanse of the infinite God, love first tapered to the boundaries of the universal human community, and then radically contracted to the narrowness of a single self—one's own self.”²⁸

This leads to the insight that true human flourishing ought to take place in the context of the law of God as summarized by the two great commandments: love God supremely and love one's neighbor as one's self. This diminution of love is a progressive turning away from these two great commandments.²⁹

MAN'S CHIEF END: FROM THE REFORMATION TO EDWARDS

Having established the tradition that human flourishing is man's chief end, and having located human flourishing within the virtue of love and the two great commandments, it is now time to turn to the other great tradition which holds that man's chief end is to glorify God.

Jonathan Edwards

Glory as God's chief end in creation is argued at length in Jonathan Edwards's *Concerning the End for Which God Created the World*. While Edwards is directly addressing *God's* chief end in creating the world rather than *man's* chief end, Edwards is indirectly addressing man's chief end. If God's chief end for his creation is that he receives glory, then it follows that the rational creation seek to fulfill the end for which God chiefly created it by making God's glory its chief end.

In the second chapter of *The End for Which God Created the World* Edwards makes his case from Scripture. He first surveys Scripture for the multiplicity of ends that it states God had. For instance, he observes that Scripture speaks of God acting for his own sake (Isa. 48:11; Rom. 11:36).³⁰ Scripture also identifies God's glory as the end of “that part of the moral world that are good” (Isa. 43:6-7; 60:20, etc.).³¹ Scripture teaches that God acts for

²⁷ Ibid., 17.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ I found Volf's essay via an essay by Jonathan Pennington on human flourishing. After summarizing Volf's argument, Pennington observed, “Another point of this survey is to help us understand why many of us are ignorant of or squeamish about the fact that human flourishing is a biblical idea. The version that most of us know about is obviously not godly and is a function of modern individualism.”

Jonathan T. Pennington, “A Biblical Theology of Human Flourishing” (Paper delivered at Institute for Faith, Work, and Economics, 2015), 4.

³⁰ Paul Ramsey, ed., *Ethical Writings*, Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 8, ed. John E. Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 475 (ch. 2, sec. 3, pt 1; ¶143-44). The numbers following the symbol ¶ are the paragraph numbers found in John Piper, *God's Passion for His Glory* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1998). Part numbers in brackets are also supplied by Piper.

³¹ Ibid., 476 (ch. 2, sec. 3, pt. 2; ¶146).

his name's sake (1 Sam. 12:22; Ps. 23:3, etc.).³² Scripture also identifies God's perfections as the ultimate end of his creation (Ps. 88:11-12; 2 Kings 19:19, etc.).³³ Praise of God is his ultimate in creation (Ps. 8:1, 2; Eph. 1:6, 12, 14, etc.).³⁴ Notably section 5 of chapter 2 is titled "Places of Scripture from whence it may be argued that communication of good to the creature was one thing which God had in view as an ultimate end of the creation of the world."³⁵

Having scoured the Bible for the multiple ends that it reveals God had in creation, Edwards then concludes that these multiple ends are indeed one:

For though it be signified by various names, yet they appear not to be names of different things, but various names involving each other in their meaning; either different names of the same thing, or names of several parts of one whole, or of the same whole viewed in various lights, or in different respects and relations. For it appears that all that is ever spoken of in the Scripture as an ultimate end of God's works is included in that one phrase, 'the glory of God'; which is the name by which the last end of God's works is most commonly called in Scripture: and seems to be the name which most aptly signifies the thing.³⁶

The method by which Edwards reached this conclusion should indicate that God's glory and human flourishing need not be set against each other as rival ends. Not only is the "communication of good to the creature" one of the ends which is taken up in the phrase "the glory of God," but Edwards explicitly links God's glory and the creature's good at the end of chapter one:

Nor ought God's glory and the creature's good to be spoken of as if they were properly and entirely distinct, as they are in the objection. This supposeth that God's having respect to his glory and the communication of good to his creatures, are things altogether different: that God's communicating his fullness for himself, and his doing it for them, are things standing in a proper disjunction and opposition. Whereas if we were capable of having more full and perfect views of God and divine things, which are so much above us, 'tis probable it would appear very clear to us, that the matter is quite otherwise: and that these things, instead of appearing entirely distinct, are implied one in the other.³⁷

As Edwards further explains how the creature's happiness and God's glory are implied in each other, he moves to speak of the union between God and the redeemed.³⁸ At this point we seem to have come full circle to Aquinas's view that the chief end of man is beatitude, defined primarily in terms of knowing God.³⁹

³² Ibid., 493 (ch. 2, sec. 4, [pt. 1]; ¶196).

³³ Ibid 496-7 (ch. 2, sec. 4, [pt. 2]; ¶207, 211).

³⁴ Ibid., 500-1 (ch. 2, sec. 4, [p. 3]; ¶221, 223).

³⁵ Ibid., 503 (ch. 2, sec. 5; ¶226).

³⁶ Ibid., 526 (ch. 2, sec. 7; ¶264).

³⁷ Ibid., 458-59 (ch. 1, sec. 4, obj. 4, ans.; ¶113).

³⁸ Ibid., 459-60 (ch. 1, sec. 4, obj. 4, ans.; ¶115-17).

³⁹ This conclusion is confirmed by McClymond and McDermott: "As Edwards argues in *End of Creation*, the knowledge of God among believers is the purpose for which the world was created, and it will go on increasing throughout all eternity." McClymond and McDermott, 242. In their

Calvin and the Westminster Confession

Confirmation of the closeness in Thomas's and Edwards's view is found in Calvin's Geneva catechism. The first question of this catechism is: "What is the principall and chief end of man's life?" Calvin's answer is: "To know God." The second question is: "What moveth thee to say so?" The answer connects knowing God to God's glory: "Because He hath created us and placed us in this world to set foorth his glorie in us: And it is good reason that we employ our whole life to his glorie, seeing he is the beginning and fountaine thereof." The third question parallels the idea of man's chief end as knowing and glorifying God with man's chief happiness: "What is, then, the chief felicitie of man? Even the self-same: I meane to know God and to have his glorie shewed foorth in us." A few questions later Calvin further connects knowing God and glorifying God: "But what is the true and right knowledge of God? When a man so knoweth God, that he giveth him due honour."⁴⁰

The man who knows God's glorifies God. If the blessedness which is the chief end of man is to know God, then blessedness as man's chief end and God's glory as man's chief end are identical ends.

B. B. Warfield, who examined these questions in seeking to plumb the heritage of Westminster Shorter Catechism 1 reaches the same conclusion:

"Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." Not to enjoy God, certainly, without glorifying Him, for how can He to whom glory inherently belongs be enjoyed without being glorified? But just as certainly not to glorify God without enjoying Him—for how can He whose glory is His perfections be glorified if He be not also enjoyed?⁴¹

EVALUATION AND EXPANSION

By this point it should be clear that there is no inconsistency in Thomas Watson's affirmations that both blessedness and to glorify and enjoy God are man's chief end. Indeed, to enjoy God includes the idea of blessedness.

There is, however, something to critique in Aquinas' conception of beatitude. He is overly focused on the intellect. For instance, he deals with the question of whether the body is needed for blessedness:

Happiness is twofold; the one is imperfect and is had in this life; the other is perfect, consisting in the vision of God. Now it is evident that the body is necessary for the happiness of this life. For the happiness of this life consists in an operation of the intellect, either speculative or practical. And the operation of the intellect in this life cannot be without a phantasm, which is only in a bodily organ, as was shown in the First Part (Q84, A6-7). Consequently that happiness which can be had in this life, depends, in a way, on the body. But as to perfect

discussion of *End of Creation*, McClymond and McDermott explicitly parallel Edwards and Aquinas. Ibid., 219-20.

⁴⁰ As quoted in Benjamin B. Warfield, "The First Question of the Westminster 'Shorter Catechism,'" *The Princeton Theological Review* VI, no. 1-4 (1908): 568-569 (=Works 6:382).]

⁴¹ Ibid., 587 (6:400).

Happiness, which consists in the vision of God, . . . it is evident that the souls of the saints, separated from their bodies, *walk by sight*, seeing the Essence of God, wherein is true Happiness (ST I-II Q4, A5).

Thomas affirms the resurrection of the body, which is important to orthodoxy. But if perfect happiness can be found in a disembodied vision of God apart from the body, why the need for the resurrection? Knowledge of God is certainly an important part of beatitude, but in a biblical conception of beatitude it cannot be the whole. This can be seen by looking at the Beatitudes of Matthew 5 in particular and the Sermon on the Mount in general.

The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing

Μακάριος, the term typically translated “blessed” in translations of the beatitudes, refers to human flourishing. R. T. France explains:

‘Macarisms’ are essentially commendations, congratulations, statements to the effect that a person is in a good situation, sometimes even expressions of envy. The Hebrew equivalent of *makarios* is *’asrê* rather than the more theologically loaded *bārūk*, ‘blessed (by God).’ The traditional English rendering ‘blessed’ thus also has too theological a connotation in modern usage; the Greek term for ‘blessed (by God)’ is *eulogeĩos*, not *makarios*. The sense of congratulation and commendation is perhaps better conveyed by ‘happy,’ but this term generally has too psychological a connotation: *makarios* does not state that a person feels happy (‘Happy are those who mourn’ is a particularly inappropriate translation if the word is understood in that way), but that one is in a ‘happy’ situation, one which other people ought also to wish to share. ‘Fortunate’ gets close to the sense, but has inappropriate connotations of luck. “Congratulations to . . .” would convey much of the impact of a ‘macarism,’ but perhaps sounds too colloquial. The Australian idiom ‘God on yer’ is perhaps as close as any to the sense, but would not communicate in the rest of the English-speaking world! My favorite translation of *makarios* is the traditional Welsh rendering of the Beatitudes, *Gwyn eu byd*, literally ‘White is their world,’ an evocative idiom for those for whom everything is good. Beatitudes are descriptions, and commendations of the good life.⁴²

Jonathan Pennington argues at greater length for this same conclusion, noting that the one who receives blessing (בָּרַךְ/εὐλογητός) is the one who is in a flourishing condition (אַשְׁרֵי/μακάριος).⁴³ This can be further illustrated in the passage where the Hebrew word *’ashre* first occurs: “Then Leah said, ‘Happy am I! For women will call me happy.’ So she named him Asher” (Genesis 30:13). Michael Brown observes, “[B]ecause God blesses Leah with

⁴² R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 160-61. The one alteration that I would make to France’s evaluation is his claim that the בָּרַךְ/εὐλογητός pair is more theologically loaded than the אַשְׁרֵי/μακάριος. If the latter pairing points to man’s chief end, then it too is of significant theological significance.

⁴³ Jonathan T. Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017), 50. See also the surrounding pages for the full argument.

fecundity (doubtless attributed to the ‘blessing’ [*berakā*] of God . . .), she is now in a state of true happiness and will be called happy.”⁴⁴

Beatitude, or flourishing, in Matthew 5 includes Thomas’ identification of the happiness that is man’s chief end. The beatific vision in which one comes to a fuller knowledge of God is included in Matthew’s Beatitudes. But in the Sermon Jesus does not limit beatitude to the beatific vision.

The blessed states found in the beatitudes are bounded by an inclusion: “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” This inclusion indicates that the kingdom of heaven is the overarching category in which the other statements of flourishing fit.⁴⁵ Within this broader category of the kingdom, Jesus taught that his followers will flourish in the new creation when death, mourning, crying and pain have passed away (Matt. 5:4; Isa. 61:2; Rev. 21:4).⁴⁶ They will flourish when they inherit the earth and rule over it under God’s greater rule as God intended from the beginning (Matt. 5:5; Gen. 1:26-28; Rev. 22:5).⁴⁷ They will flourish because righteousness will dwell in the new heaven and earth (Matt. 5:6; 2 Pet. 3:13).⁴⁸ They will flourish because they will receive mercy from God at the last judgment (Matt. 5:7).⁴⁹ And yes, as Aquinas noted, flourishing will include the beatific vision (Matt. 5:8; Rev. 22:3-4).⁵⁰ Finally, they will flourish in becoming like God (thus receiving the title “sons of God”) (Matt. 5:9; Rev. 2:6-8; Rom. 8:19-23; 1 John 3:2).⁵¹ Notably the righteous can be considered to flourish given these future realities even though at present they suffer persecution (Matt. 5:10-11).⁵²

⁴⁴ NIDOTTE, 1:763. The point is that it is the blessing [ברך] of God that brings one into the state of אֲשֵׁרִי. While בָּרַךְ (and εὐλογητός) can be used sometimes to indicate a state, but it seems that אֲשֵׁרִי always indicates a state.

⁴⁵ John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Greek Testament Commentary, ed. I. Howard Marshall and Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005); 197; R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 165.

⁴⁶ See Robert A. Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Foundation for Understanding* (Waco, TX: Word, 1982), 81.

⁴⁷ See William Perkins, “The Sermon on the Mount,” in *The Works of William Perkins*, ed. Joel R. Beeke, Derek W. H. Thomas, and J. Stephen Yuille (1608; repr., Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2014), 1:191-92.

⁴⁸ See D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” in *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 164.

⁴⁹ See Guelich, 89.

⁵⁰ See Carson, 135; France, 168-69.

⁵¹ Carson, 135-36; France, 169. Recall that Clement of Alexandria identified man’s chief end as “Assimilation to God” with the result that “as far as possible a man becomes righteous and holy with wisdom.” Clement, 2:377

⁵² There are some present aspects to some of these blessings. For instance, justice and mercy are both given at times in this present life, and Christians can in the present be identified as sons of God (1 John 3:2). Nevertheless, the emphasis in this passage is on the new creation. It is notable that elsewhere in Scripture each of the descriptions of blessedness find their fullness in the new creation. The parenthetical passages in the above paragraph demonstrate this, and they are worth looking up. Recall also that Augustine identified man’s chief end as “eternal life.” Augustine, *City of God*, 194 [19.4].

The Sermon on the Mount thus opens with an emphasis on flourishing. This flourishing is truly human flourishing, but it is flourishing that is focused on God. Indeed, it could bear the label “enjoying God.” Within the frame of the kingdom of heaven, the blessed states the Jesus enumerates climaxes with becoming like God in connection with knowing God intimately (the beatific vision). Other parts of the blessing deal with the removal of obstacles that would stand in the way of this enjoyment of God: they will receive mercy, their desire for righteousness will be satisfied, the mourning caused by sin and a sin-filled world will be done away with. Even the mundane blessedness of inheriting the earth is blessed because of the presence of God (cf. Rev. 22:5).⁵³

The flourishing the Beatitudes describes is certainly to be a goal of all Christians, but the next section of the Sermon (5:13-16) identifies God’s glory as the goal of Jesus’s disciples. Christians who suffer persecution may be tempted to blend in with the surrounding culture or to withdraw so that the culture does not notice them. Jesus allows neither option but demands that Christians be salt and light with the aim that God receives glory when their good works are manifest.⁵⁴

Having raised the issue of good works, Jesus then turns to the law, the standard by which the goodness of the works must be measured. Keeping the law is both the means by which God is glorified by good works and it is a means by which humans flourish. Psalm 1 affirms, “Blessed [אַשְׁרֵי] is the man . . . [whose] delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.” This person of Psalm 1 flourishes: “He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.”⁵⁵

However, the way Jesus expounds the law shows that his fulfillment of the law is not merely a repetition of the law. In fact, in the antitheses he alters the Mosaic code at least with regard to divorce and possibly with regard to oaths and the *lex talionis*.⁵⁶ Here Jesus models the use of the law for those in the new covenant. Those in the new covenant are no longer under the Mosaic code because they are no longer under the Mosaic covenant. But they are still to use the Mosaic law as wisdom, something already modeled in the Old Testament by Psalms and Proverbs.⁵⁷ Notably, Pennington observes, “The other place in

⁵³ That God’s presence is an essential part to the blessedness of inheriting the earth is vividly portrayed in Exodus 33:1-6. After the golden calf idolatry, God told Moses that the people would inherit the land that God had promised them in his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But God will not go up with them to the land. “When the people heard this disastrous word, they mourned, and no one put on his ornaments” (33:4). Likewise, if God showed mercy to his people by not judging them in Hell for their sins and by giving them the new earth as an inheritance but withheld his presence, the new creation would not be a blessing.

⁵⁴ My thoughts along this line were stimulated by N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 288-89.

⁵⁵ Recall also Volz’s point about the connection between flourishing and the summary of the law in the two greatest commandments.

⁵⁶ William J. Dumbrell, “The Logic of the Role of the Law in Matthew 5:1-20,” *Novum Testamentum* 23, no. 1 (January 1981): 20.

⁵⁷ For an argument that Christians are not under the law because of a change in covenant but that they should make use of the law as wisdom, see Brian S. Rosner, *Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments of God*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2013). Al Wolters gives insight on why this “reappropriation” of the law can take place:

which *'asrê* regularly occurs is Proverbs, which also make an appeal to find full human flourishing through wise living. In Proverbs, the *'asrê* one is primarily the person who finds wisdom and lives wisely (cf. Proverbs 3:13a; 8:32, 34; 14:21; 29:18). This person is naturally extolled as 'happy' or 'flourishing.'"⁵⁸ Pennington further argues that to flourish and to be godly are equivalent concepts.⁵⁹ He observes that in Proverbs "[i]ncluded in this concept [of flourishing] is the wisdom of the one who fears the Lord and is therefore blessed (Prov. 16:20; 28:14). Indeed, in Proverbs reverence for the Lord is central to understanding what it means to be wise and therefore *'asrê*."⁶⁰

Human Flourishing as Central to Biblical Theology

The biblical content of human flourishing, as the preceding indicates, cannot be limited to knowing God. Notably the content of human flourishing links into the major themes of Scripture.

- In the opening chapter of Genesis God created man, male and female, in his image. In the beatitudes, the climatic flourishing state is to called sons of God, which is the same as to be transformed into his likeness.

"The Mosaic law was the divinely accredited implementation of creational law for ancient Israel [creational law being God's fundamental design for the way things ought to be that he built into creation]. This means that the law of Moses is fixed between two reference points: creational law and ancient Israel, the universal and enduring principles of creation and the historical situation of a particular people (Israel) in a particular place (Palestine) at a particular time (the centuries between Moses and Christ). Because of this double reference, the coming of Christ also involves a 'fulfillment' of the law in a double sense. On the one hand, the law is fulfilled in that the shadow is replaced by the substance, and Jewish law is no longer binding on the people of God. On the other hand, the law is fulfilled in that Christ reaffirms its deepest meaning (see Matt. 5:17). In other words, insofar as the Mosaic law is addressed to a particular phase of the history of God's people it has lost its validity, but insofar as it points to the enduring normativity of God's creation order it retains its validity. For example, the legislation concerning the year of Jubilee, applying as it does to an agrarian society in the ancient Near East, is no longer binding for the New Testament people of God, but in its reflection of a general principle of stewardship as a creational norm it should continue to function as a guide for the new Israel [better: the church]. The provision for a bill of divorce is no longer in effect, but it still stands as God's own reminder to us of a basic principle of justice: there must be legal guarantees to minimize the effects of the hardness of the human heart. The same could be said concerning the laws for tithing, protection of the poor and sojourners, and so on. Another way of saying this is that God did the implementing for his people in the Old Testament, while in the New he in large measure gives us the freedom in Christ to do our own implementing. That is the point of Paul's letter to the Galatians. But in both cases he holds us to the blueprint of the law of creation. In the Old Testament the explanations he gave included detailed instructions for the implementation of the blueprint; that was by way of apprenticeship. In Christ we are journeyman builders—still bound to the architect's explicit directions, but with considerable freedom of implementation as new situations arise." Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 40-41.

⁵⁸ Pennington, *Sermon*, 45.

⁵⁹ Jonathan Pennington, "A Brief Biblical Theology of Biblical Flourishing," available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eN-t3xYhuac&feature=youtu.be&t=17m53s> accessed 8 July 2017. See at 7:45-55.

⁶⁰ Pennington, *Sermon*, 45.

- The creation blessing of Genesis 1:26-28 includes human rule over the earth. The beatitudes are framed with possession of the kingdom, and they include both the inheritance of the earth and the satisfaction of justice.⁶¹
- Human rule over the earth was always to be a rule under God's greater rule, which meant it was to be a wise rule in conformity to God's law. In other words, it was to be a righteous rule by those who meditated on God's law and wisely applied it.
- When Adam sinned one of the chief consequences was the separation of humanity from God's presence, but the flourishing human will see and know God intimately.
- The only way for humans to know God in this way is for God to show mercy to sinners and to reverse the effects of the curse, bringing his shalom to earth.

The themes of redemption, the presence of God, Christlikeness, wisdom/law, shalom, and the kingdom are all tied to the theme of beatitude/flourishing.

All these themes feed into the great end of God's glory. If Edwards is correct that the glory of God is the chief end of man, and if the chief end of redemption is the restoration of God's good creation for his glory, and if man is at the center of creation and redemption (as image-bearer and vice-regent), then human flourishing is bound to bring God glory. In other words, one of the chief ways for mankind to bring God glory is for mankind to flourish according to God's definition of flourishing.

CONCLUSION

This paper has established that Thomas's claim that beatitude is man's last end and the Westminster Shorter Catechism's claim that to glorify God and enjoy him is man's last end are not conflicting answers. It may still be asked, however, if beatitude and God's glory are both ultimate ends. As John Piper modified Westminster Shorter Catechism 1 to read that man's chief end is to glorify God *by* enjoying him forever, perhaps this paper should conclude that man's chief end is to glorify God through human flourishing. God's glory is the ultimate end and human flourishing is the chief means to that ultimate end. And yet the two are so closely bound together that Jesus can say things like "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." It seems that Warfield is correct in concluding that man's chief end is certainly not "to enjoy God . . . without glorifying Him, for how can He to whom glory inherently belongs be enjoyed without being glorified? But just as certainly not to glorify God without enjoying Him—for how can He whose glory is His perfections be glorified if He be not also enjoyed?"⁶²

⁶¹ Notice also Matthew 6:33 "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Also, one of the leading petitions of the Lord's Prayer is "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10).

⁶² Warfield, 587 (6:400).