

*Makarios* Now: Plundering Athens and Hippo

by

Rev. Clayton A. Thomas

Date: 3/25/2016

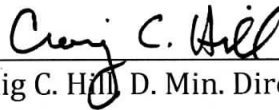
Approved:



Dr. Will H. Willimon, Supervisor



Dr. Charles D. Hankins, Second Reader



Dr. Craig C. Hill, D. Min. Director

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Ministry  
in the Divinity School of Duke University

2016

ABSTRACT

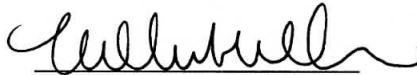
*Makarios* Now: Plundering Athens and Hippo

by

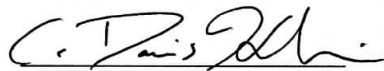
Rev. Clayton A. Thomas

Date: 3/25/2016

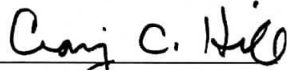
Approved:



Dr. Will H. Willimon, Supervisor



Dr. Charles D. Hankins, Second Reader



Dr. Craig C. Hill, D. Min. Director

An abstract of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Ministry  
in the Divinity School of Duke University

2016

Copyright by  
Clayton A. Thomas  
2016

## Abstract

A Christian doctrine of happiness differs greatly from contemporary and pseudo-Christian conceptions of happiness, which are measured subjectively and by the accumulation of external goods. In order to develop a fresh account with objective standards, I critique, integrate and revise Aristotle and Augustine's accounts of happiness. Additionally, I rely heavily on scriptures to present a *telos* of godlikeness that in turn informs a robust account of *makarios*. Throughout the thesis, the argument is made that happiness (*eudaimonia*) and blessedness (*makarios*) are equivalents. Despite the skepticism of liberal theologians, Christian happiness (*makarios*) is promised in the New Testament and achievable in this life. Fundamentally, *makarios* is relational, active, constant, and dependent.

## **Dedication**

To my beloved wife and children.

## Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations	vii
Acknowledgments	viii
Introduction	1
I. What Language Shall I Borrow?	11
II. Says Who?	23
III. Misconceptions of Blessedness	33
IV. Plundering Athens: Aristotle's Account of Happiness	55
V. Aristotelian Controversies	73
VI. Plundering Hippo: Augustine's Account of Happiness	87
VII. Human <i>Ergon</i> and <i>Telos</i>	97
VIII. <i>Makarios</i> Now: Christian Parameters	109
Conclusion	142
Bibliography	145

## **Acknowledgements**

I am most grateful to my wife, the love of my life, who graciously gave me the gift of time to complete my thesis. Much like the benefactor who quietly gives a matching gift, the burden of this thesis was equally shared. More than once I doubted my ability to tackle Aristotle and Augustine's work on happiness. When I did not believe in me, she did. When I expressed uncertainties about finishing, she gave me a kick in the pants and reminded me that she had invested way too much time in this thing for me not to finish. In the same vein my children endured my absenteeism. Birthday parties and vacations were missed, and days off were few. This, of course, made my time with them all the more precious. Their laughter and wonderment provided a healthy, centering corrective to my myopic preoccupation. In thanksgiving and repentance, I release them from any obligation they may feel later in life to wade through this thesis. Mason, Fields, Wellspring and Wilder, I love you.

I am thankful for Dr. Craig Hill's vision for and implementation of a rigorous and rewarding Doctorate of Ministry Program at Duke Divinity School. Dr. Hill went to great lengths to give me this opportunity and shepherded me from start to finish. Dr. Will Willimon served as my advisor and first reader. Dr. Willimon's writings inspired me long before I became a student at Duke, so I was of course honored when he agreed to be my advisor. His excellent counsel is propelled by his unmistakable genius, a hope-filled dissatisfaction with the status quo, remarkable ability to listen, and a love for the church as great as anyone I have encountered in

my ministry. For the record, my first proposal was an utter failure and left me feeling a bit defeated. In response, Dr. Willimon guided me to my passions and a gutsy thesis. Though late in the game, my second reader, Dr. Davis Hankins played a crucial role in the final product. As a long time comrade in the progressive movement to combat shallow theologies of destruction, Dr. Hankins was a perfect partner in this apology on blessedness. I am extremely grateful for the time he spent improving this argument. Dr. Hankins swam tediously through the tumultuous first draft and made insightful suggestions for revision. Any weak arguments remaining in this paper are the result of my failure to heed his advice. Lastly, in the sphere of academia, I am indebted to and grateful for Rev. Carol Howard Merritt who labored as copy editor.

I enrolled at Duke Divinity while serving as an associate pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Sarasota, FL. Midway through the program I accepted a call to serve as pastor at Rivermont Presbyterian Church in Chattanooga, TN. I give thanks for the sessions and members of FPC and RPC. Both churches boosted my continuing education allowance to make tuition feasible, were patient with me and held me in prayer.

Lastly, I am beholden to my mom and dad who modeled Christian virtues for me as a child (and still today). Throughout this endeavor they cheered me on to the finish. Like most parents, more than anything in the world they yearn for me to be happy. Well, I am happy, and I believe this should partially be attributed to their prodding me along a joyful journey with Christ. For the record, my mother proofread my thesis. How great is that? Thanks Mom!

## INTRODUCTION

*...Most people virtually agree...they suppose that living well and doing well are the same as being happy. But they disagree about what happiness is, and the many do not give the same answer as the wise.* Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* I.4.2

### Common Ground

Today we inhabit a world where happiness is most often reduced to a shallow, subjective state of contentment. Further, happiness measured by satisfaction tends to be based on external goods such as wealth, health and progeny. Unfortunately these notions of happiness often determine how Christians imagine what it means to live a blessed life. This thesis returns to ancient Greek and early Christian theologians to answer the question: what does it mean to be happy and blessed?

In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle compares the need to define happiness to an archer who needs a target to aim at.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, in *Eudemian Ethics*, he justifies the need for an account of happiness “since not to have one’s life organized with reference to some end is a mark of great folly.”<sup>2</sup> Aristotle argues *eudaimonia*, the archer’s target, is defined by the human *telos*.<sup>3</sup> If we understand what people are created for, we will know the nature of a happy life. In his treatise on happiness, Augustine of Hippo follows Aristotle’s point of departure and assumes “all persons

---

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by Terence Irwin. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999. EN I.2.2. *Nicomachean Ethics* will be abbreviated as EN.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle. *The Eudemian Ethics*. Translated by Anthony Kenny. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. EE I.2 *The Eudemian Ethics* will be abbreviated as EE.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, I.7.10-16.

want to be happy."<sup>4</sup> However, given his understanding of the human *telos* is different from Aristotle's, Augustine proposes a much different account of *eudaimonia*.<sup>5</sup> In the *City of God*, Augustine traces Varro's account and identifies 288 schools, each contrasting in their account of happiness.<sup>6</sup> Given the multitude of competing claims for happiness, both secular and religious, Christians must be able to articulate the *telos* of the faith to avoid being tossed to and fro by "every wind of doctrine" (Eph 4:14, NRSV).<sup>7</sup>

The relationship between happiness and blessedness is equally important. I argue to be blessed is to be happy and vice versa. Either statement can be used to identify the chief good of human beings. In fact, ancient Greek philosophers used *makarios* and *eudaimonia* interchangeably.<sup>8</sup> Due to the contemporary understanding of happiness, the synthesis of blessedness and happiness is resisted by liberal theologians who are suspicious of a Christian ethic that aims at happiness. However, this reluctance is driven by a misconception of both blessedness and happiness. I argue Christians who achieve the ordained *telos* should be called happy *and* blessed.

---

<sup>4</sup> "The Happy Life" in Augustine. *Trilogy on Faith and Happiness*. Ed. Boniface Ramsey (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 2010), 35.

<sup>5</sup> Jennifer Herdt writes, "Augustine, like the ancient pagans, assumes that the pressing task is to discern in what our happiness substantially consists; the fact that all we do is for the sake of happiness he takes for granted." *Putting on Virtue: The Legacy of the Splendid Vices* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 51.

<sup>6</sup> Augustine, *The City of God* XIX, trans. Marcus Dods, (New York: Modern Library, 1993), 669-672.

<sup>7</sup> Coogan, Michael David., Marc Zvi. Brettler, Carol A. Newsom, and PHEME Perkins. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: With the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. Unless noted all scriptures referenced are from the NRSV.

<sup>8</sup> The definitions of *makarios* and *eudaimonia* vary greatly throughout history. Chapter Two is a thorough exploration of the best way to define the two.

## Problem

Presently, the idea of happiness has become so watered down or overused or worldly that many suspicious Christians prefer the word “joy.” However, in the scriptures joy (*charis*) is generally transitory and emotive, while happiness (*makarios*) is robust and stable. Contemporary notions of happiness are understood as entirely subjective, satisfaction oriented, and hardly resemble the *eudaimonic* sense of “best possible life.”

Worse yet, blessedness is most often believed to be about receiving external goods (health, wealth, progeny) from the divine. Brent Strawn laments that Christians have adopted a “plastic (pseudo) happiness marked by the syrupy sweet, the real estate success, the hedonically egoistical, the perfect parking spot, and the like.”<sup>9</sup> This thin happiness is based on “commercial consumerist capitalism of the First World with a few stock lexical items thrown in from the Bible.”<sup>10</sup> Even still, the perception that dominant conceptions of happiness are distorted long predated the development of neoliberal capitalism. Aristotle debunks the “three lives” defined by a false sense of the source of happiness, including the moneymaker before giving his own account, and Aquinas notes the “mass opinion of silly people” that money is capable of anything.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Brent A. Strawn, *The Bible and the Pursuit of Happiness: What the Old and New Testaments Teach Us about the Good Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 318.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 317.

<sup>11</sup> EE I.5. Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas*, I-II, 2,1 cited by Paul Wadell, *Happiness and the Christian Moral Life: An Introduction to Christian Ethics*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), p.16.

Regrettably, an emphasis on external goods is voiced in the Bible. In Deuteronomy blessedness is construed as a divine response to obedience that manifests in favors and fortunes: longevity, wealth, and fertility (Deut 28-30). However, in the New Testament, blessedness is presented as dispossessing, noetic and relational. Nonetheless, ignoring the New Testament and the polyvalence created by non-Deuteronomic voices in the Old Testament, the Deuteronomic understanding of blessing dominates church practices and certainly is the basis for the common usage of the word “blessed.”<sup>12</sup>

In addition to the emphasis placed on external goods, across the theological spectrum, belief has replaced action as the means to a blessed reward. Prosperity gospel churches exhort believers to speak, think and believe their blessings into their lives. With the right frame of mind, new houses and job promotions that are being stored up in heaven will be poured out on the believer. However, confusion about the nature of blessedness is not limited to prosperity gospel churches. Protestants and Roman Catholics alike base their stewardship campaigns on gratitude for what we have (possess) and repeat the mantra “blessed to be a blessing.” While more subtle, the message is the same: external goods are received by divine favor. Broadly, the confusion regarding blessing is evident in statements about one’s blessedness. Instead of identifying blessedness as relationship with God, most Christians will list material examples of divine favor. For example, “I am so blessed. I have four beautiful, healthy children” or “we are so blessed to be able to

---

<sup>12</sup> Clearly the rise of acquisitive capitalism has exacerbated the problem. See Kate Bowler, *Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

vacation on the Gulf Coast at our beach house.” Ostensibly these statements are expressions of gratitude; however, the implications of such statements are destructive to the church and contrary to Jesus’ teachings on the Kingdom of God.

Like prosperity gospel churches, but with a different motivation, Mainliners and Catholics understand the reception of blessings to be unilateral and unrelated to one’s actions. Protestant passivity is a result of an unbiblical overemphasis on depravity. Lost is Jesus’ commandment to “be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matt 5:48). The sixteenth century reformers latch onto the late writings of Augustine and push blessings and happiness strictly into the hands of God.<sup>13</sup> In *City of God*, Augustine describes the pursuit of happiness in this life as an exercise of futility, vanity and a “marvelous shallowness.”<sup>14</sup> Any effort in this life at achieving happiness is futile because terrestrial happiness is so inferior to eternal happiness, and thus not complete; and vain because it is only by God’s grace that we can be happy.<sup>15</sup>

Building on Augustine, John Calvin contends that to pursue virtue is not only *undeserving* of reward (happiness), but rather driven by *hubris* and therefore deserving of punishment, “because by the pollution of their hearts they defile God’s

---

<sup>13</sup>Jennifer A. Herdt characterizes the liberal protestant position of the last 500 years as hyperaugustinianism. For example: “Luther’s perspective is consistently anti-*eudaimonistic*, and in this respect not only anti-Aristotelian but also non-Augustinian.” *Putting on Virtue*, 188-189.

<sup>14</sup> Augustine, *City of God* XIX.4, 676.

<sup>15</sup> Jennifer A. Herdt, *Putting on Virtue*, 53 citing *City of God* XIX.4, 855 on futility: “eternal life is the supreme good and eternal death the Supreme Evil, and...to achieve the one and escape the other, we must live rightly.” On vanity: “For we do not yet see our good, and hence we have to seek it by believing; and it is not in our power to live rightly, unless while we believe and pray we receive help from him who has given us the faith to believe that we must be helped by him.”

good works.”<sup>16</sup> Martin Luther rejects human agency in the pursuit of virtues by claiming that any efforts to produce virtue are hypocritical and falsely pious.<sup>17</sup> Even contemporary virtue theorists are leery of making bold claims of happiness. Stanley Hauerwas and Charles Pinches warn, “Christianity does not promise fulfillment but rather offers a way to live in the world truthfully and without illusion.”<sup>18</sup> But how can their caution against “happiology” account for Jesus’ promises of “abundant life” and lifelong quenching “living waters” (John 10:10, 4:14)?<sup>19</sup> While liberal theologians remain reluctant to articulate a theology of happiness, the prosperity gospel churches’ account of blessedness stands unrivaled.

### **Casualties of the Problem**

Casualties of the blessed distortion are legion. The first casualty group is the ‘cursed.’ This group is created by the present understanding of blessings in the form of external goods. If your finances and health are a result of divine favor, the poor and the sick must be cursed by God—either because of a lack of faith or an arbitrary God. The miserable state of the many is christened by the few, and the few are

---

<sup>16</sup> Despite his reputation for emphasizing depravity, John Calvin makes more room for human agency in his sections on sanctification and maturation. *Institutes of the Christian Religion* III.XIV.3, trans. John Thomas McNeill and Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 770.

<sup>17</sup> Luther, *Luthers Werke*, Weimar Ausgabe and Luther, *Luther’s Works* cited in Herdt, *Putting on Virtue*, 174. Tuomo Mannermaa explains, “according to Luther the modus of a Christian is always *passio*: a person is neither inwardly nor outwardly active; one experiences only what God affects in him or her.” Herdt, *Putting*, 188. Mannermaa, “Why Is Luther So Fascinating?” in *Union with Christ* 10.

<sup>18</sup> Stanley Hauerwas and Charles Pinches, *Christians among the Virtues: Theological Conversations with Ancient and Modern Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press), 14.

<sup>19</sup> Later, Hauerwas and Pinches write, “Christians claim (believe)...we are happy to the extent that our lives are formed in reference to Jesus of Nazareth.” *Christians Among The Virtues*, 16. In the tension between this and the quotation above, there is an evident reluctance to embrace a Christian account of *eudaimonia*.

released from the burden to aid the many.<sup>20</sup> The second casualty is the humanist. Even if the humanist falls into the popular understanding of blessed, she cannot come to love a God who is arbitrary and cruel.<sup>21</sup> The third casualty is the literalist. The literalist will hold fast to this pseudo-doctrine of blessedness even when misfortune overtakes him. The loss of children, job or a terminal illness will serve as an indicator that God is punishing him for a lack of obedience. Ultimately, the literalist will curse God or painfully wither away in a masochistic relationship with God. The fourth casualty is the disciple. The disciple, confessing passive receipt of blessedness, is denied the transformative power that comes with a thick understanding of blessedness.<sup>22</sup> And finally God, who seeks a relationship rooted in love and grace, is met with a cheapened relationship. Under the current paradigm, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus are not enough to earn our love; rather, believers need drizzling incentives to stoke their gratitude. In fact, everyone, YHWH included, loses with misconceived blessedness.

---

<sup>20</sup> This predicament mirrors the problem of double predestination. Presbyterian minister Scott Dannemiller shares this concern and challenges the way Christians use the word “blessed.” [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/scott-dannemiller/christians-should-stop-saying\\_b\\_4868963.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/scott-dannemiller/christians-should-stop-saying_b_4868963.html). Note also the outcry (blog/article links) among those who believe his article is a slight against God.

<sup>21</sup> For a challenging essay on a masochistic relationship with a providential God see Stephen Davis’ chapter on “A Theodicy of Protest,” in *Encountering Evil*, coauthor John B. Cobb (Atlanta: J. Knox, 1981), 7-22.

<sup>22</sup> Consider also the detrimental effect of using “bless” for every occasion, slowly making the term meaningless. Jessica Bennett, “They Feel ‘Blessed’,” *New York Times*, May 2, 2014, accessed February 26, 2016. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/04/fashion/blessed-becomes-popular-word-hashtag-social-media.html? r=0>

## Claim

The growing interest in virtue theory opens the door for a thorough account of happiness. Jennifer Herdt points to Erasmus as an example of a theologian who avoids the false dichotomy between mysterious, passive infusion of virtues and autonomous human agency. For Erasmus, the call to imitate Christ is the path to happiness. This endeavor is not prideful, quite the opposite, for in imitating Christ one puts on the virtue of humility.<sup>23</sup> In sum, Herdt concludes acquisition of virtues is through *grace-enabled human agency* formed in Christian communities.<sup>24</sup>

I contend that my account of *happiness* is both orthodox and Reformed, by championing Herdt's argument for a grace-enabled happiness in this life through faithful obedience. My contribution will be to demonstrate the relationship between happiness and blessedness, to provide an account of the nature of Christian happiness, and to identify the biblical paradigm for acquiring happiness. I will demonstrate that blessedness is enjoyed in the present, is relational, noetic, active, dynamic, and stable despite the loss of external goods, empowered by the Holy Spirit and dependent on community. Like the formulaic prescription in Deuteronomy, blessedness is to be pursued through faithful obedience to God.

Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* is a well-reasoned approach to pursuing happiness. Aristotle argues that happiness is informed by nature, specifically the unique human function, and that it must be complete, self-sufficient, active and

---

<sup>23</sup> Herdt, *Putting on Virtue*, 115. Erasmus' teachings echo Athanasius' doctrine of *theosis* and *unio mystica*. Erasmus' writes, "We have such a capacity for divinity that we can soar past the minds of the angels and become one with God." Erasmus, *Desiderri Erasmi Roterodami opera omnia*, (LB V 12D) cited in Herdt, *Putting on Virtue*, 113.

<sup>24</sup> Herdt, *Putting on Virtue*, 350-351.

rational. Departing from Socrates, Aristotle goes beyond seeking the nature of happiness and prioritizes “from whence arises.”<sup>25</sup> This thesis places an equal emphasis on the source and acquisition of happiness. A Christian account will differ from Aristotle’s by, for example, discarding self-sufficiency and affirming dependency. Even on this point, however, a survey of interpretations of Aristotle’s thought shows his insistence on “self-sufficiency” to be more complicated than a simple opposition with dependency would suggest. My account of a Christian notion of happiness relies extensively on Aristotle’s and the rich history of its theological reception. At the same time, the historic controversies of *Nicomachean Ethics* will also prove to be an aid in demonstrating the resilience of a Christian account from a philosophical view.

Aristotle, contra-Plato, begins from what is familiar (known to us) and moves towards theoretical principles (known by nature or known without qualification).<sup>26</sup> Aristotle seeks “conviction through argument, using people’s perceptions as evidence and example.”<sup>27</sup> Like Aristotle, I begin with the familiar and move towards underlying principles (known by nature). Unlike Aristotle, in a Christian account what is “known to us” includes “special revelation” and thus does not aim to be universally convincing—while at the same time, it is my hope that a robust account of Christian happiness is compelling to non-Christians.

I will address scriptures that deal directly with blessedness, with special attention to the Sermon on the Mount. I also turn to the lives of Josiah, Jesus, and

---

<sup>25</sup> EE I.5.

<sup>26</sup> EN I.4.4.

<sup>27</sup> EE I.6.1.

Paul as illustrations that concretely portray blessedness. Of course within the Christian tradition interpretations of what is “known to us” vary greatly, and so my interpretative moves result in different principles on blessedness than my interlocutors.

Chapter One is a brief word study of *makarios* and *eudaimonia*. It will become clear that these words, like all words, receive their meaning from their use within a community. In Chapter Two, I argue for an objectivist approach to happiness. Chapter Three surveys secular and religious misconceptions about blessedness and happiness. Chapter Four is a summary of Aristotle’s account of *eudaimonia*. Chapter Five discusses the two primary controversies of Aristotle’s account, which concern the addition of the requirement of external goods for a happy life and the contradiction between Books I and X. This chapter is greatly informed by Julia Annas’ book *The Morality of Happiness*. In Chapter Six, I both critique and borrow from Augustine’s theology of happiness. In Chapter Seven, I argue that the *telos* of humankind is godliness. Finally, I present the nature of happiness from a Christian perspective (Chapter Eight). Chapter Eight also includes an excursus outlining how virtues are cultivated. I conclude with implications and recommendations for further study.

## I.

### WHAT LANGUAGE SHALL I BORROW?

*What language shall I borrow to thank Thee, dearest friend...  
Lord let me never, never outlive my love to Thee.* Bernard of Clairvaux

The Greek words *makarios* and *eudaimon* are interchangeable in Greek philosophy. Etymologically, *eudaimon* means good (*eu*) spirit (*daimon*), and *makarios* means to make large or extend (*mar*).<sup>1</sup> *Eudaimon* is most often translated “happy.” Given *makarios*’ origination from the divine attribute *makar* and its proliferation in the New Testament, it is most often translated “blessed.” However, there is philosophical and biblical support to translate *makarios* as “happy.” The corresponding Hebrew word for the two is *asher* and not *barak*.<sup>2</sup> *Barak* and the Greek equivalent, *eulogeo*, are cousins to the previous terms but not analogs. *Barak* is to kneel or bless, and like *eulogeo*, it signifies the *act* of blessing, conferring benefit, speaking well of, and praising.<sup>3</sup>

A simple lexical definition will not resolve the confusion about the meanings of happiness and blessedness. With each time, place, and language, happiness and

---

<sup>1</sup> William F Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature: A Translation and Adaptation of the Fourth Revised and Augmented Edition of Walter Bauer's Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der übrigen urchristlichen Literatur* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979), 486-487. The first definition is “blessed, fortunate, happy, usually in the sense of privileged recipient of divine favor.”

<sup>2</sup> For example, *makarios* is used in the LXX to translate *asher*, not *barak*. *Eulogeo* is used to translate *barak*.

<sup>3</sup> Francis Brown et al. *The Brown, Driver, Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic: Coded with the Numbering System from Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 138-139. Arndt, *Lexicon*, 322-323.

blessedness take on new meaning. Brent Strawn presents a linguistic critique based on the semantic drift of happiness that has led the concept of happiness beyond the rich meanings associated with *eudaimonia*. The word, he concludes, has suffered far more than word pollution. It is past a pidgin and has now become a full-blown Creole. He chides popular understandings of happiness for lacking the “depth, richness, variety, and most importantly, the nuance of the original, full language.”<sup>4</sup> Of course defining happiness *is* the quest of the ages. By exploring the etymology of *makarios* and *eudaimon* in ancient writings, and especially in Aristotle, a more robust understanding of happiness will emerge.

### **Ancient Greek Literature**

C. de Heer’s book *A Study of the Semantic Field Denoting Happiness in Ancient Greek to the End of the 5th Century B.C.* traces the semantic drift of Greek words for happiness, fortune and luck (*makar*, *eudaimon*, *olbios*, and *euthyches*). He focuses on how the terms are used in narratives. De Heer begins with Homer’s ninth century BCE *The Iliad* and ends with fifth century BCE authors Euripides and Aristophanes. The latter authors, being contemporaries of Socrates, shed light on how Aristotle may have used these terms. Depending on the period (e.g. Epic, Archaic) and even the author within the same period (Homer vs. Hesiod), *eudaimonia* and *makarios* take on different meanings. Of most interest for this study is the meaning of *eudaimonia* and *makarios*; *makar* being the oldest variant of the two. Homer uses

---

<sup>4</sup> Brent A. Strawn, *The Bible and Pursuit of Happiness: What the Old and New Testaments Teach Us About the Good Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 315-317.

*makar* eighteen times in *The Iliad*; sixteen of those times it is an epithet for the gods.<sup>5</sup> From the *Odyssey*, de Heer concludes, “to be *makar* is to be divine, to have a home secure against adversity, to be untroubled by wind and rain, to enjoy perpetual sunshine, enjoy oneself all day long.”<sup>6</sup> The variants *makarizo* and *makarios* are more often assigned to human beings. With the pen of Homer and Hesiod, the human variants are emotive and temporal. By the Archaic Age *eudaimon* and *makarios* are used with variation. Solon equates *makar* with divine and not a mere semblance of the divine; while Theognis implies *makar* could be a divine gift.<sup>7</sup> Pindar continues the practice of using *makar* exclusively for the gods and *makarios* for humans, “being like *makar*, but to a less degree.”<sup>8</sup> Moving to *eudaimon*, Theognis and Pindar both understand it as a result of divine favor.<sup>9</sup>

#### Makarios and Eudaimon from Aeschylus to the End of the Fifth Century<sup>10</sup>

Markar Group	Eudaimon Group
Being the object of divine favor	Enjoying divine favor
Having gained some great success	Acquired through human agency
Being secure from adversity (constancy)	Being secure from adversity (constancy)
Being elevated above the generality of humankind	Having a lofty status, such as belonging to the aristocracy
Being outstanding in a specific way	Having possessions and wealth
Living a life of ease	Being able to enjoy life in various ways
Having a specific desire fulfilled	Sometimes permanent, sometimes temporary
As <i>makar</i> , applied to the gods	Living in freedom

<sup>5</sup> De Heer (Amsterdam: University of Western Australia in Association with A.M. Hakkert, 1968), 4.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 28-29.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 51-52.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 56-57. The table is abridged and the parentheses are mine. For uses during the Archaic age, see 51-52.

The fluidity of the words is most obvious in that *eudaimon* can be either permanent or temporary and can be acquired by human *or* divine agency. The overlap between the two groups is striking. Both *makar* and *eudaimon* communicate divine favor, status, constancy, and enjoyment. In fact, de Heer concludes all four words (*makar*, *eudaimon*, *olblios*, and *euthyches*) are believed by fifth century BCE authors, “with varying degrees of awareness, to be due to the favor of the gods.”<sup>11</sup> *Makarios* is sometimes a human happiness that is transitory and subjective, and other times used solely for the gods.

The lexical histories of *makar* and *eudaimon* display a consistent tendency of these terms to float across a wide semantic range. This makes translation difficult. The depth and complexity of the terms drive de Heer to refuse singular translations. Of *makar* he writes, “no word in a modern language can hope to render the sense and it is certainly erroneous to translate it as ‘blessed.’”<sup>12</sup> Nearing his conclusion, de Heer revisits the danger of translation and chastises those who translate *makarios* as “‘happy’, or ‘glücklich’, ‘beato’, ‘felice’...which are used to render each and all of the words under study.”<sup>13</sup> De Heer’s reasoning for rejecting conflation of terms is sound. He argues *eudaimon* is too fluid, complex and alien to modern thought to be captured in “precise, concrete terms” like happy.<sup>14</sup> De Heer’s dissertation aims

---

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 99.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 84.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

instead to establish the “meaning (of the key words) from the context.”<sup>15</sup> However, rather than banishing *makarios* and *eudaimon* to the ancient world, our task precisely is to restore robust meaning to the complex words blessed and happy. Just as de Heer traces these words through Greek literature, the definitions proposed in this thesis are based on the contextual study of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, the scriptures, and key theologians.

### **How Does Aristotle Use *Eudaimonia* and *Makarios*?**

De Heer demonstrates that the meanings of *eudaimonia* and *makarios* are fluid. Perhaps because Homer uses the words differently than Pindar who uses the words differently than Euripides, *eudaimonia* and *makarios* drifted together. While the English translations “happy” and “blessed” are debatable, there is consensus among philosophers that Aristotle appears to draw no meaningful distinction between *eudaimonia* and *makarios*. The claim of likeness was first made by Stoic philosopher Arius of Didymus (1<sup>st</sup> BCE). In Arius’ history of Stoic ethics, he assesses it does not matter whether one uses *eudaimon* or *makarios* “it comes to the same thing.”<sup>16</sup> In *Fragility of Goodness*, Martha Nussbaum demonstrates that Aristotle makes no distinction between the two by highlighting passages where Aristotle toggles between the two.<sup>17</sup> For example:

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>16</sup> Arius Didymus, *Epitome of Stoic Ethics* 48.6-11, ed. Arthur J. Pomeroy (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999), 9-11. Also, Julia Annas writes, “they are interchangeable (other than stylistically).” *The Morality of Happiness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 44.

<sup>17</sup> Martha Craven Nussbaum, *Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 330-334.

There is a debate as to whether the *eudaimon* needs friends or not. For they say *makarioi* and self sufficient people have no need of friends, since they have all good things already.... But it seems peculiar to give all good things to the *eudaimon* and to leave out friends.... And surely it is peculiar to make the *makarios* a solitary: for nobody would choose to have all the good things in the world all by himself. For the human being is a political creature and naturally disposed to living-with. And this is true of the *eudaimon* as well.<sup>18</sup>

Similarly, Terence Irwin concludes the two are interchangeable based on Aristotle's alternating use of *eudaimonia* and *makarios* in his argument about Priam.<sup>19</sup> Irwin and Julia Annas both note that some distinction is hinted at in *Eudemian Ethics* I.3. Nonetheless, Annas claims, "'Blessed' (*makarios*) is a loftier and more pretentious word than 'happy' (*eudaimon*), but they are interchangeable (other than stylistically)." If anything, Aristotle's use of both terms could be an effort to maintain the soundness of his hierarchy of ends and the completeness of happiness.<sup>20</sup> Unlike Aquinas, Augustine, and Arius Didymus, Aristotle offers no in-between state. Either a person is happy *and* blessed, or they are not, and so he writes, "For one swallow does not make a spring, nor does one day; nor, similarly, does one day or a short time make us blessed *and* happy."<sup>21</sup> Given the semantic drift described already, interpreters of Aristotle struggle to make plain sense of the word. J.L. Ackrill states,

---

<sup>18</sup> Aristotle, EN IX.9.1-3; trans., Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999), quoted in Nussbaum, *Fragility*, 331.

<sup>19</sup> Aristotle, EN I.10.13-15, 318. Terence Irwin, the translator, acknowledges the temptation to align *makarios* with the life of the gods and therefore as "entirely stable and immune to the limitations of the human condition," however, "unless the terms are interchangeable, the argument in I.10.13-16 is difficult to follow."

<sup>20</sup> *The Morality of Happiness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 44. "Augustine Laughed (*De beata vita* 2, 10)," In the same vein, Steinhauser contends *eudaimonia* and *telos* are also interchangeable. *Tradition and the Rule of Faith in the Early Church*, edited by Ronnie Rombs and Alexander Hwang (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 212.

<sup>21</sup> Aristotle, EN, I.7.16.

“The word *eudaimonia* has a force not at all like ‘happiness,’ ‘comfort,’ or ‘pleasure,’ but more like ‘the best possible life.’”<sup>22</sup>

### **How Should We Translate *Makarios* in the New Testament?**

*The Bible and the Pursuit of Happiness* includes a complete biblical lexicon on happiness by Michael Chan.<sup>23</sup> Like de Heer, Chan sees the danger of direct translations from Greek or Hebrew to English. To begin, there is the common problem with contemporary translations between language and culture, e.g. identifying an English word that captures the German notion of *schadenfreude*. On top of that is the two thousand years of semantic drift. Consider Jerome’s decision to translate *makarios* as *beati* in his *Vulgate* translation in 405 CE. Surely, there are different cultural connotations of *beati* among Jerome’s colleagues in Bethlehem than from Pope John XXIII in Rome in the 1960s. Does it matter that the *marcarisms* of the Sermon on the Mount are translated “blessed” in the King James Version (1611), “happy” in Young’s Literal Translation (1862), “blessed” in the Revised Standard Version (1952), and “happy” in Today’s English Version (1966)?<sup>24</sup> No, it does not. Given that cultural connotations of happiness will vary, it is incumbent on the church to be vigilant about what it means by “happy.” Unlike de Heer, Chan does assign English words to the various Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek terms based on

---

<sup>22</sup> Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, ed., *Essays on Aristotle’s Ethics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 24. Stanley Hauerwas and Charles Pinches employ this definition in *Christians Among the Virtues: Theological Conversations with Ancient and Modern Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1997), 8ff.

<sup>23</sup> Strawn, *Bible and Happiness*, 323-370.

<sup>24</sup> The NRSV translates the *marcarisms* found in Sirach 25:8-9 “happy” and the *marcarisms* in Matthew 5:3-11 “blessed.”

“plausible conceptual intersections.”<sup>25</sup> Chan determines the best translation for *makarios* is simply “happy.”<sup>26</sup>

Other translators reject the word “happy” because it has come to mean a transitory emotion. Charles Quarles deems the translation “happy” as misleading. He writes, “Jesus was not referring to an emotion or feeling that is based on present circumstances, nor was he assuring that life will not be plagued with difficulties.”<sup>27</sup> Hoping to flesh out “blessed,” Quarles cites Donald Hagner, “Rather than happiness in its mundane sense, it refers to the deep inner joy of those who have long awaited the salvation promised by God and who now begin to experience its fulfillment.”<sup>28</sup> Conversely, Albright and Mann recommend “fortunate” because *makarios* in Jesus’ time was not a theologically loaded term. The same could be said of “love;” except Paul theologizes *eros*, *philos*, and *agape*. Paul stakes a claim about what “love” means in its fullness; other understandings are mere semblances of love.<sup>29</sup> Rather than casting off happiness, Ellen Charry speaks of the need “to reclaim Christianity’s

---

<sup>25</sup> Strawn, *Bible and Happiness*, 325.

<sup>26</sup> Strawn, *Bible and Happiness*, 345-346. Ed. Michael Chan provides a complete listing of the instances of *makarios*, *makarismos*, and *makarizo* in the Appendix.

<sup>27</sup> Charles L. Quarles, *Sermon on the Mount: Restoring Christ’s Message to the Modern Church* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2011), 42. R.T. France expresses similar reservations about happy and sheepishly proposes instead fortunate, congratulations, and “white is their world.” Only at the conclusion of his section on *macarisms* does he approach the historical and robust meaning: “Beatitudes are the descriptions and commendations, of the good life.” *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2007), 160-161.

<sup>28</sup> Donald Hagner, *World Biblical Commentary, Vol. 33a, Matthew 1-13* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1993), 91, quoted in Quarles, *Sermon*, 42.

<sup>29</sup> The church is laden with freighted words that require narrative and worshipful enactment to understand. For example, Presbyterians use the term “confession” for affirmations of faith.

offering of happiness from secular captivity.”<sup>30</sup> It is the right and duty of Christians to give a competing account of happiness.

### **The Best Possible Life**

When someone asks you if you would like chocolate cake or a brownie, the correct answer is “yes.” And so, I will follow Aristotle and interchange “blessed” and “happiness” for *makarios*. If *makarios* is the best possible life, a life lived according to our God-given nature, then *makarios* must indicate the robust understandings of happiness and blessedness. Given both words suffer from word pollution; it would be a shame to cast one off for the sake of simplicity. By using both “blessed” and “happy,” the church appeals to the secular seeker of happiness and cleanses religious perversions of blessedness.

I propose that the unstated resistance to translate *makarios* “happy” goes beyond criticism of happiness as self-gratifying and fleeting. The truth is that in saying, “happy are those who mourn,” one creates cognitive dissonance. Mourning and persecution would seem to preclude our understanding of happiness. But the same would have been true for the crowd gathered around Jesus in Galilee. Jesus is not tweaking convention—he is flipping over the philosophical and religious tables, and offering a radically different account of happiness. So why not “happy” for *makarios*? After all, as Hauerwas and Pinches remind us “the gospel is meant to confront, if not destroy our presumptions about what will make us happy in this

---

<sup>30</sup> Ellen T. Charry, *God and the Art of Happiness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), xii.

life.”<sup>31</sup> Strictly using “blessed” for the Beatitudes softens Jesus’ sermon. “Blessed” implies a non-terrestrial experience, and the Beatitudes are dismissed from the present life.

Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* is a wonderful starting place to examine what the Bible means by *makarios*. I agree with Ackrill that happiness is the best possible life. Ellen Charry proposes a definition of happiness through the lens of soteriology and realizing eschatology. She writes:

Happiness...is the intensification of spiritual maturity in which happiness expands and depends as people become spiritually stronger and better able to contribute to their own and the world’s healing.<sup>32</sup>

I am hesitant to employ Charry and Steinhauser’s use of the word flourishing. If suffering and persecution lead to a heightened state of *makarios*, then flourishing creates cognitive dissonance. Yet, theoretically, if one is living into the fullness of their humanity, flourishing or thriving seems appropriate. A lifetime of vice that yields health, wealth and pleasure is not flourishing in the *imago dei* sense. A similar argument could be made to reclaim prosperous, thriving and fortunate. However, the shift simply requires an undue burden on the hearers. Christians are well aware that faithfulness comes with sacrifice, and so, identifying *makarios* as the “best possible life” will be palpable but challenging. A biblical account of happiness for us to follow will hardly resemble Joel Osteen’s *Your Best Life Now*, but I do commend him on the title. Osteen at least believes we can be happy *now* and do not have to wait to die; yet Osteen’s account is driven by personal gratification. Strawn criticizes

---

<sup>31</sup> Hauerwas and Pinches, *Christians among Virtues*, 14.

<sup>32</sup> Charry, *God and Art*, 254-255.

happiness factories like Osteen's Lakewood Church for being all about "success, glory, favor. All shine, no sweat. In more theological terms: it's a theology of glory with no theology of the cross. But without the sweat, without the cross, without the lament, the struggle... 'religious (pseudo)happiness' is at best just a pidgin, a very thin happiness indeed, a rich truth greatly reduced."<sup>33</sup> A robust account that acknowledges struggle and suffering is not only honest but also gauges the stability of happiness against external threats.

When Hauerwas and Pinches remind us that *suffering* is the hallmark of the faith, they challenge our "facile presumptions that God is primarily concerned with our happiness."<sup>34</sup> In the *Oxford Companion to Philosophy Dictionary*, Patricia Walsh offers a question to provide a robust understanding of "well-being" that I believe elucidates what Christians mean by happiness. She writes "any adequate conception of a good life...will be a highly complex account akin to the answer a parent might give when asked 'What sort of life do you wish for your children?'"<sup>35</sup> It would not then be a stretch to imagine this question posed to God. "What sort of life do you *will* for your children?" In response to my reframing Walsh's question from God's point of view, Paul Wadell contends that God indeed:

...desires what is best for us, and continually seeks to achieve it. God fashioned us from goodness and for goodness, wants our happiness, and works far better than we do to accomplish it because God is love and love

---

<sup>33</sup> Strawn, *Bible and Happiness*, 316-317.

<sup>34</sup> Hauerwas and Pinches, *Christians among Virtues*, 14. Nonetheless, they spend the next three chapters identifying the sort of happiness Christians are to pursue.

<sup>35</sup> Strawn, *Bible and Happiness*, 321. Patricia Walsh, s.v. "Well-being," in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed. Ted Honderich (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 955-56.

always seeks the good of the beloved. This is why happiness is not an impossible dream.<sup>36</sup>

Ultimately, a Christian account looks to God's intentions for humankind and deduces the human *telos*. The chief end will be a harmonious alignment with the God who creates, redeems and sustains.

---

<sup>36</sup> Paul J. Wadell, *Happiness and the Christian Moral Life: An Introduction to Christian Ethics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), 13.

## II.

### SAYS WHO?

Can one judge whether or not someone else is happy? Is happiness purely subjective? What could supply an objective ground for judging happiness? Richard Kraut distinguishes three views on determining who is happy: subjectivist, objectivist, and flexible or reformed objectivist. All approaches share two characteristics of happiness. The happy person must have “certain attitudes towards one’s life and measure up to certain standards.”<sup>1</sup> The three approaches differ in how those standards are determined.

For the subjectivist, which Kraut argues is the most popular understanding, individuals establish their own criteria for happiness. The goals you establish for yourself are the criteria for which you are evaluated; furthermore you do your own evaluation. The subjectivist approach is appropriate for determining satisfaction. I agree that self-evaluation is the popular understanding of how happiness is identified. A Pew Research poll in 2014 on “happiness” asks people in 43 countries about “satisfaction.”<sup>2</sup> Participants were asked to place themselves on the “ladder of life” using a scale of 1 to 10.

Here is a ladder representing the “ladder of life.” Let’s suppose the top of the ladder represents the best possible life *for you* and the bottom, the worst

---

<sup>1</sup> Richard Kraut, “Two Conceptions of Happiness,” *The Philosophical Review* 88, no. 2 (1979): 167.

<sup>2</sup> “People in Emerging Markets Catch Up to Advanced Economies in Life Satisfaction,” Pew Research Center, accessed February 26, 2016. <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/10/30/people-in-emerging-markets-catch-up-to-advanced-economies-in-life-satisfaction/>.

possible life *for you*. On which step of the ladder *do you feel* you personally stand at the present time?<sup>3</sup>

The poll's emphasis on personal feelings verses objective standards is a quintessential example of the subjectivist approach. It is quite telling that the pollsters' report replaced a robust understanding of happiness, "the best possible life," with the deferential and mild term: satisfaction. In fact, the report of the poll's findings completely discards "best possible life" and interchanges happiness and satisfaction as if they are synonyms. For example, the report concludes, "The analysis of who is happy – and who is not – reveals that people with higher incomes and more household goods are more satisfied with life in general."<sup>4</sup> The subjectivist approach is appropriate for determining personal satisfaction but not happiness.

The greatest weakness of subjectivism is it leaves too much room for error. If standards are personal and groundless, even whimsical, they are no longer standards in any objective sense of the word. A fool or sadist could rightfully diagnose himself as happy. His conclusion could not be challenged; in fact, with this method, he is accurate when he calls himself happy. In that case we are no longer dealing with *eudaimonia*, which is informed by reason and a sense of the primary function of human beings.

Kraut concedes that a weakness of subjectivism is the problem of delusion. A person could believe she has reached her desires, e.g. a perfect family, even though her husband is secretly cheating on her. An extreme subjectivist would still argue

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid (italics mine).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

the psychological state is reality. Her satisfaction is no different than if her husband was faithful. Kraut notes, “Just as unfounded fear is still fear, so unfounded happiness is still happiness.”<sup>5</sup> However such fear is deemed irrational; likewise, ostensible happiness is irrational and not true happiness.<sup>6</sup> Both Christians and psychological egoists would challenge the notion that any satisfied desire yields happiness.<sup>7</sup> Finally, subjective “happiness” is completely unrelated to potential or flourishing. Given that satisfaction, and presumably the tranquility associated with achieving one’s goals, is the primary indicator, the subjectivist approach resembles a shallow Epicureanism more than the robust *eudaimonia* as found in Platonism, Aristotelian, and Stoicism.

---

<sup>5</sup> Richard Kraut, “Two Conceptions,” 178.

<sup>6</sup> Consider Julia Annas’ argument about pleasure: “...true pleasure is not false or unreal pleasure but qualified pleasure. Again, he’s not making the palpably false claim that when the bad man honestly says that he is pleased we can tell him that he is not pleased; rather the claim is that what he is doing is not really pleasant, and this is a very different kind of claim. The bad man really is pleased; but his activities are only pleasant for him, not generally and without qualification. The sadist really does enjoy what he is doing; but what he is doing is not something that is pleasant, period.... Virtuous activities, by contrast, are according to Aristotle pleasant in an unqualified way.” Julia Annas in *Essays on Aristotle’s Ethics*, “Aristotle on Pleasure and Goodness,” ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 298.

<sup>7</sup> Consider the warfare resulting from competing desires in Hobbes’ *Leviathan*: “If any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies; and...[they] endeavor to destroy or subdue one another.” Thomas Hobbes in Hobbes, Thomas. *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury*, Vol. III, (Aalen: Scientia, 1962), 111. It would be a strange, and very un-Aristotelian, definition of happiness that does not build up the *polis* but leads to destruction of fellow human beings. From a Christian position, desires are an unreliable source for goodness. Just as Aristotle argues the irrational part of the soul must obey and be persuaded by reason, so too the Spirit reigns in desires contrary to the will of God. Consider Galatians 5:17: “For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want.”

On the contrary Aristotle, an objectivist, proposes an ideal or objective standard for judging happiness. Given reason is the singular, particular human function, the ideal must employ the right use of reason.<sup>8</sup> His standard for happiness, then, is the “activity of the soul in accord with reason.”<sup>9</sup> Like the subjectivist, complete satisfaction is required, however, the “desires must be directed at worthwhile goals.”<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, what qualifies as a worthwhile goal is not up to you to determine, rather, they are “fixed by your nature, and your job is to discover it.”<sup>11</sup> The magnanimous woman does take pleasure in the virtuous life; it is a fulfillment of proper desires. But the pleasure she enjoys is mere adornment. The *kind of life* she lives is more important than how she feels about her life.<sup>12</sup>

The most obvious weakness to Aristotle’s objective standard is the nebulous nature of the standard. G.E.M. Anscombe’s landmark article, “Modern Moral Philosophy,” deconstructs deontology and consequentialism. She argues the absence of an obliged actor (e.g. a deity) negates universal standards. Her critique can also be lodged against Aristotle’s magnanimous man. She asks of the consequentialist, “where does he get the standard from?” and answers, “from the standards current in his society or his circle. And this has in fact been the mark of all these philosophers

---

<sup>8</sup> Aristotle’s claim that reason is the particular attribute of human beings is debatable. Presumably his audience would agree with the claim for he spends little time exploring alternatives.

<sup>9</sup> EN I.7.14.

<sup>10</sup> Kraut, “Two Conceptions,” 176.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 181.

<sup>12</sup> EN II.3.

that they have been extremely conventional.”<sup>13</sup> Yet, Aristotle is well aware of the influence of others in shaping our virtues. His solution to avoid succumbing to societal norms is to embrace the influence of others by surrounding himself with friends who are “good and alike in virtue.”<sup>14</sup> This sort of friendship provides a clearer picture of ourselves for “we are able to observe our neighbors more than ourselves, and to observe their actions more than our own.”<sup>15</sup> He even makes the case that friends should live together so they can best influence one another.<sup>16</sup> Friends become “still better from their activities (together) and their mutual correction.”<sup>17</sup> Aristotle concedes, “someone may say that everyone aims at the apparent good, and does not control how it appears, but, on the contrary, his character controls how the end appears to him,” but replies, “if each person is in some way responsible for his own state, he is also himself in some way responsible for how [the end] appears.”<sup>18</sup> The alternative is for virtue and vice to be completely beyond anyone’s control. This option is disastrous in that humans are neither responsible for their actions nor empowered to contribute to the development of their character. Aristotle then concludes if humans are capable of developing virtues, in the process they shape the appearance of the end.

---

<sup>13</sup> G.E.M. Anscombe, “Modern Moral Philosophy,” *Philosophy*, 13.

<sup>14</sup> EN VIII.3.6.

<sup>15</sup> EN IX.9.5.

<sup>16</sup> EN IX.10.3-5, EN IX.12.1.

<sup>17</sup> EN IX.12.3 “...For each molds the other in what they approve of, so that ‘[you will learn] what is noble from noble people’.”

<sup>18</sup> EN III.5.17.

Aware of the temptations of pleasure, desire and societal norms, Aristotle attempts to provide objective standards for the magnanimous man. A courageous act done for the wrong reasons are not generous, but a mere semblance of generosity. Annas explains, it is not enough for a “person who does what she does because she has to do it, or does it because she just wants to do it, or finds it useful to do it.”<sup>19</sup> Aristotle’s conditions for truly virtuous acts are rigid. He states that only the one who “stands firm against the right things and fears the right things, for the right end, in the right way, at the right time, and is correspondingly confident, is the brave person.”<sup>20</sup> More broadly, Aristotle explains the virtuous person always aims at the *kalon* (fine).<sup>21</sup> “To the brave person bravery is a fine thing; and so similarly will be its aim...so it is for the sake of the fine that the brave person stands up to, and does, what bravery requires.”<sup>22</sup> Aristotle’s description of generosity neatly summarizes the standards he applies throughout *Nicomachean Ethics*. He writes:

Actions in accord with virtue are fine, and aim at the fine. Hence the generous person will also aim at the fine in his giving, and will give correctly; for he will give to the right people, the right amounts, at the right time, and all the other things that are implied by correct giving. Moreover, he will do this with pleasure, or at any rate without pain; for action in accord with virtue is pleasant or at any rate painless, and least of all is it painful.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 370.

<sup>20</sup> EN III.7.5.

<sup>21</sup> For an analysis of Aristotle’s use of *kalon* to gauge virtuous acts, see Annas, *Morality*, 369-372.

<sup>22</sup> EN III.7.6.

<sup>23</sup> EN IV.1.12-13.

A close reading reveals Aristotle went to great lengths to avoid being vague in his standards. Of course, his criteria still begs Anscombe's question, "where does he get the standard from?" meaning, who determines what is the "right amount?" Aristotle is satisfied to determine the golden mean in cooperation with people of similar virtue. Julia Annas gives more credence than Anscombe to Aristotle and the ancient philosophical schools' desire for objectivity. Annas proposes that ancient ethical theories had "no tendency towards moral conservatism. Rather, they express a tendency to question and to reflect on conventional morality. For a proper conception of morality will give due emphasis to its intellectual and reflective side."<sup>24</sup> Granted a communal standard is a slippery, and in the end a subjective standard, but it is honest and certainly preferable to solitary invention of ideals.<sup>25</sup>

Still, the ambiguity and acknowledged contextuality of Aristotle's standards impair a confident declaration of the universality of his account. Hauerwas and Pinches succinctly conclude Aristotle's account "begs for a narrative display."<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Annas, *Morality*, 451.

<sup>25</sup> For more on the mutual benefit of friendship in Aristotle see Annas, *Morality*, 249-252 and Hauerwas and Pinches, *Christians among Virtues*, 31-51, In the section on the flaws of Aristotle's argument, I will highlight the advantage gained by appealing to special revelation as one establishes the ideal.

<sup>26</sup> Hauerwas and Pinches, *Christians among Virtues*, 29. In *After Virtue*, Alasdair MacIntyre explicates the fundamental role of narrative in communal formation by exploring ancient epics and sagas. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 121-130. Narrative provides context and history, and therefore MacIntyre concludes that "any adequate account of the virtues in heroic society would be impossible which divorced them from their context in its social structure," 123. In *Putting on Virtue*, Jennifer Herdt explores the Jesuit traditions theatrical display to arouse in students the love of good and the love of God. Herdt, 128-170. In *Hauerwas Among the Virtues*, Herdt traces Hauerwas' ethical focus shift from personal to communal. "Action can only be rendered intelligible in a narrative

Aristotle does characterize the magnanimous man as one with “a slow gait, a deep voice, and calm speech,” but without a true narrative this invented man is too abstract to serve as the paradigm of *eudaimonia*.<sup>27</sup> Christians, of course, turn to Jesus for a narrative display of excellence. As historical and transhistorical, Jesus demonstrates finitely what is infinitely good. Paul Tillich explained, “If Jesus is called the Christ, he must represent everything particular and must be the point of identity between the absolute concrete and the absolute universal.”<sup>28</sup> However, if Jesus is the standard bearer, our hopes of happiness are slim. Jesus commands us to be perfect but perfection seems like an impossible ideal (Matt 5:48). Hence, Kraut charges the objectivist, Christian or not, to identify the necessary proximity to the ideal. The ambiguity of proximity is a problem because “unless we have some idea of what deviations from the ideal are compatible with happiness it would be pointless to try to judge whether anyone is living happily.”<sup>29</sup> Similarly, Aristotle’s presentation also requires near perfection. A magnanimous man embodies all the virtues, uses them at the right time and to the right extent and for the right people. Furthermore, true magnanimity takes pleasure in all the virtues.

---

context, and narratives are irreducibly particular. We understand ourselves not by retreating into private reflection, but by grasping our participation in the inherently social and historical practice of reason-giving.” ...Thus, the categories of character, agency, and intention recede, while those of community, narrative, and tradition come to the foreground.” Jennifer A. Herdt, “Hauerwas among the Virtues,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 40 (2012): 210.

<sup>27</sup> EN IV.3.34.

<sup>28</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology, vol. 1* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 17.

<sup>29</sup> Kraut, “Two Conceptions,” 190.

Flexible objectivism takes into consideration an individual's ability. Standards are no longer universal, rather, each person's happiness is evaluated based on her "capacities and circumstances."<sup>30</sup> Kraut will find many sympathizers with this caveat. Theologians such as Jean Vanier take exception to the exclusive nature of Aristotle's formula. Vanier who works with the severely handicapped is a "flexible objectivist." He laments and proposes, "Not everyone can be wise and magnanimous, but everyone can be aware that human nature is realized when we take the path towards the noblest virtues. Everyone in some way can share in these virtues."<sup>31</sup> Flexible objectivism also redresses Aristotle's exclusion of slaves, women and children from *eudaimonia*.<sup>32</sup>

Arguments for a flexible objectivism with a Christian emphasis enjoy privileges not afforded to a secularist philosopher. Whereas Aristotle is hard pressed to identify parameters for achieving happiness outside of those he is living with, Christians enjoy a standard-bearer for magnanimity, Jesus Christ. If the chief end is, as Aristotle believes, the fulfillment of the human function, then Jesus as truly human is the exemplar for *eudaimonia*. Likewise, he is the archetype for virtues. Christians, pursuing virtue and happiness, can move quickly beyond Aristotle's cloudy golden mean and to the teachings and doings of Jesus. When challenged by a subjectivist's (G.E.M. Anscombe) "says who?" the Christian response is trite but true: "says Jesus." The scriptures are the authoritative and sufficient revelation of the

---

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 194.

<sup>31</sup> Jean Vanier, *Made for Happiness: Discovering the Meaning of Life with Aristotle*, (Toronto: House of Anansi, 2001), 139.

<sup>32</sup> I will elaborate further on Aristotle's exclusions in Chapter Five.

nature of God and creation. They therefore provide flexible objective criteria for pursuing *makarios*. The scriptures do require interpretation with consideration of context and intertextuality. Additionally, the voice of the church in the form of creeds, confessions and theologians, provide standards.

Still, any account of a truly happy life based on objective standards requires the subjective consent to the standards. Hence, the following argument is an apology for particular standards in hopes of restoring the biblical paradigm of blessedness as revealed through the scriptures and in Jesus Christ. Finally, Christ invitation to an abundant life is made to all of humanity. Therefore, Christian objectivism is flexible and calls all to embody the universals within their capacity and circumstances.

### III.

#### MISCONCEPTIONS OF BLESSEDNESS

*Anaxagoras of Clazomenae was once asked who was the happiest person. 'Not anyone that you would think,' he replied, 'but someone who would seem very odd to you.'*<sup>1</sup>

Many contemporary Christian understandings of blessedness are inconsistent with the teachings of the New Testament. Blessedness (*makarios*) has undergone seismic semantic shifts over the last two millennium. In Jesus' life and teachings, the marks of blessedness (*makarios* or *barak*) are those who reject the veneration of external goods (in contrast to Deuteronomy 28-30) and those who exhibit the possession of internal goods. For this reason, the early Church writings about blessedness and happiness have more in common with Aristotle's *eudaimonia* than Jabez' prayer (1 Chr 4:10). Especially over the last century the church has relapsed and now primarily defines blessedness as the reception of external goods. This shift is most visible in Prosperity Gospel churches, but while often overlooked or buried, the materialistic drift pervades all traditions. Today, Christian discourse about blessing primarily focuses on external goods.

In this section I focus on what blessedness is not. First, I highlight Aristotle's negations of three lives of pseudo-blessedness. Then I present blessedness through the lens of the Torah with special attention to Deuteronomy 28-30. The Hebrew Bible is of course polyvalent on blessedness and wrestles quite openly with the Deuteronomic model in wisdom literature. However, the current Christian

---

<sup>1</sup> EE I.4.

framework for blessedness ignores this complexity.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, my criticism of the Deuteronomic paradigm aims primarily at Prosperity Gospel preachers, and not at all at Judaism. A close reading of 2 Kings 22-23 and an analysis of the theodic crisis born by the violent death of Josiah exposes the failure of a Deuteronomic path to happiness. Next, I look at the impact of the Prosperity Gospel and mainline liturgy to show how prevalent is the tendency to connect external goods with blessedness.

### **Aristotle Debunks the Three Lives**

In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle argues that *eudaimonia* is universally agreed to be the chief end.<sup>3</sup> However, the nature of *eudaimonia* is the dividing line for the various philosophical schools in ancient Greece. The focus on external goods by some Greek proponents leads Aristotle to debunk three understandings of the

---

<sup>2</sup> Lest I be accused of homogenizing the Hebrew Bible or supersessionism, I contend even in the Torah there is a complex understanding of blessedness. In Exodus, physical proximity is a demonstration of blessedness (promised land, ark, Mt. Sinai, temple). Relationship confirmed by proximity and steadfastness of God is the *telos* of Hebrew people. The naming of Ichabod (*glory departed*) captures both senses of blessedness, external and relational. “She named the child Ichabod, meaning, “The glory has departed from Israel,” because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband” (I Sam 4:12). Ellen T. Charry reconstructs the linkage between piety and pleasure in her book *God and the Art of Happiness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), xii. Charry gives special attention to the contributions of the Hebrew Bible in Chapters 9-11. In *The Bible and the Pursuit of Happiness*, edited by Brent A. Strawn, Terence Fretheim attends to the contribution of aetiology towards a wider understanding of happiness (Ch.1), Jacqueline Lapsley argues Isaiah’s vision of happiness is a blend of *hedonic* and *eudaimonic* perspectives (Ch.3), and Carol Newsome explores the competing and complimentary claims of Proverbs and Qoheleth (Ch.5). Consider also Ben Sirach which teaches blessedness as epistemic, proximity and relationship. “Put your neck under her yoke, and let your souls learn from me; it is to be found close by” (Sir 51:26).

<sup>3</sup> EN I.4.2.

source of happiness: pleasure, honor, and wealth, before giving his own account.<sup>4</sup> Their weaknesses foreshadow the characteristics of Aristotle's definition. Namely, *eudaimonia* must be rational, self-sufficient, and complete.<sup>5</sup> These pseudo-sources also are discounted because their attraction is based on deficiency. A soldier for constancy, Aristotle bemoans the fickle-minded man. Taking epicureans and sophists to task, he writes, "the same person often changes his mind; for when he has fallen ill, he thinks happiness is health, and when he has fallen into poverty, he thinks it is wealth. And when they are conscious of their own ignorance, they admire anyone who speaks of something grand and above their hands."<sup>6</sup> Aristotle prizes autonomy, and therefore, cannot support a view that is subject to the whims of the world.

The life of gratification, or pleasure, the most vulgar of all lives, is "completely slavish" and for "grazing animals."<sup>7</sup> In his argument for happiness as a life of "activity of the soul in accordance with virtue," he places a premium on reason. If, as we will explore further, reason is the distinct human function, *ergon*, a life apart from reason cannot be the chief end.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, habituation of virtues is the process of conditioning the non-rational part of the soul to obey and be persuaded by the rational part of the soul (reason).<sup>9</sup> This confirms an unconditioned

---

<sup>4</sup> EN I.5.

<sup>5</sup> These parameters will be addressed in detail in the subsequent chapter on the true nature of *makarios*.

<sup>6</sup> EN I.4.3.

<sup>7</sup> EN I.5.3.

<sup>8</sup> EN I.7.10-14.

<sup>9</sup> EN I.13.

soul, pursuing happiness through pleasure, is no different than a grazing animal. The appetite for pleasure can never be satiated. Psychologist Michael Eysenck likens the human endless desire for more to a “hedonic treadmill.”<sup>10</sup> The more one gains; the more one desires. Epicurus would counter that happiness through pleasure is stabilized when the whole life is considered. Intense moments of pleasure or pain do not make or unseat happiness; rather the inner attitude developed through a whole life allows one to withstand misfortune with memories of pleasure.<sup>11</sup> While a positive outlook has its merits, one could easily be delusional and consider their lot as pleasurable when in truth they are failing to flourish on all accounts.

Second, Aristotle rejects those who view honor as the source of happiness. For Aristotle, this position is primarily—even if, for us, ironically—associated with politicians. Aristotle is more sympathetic to the political life. Still, those who favor the life of political activity find happiness only when they are honored *by others*. Much like the problem of the fickle fool who changes his mind about the nature of happiness based on his circumstances, the political life is dependent on things outside of our control. Honor can too easily be taken away, but the “good is

---

<sup>10</sup> The hedonic treadmill (also known as hedonic adaptation) is powered by the “law of diminishing returns due to rising adaptations.” Michael W. Eysenck, *Happiness: Facts and Myths* (Hove, East Sussex, U.K.: L. Erlbaum, 1990), 83. Consider also the wisdom of Qoheleth: “Then I saw that all toil and all skill in work come from one person’s envy of another. This also is vanity and a chasing after wind. Fools fold their hands and consume their own flesh. Better is a handful with quiet than two handfuls with toil, and a chasing after wind” (Eccl 4:4-6).

<sup>11</sup> Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 349-50.

something of our own and hard to take from us.”<sup>12</sup> Aristotle acknowledges some enter politics in pursuit of virtue, but this too is not sufficient because it is not enough to simply know virtue, one must put the virtues into practice.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, the moneymaker’s life is dismissed as the means to happiness. Returning to the point of departure for happiness, the best good cannot be a subordinate end but is chosen for itself.<sup>14</sup> Wealth is instrumental and “merely useful” for achieving other ends.<sup>15</sup> The moneymaker’s life is in fact forced upon him, also showing a lack of autonomy, so that she can purchase pleasure, power, or maybe even friends. Wealth is a subordinate end and therefore not complete. Furthermore, like honor and health, wealth can easily be lost. Lodging happiness in something beyond your control produces anxiety and not tranquility.

### **Blessedness is not Elitist or Beyond Reach**

Aristotle’s account of the good is driven by his teleological worldview. As noted previously, human beings have a unique and specific function. The fulfillment of the function is a complete life and complete virtue. However, in addition to extreme misfortune, which according to Aristotle mars blessedness, Aristotle contends that one’s gender, autonomy and age dictate their potential to achieve *eudaimonia*. A monistic interpretation, taking Book X at face value, limits happiness

---

<sup>12</sup> EN I.5.4.

<sup>13</sup> EN I.5.4. In section 6, Aristotle will point out the insufficiency of the Socratic and Platonic possession of virtue. See EN I.6 and I.7.13-14.

<sup>14</sup> EN I.2.

<sup>15</sup> EN I.5.8.

to philosophers. Politicians experience happiness only in a secondary way.<sup>16</sup>

Aristotle's elitism compliments Plato's *Republic*.

Plato's producers are dominated by their appetites, the warriors yield to their spirits, and the rulers govern with their rational faculties. Only the rulers can discover the Idea of Good. Only a fraction of society is predisposed to see truth and beauty. Ostensibly Aristotle is more inclusive. He at least expresses a desire to give an account of the good that is useful to weavers and carpenters.<sup>17</sup> While the nature of *eudaimonia* has changed, in the end it is the "philosopher kings" at the pinnacle of society.

In truth, his account is for the privileged few with resources and health.<sup>18</sup> For Aristotle, women, slaves and children fall outside the realm of those who could live lives in accord with virtue.<sup>19</sup> Like Plato's producers, the bulk of humanity must simply respect their place in the natural order and leave the best life to the powerful men.

---

<sup>16</sup> Bush, S. S. "Divine and Human Happiness in Nicomachean Ethics." *Philosophical Review* 117.1 (2008), 54-56

<sup>17</sup> EN I.6.16.

<sup>18</sup> EN I.8.15.

<sup>19</sup> Women are inferior to men. EE VII.2. "As a child and a wild animal is to an adult human, so is a bad and foolish man to a good and wise one," EE VII.2. "Children and animals pursue pleasure," EE VI.2. Slave and children are not even considered individual beings, rather, a "chattel and a child... are, as it were, part of oneself" therefore no injustice can be done to them because no one can commit an injustice against oneself. EE IV.6 . While certainly this highlights Aristotle's prejudice, it is worth considering if his conclusion could also be empirically driven. Given women, children, and slaves (in varying degrees) are oppressed by wealthy patriarchs; a life of flourishing is not an option, or at the least, greatly hindered.

Some perspectives in the early Jesus movement directly attack and reject such boundaries.<sup>20</sup> From my perspective, a Christian understanding of blessedness knows no such bounds.<sup>21</sup> The driving forces behind a Christian teleology are egalitarian through regeneration in Christ. In the Old Testament, the image of God in the basic natural order of human being is held in common regardless of gender or freedom. In Christ, the divisions between male and female, slave and free are removed.<sup>22</sup> Jean Vanier, a particularly empathetic philosopher, explains:

Happiness then consists not of achieving the greatest possible autonomy, in which we appear strong and capable, but of a sharing of hearts and humility in relation to one another. Thus the child can humanize the man in the same way that a person who is weak and bereft can release goodness, tenderness and compassion in him, and thereby help him to discover a new inner unity and communion.<sup>23</sup>

In a broader sense, Aristotle's desire for autonomy clashes with the Christian virtues of humility and interdependence. Aristotle would have found Matthew's account of Jesus' celebration of children absurd: "Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."<sup>24</sup>

### **Blessed is not Blissful**

Aristotle's belief in a natural order of things leads him to begin his account on happiness with a search for the *telos* and *ergon ton anthropou*.<sup>25</sup> Summarizing his

---

<sup>20</sup> See the story of the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*.

<sup>21</sup> Aristotle's false hierarchy of people could also be refuted with a secular "known to us" argument.

<sup>22</sup> Galatians 3:28.

<sup>23</sup> Vanier, *Made for Happiness*, 185.

<sup>24</sup> Matthew 18:4.

<sup>25</sup> EN I.7.9 *ergon*—function, product, result, work (Irwin, 331); *telos*—end, goal, aim (Irwin, 325).

predecessors, Arius Didymus clarifies “that ‘living in accord with nature,’ ‘living the good life,’ ‘living well’ are equivalents, as are also ‘the fine and good’ and ‘virtue and what participates in virtue.’”<sup>26</sup> I also affirm a (super)natural order to creation, and I agree that alignment with this order is the path to happiness. As 5<sup>th</sup> century Greek philosopher Zeno of Elea writes “happiness is a smooth flow of life” (*eurhoia biou*).<sup>27</sup> A “smooth flow of life” does not mean a blissful existence or a life free from obstacles.<sup>28</sup> Neither Zeno nor the many and diverse ancient Greek schools of thought ever suggest that agreement with nature will shield one from conflict. Aristotle even notes his pursuit is for a noble and happy life, but “blissful life is perhaps presumptuous.”<sup>29</sup> Instead, they argue a life in accord with nature will provide resilience *in suffering*.<sup>30</sup>

Unlike contemporary Christian preachers and “positive thinking” teachers who promise immunity from hardship with the right frame of mind, the language of

---

<sup>26</sup> Arius Didymus, *Epitome of Stoic Ethics*, Ed. Arthur J. Pomeroy (Atlanta: Society for Biblical Literature, 1999), 41.

<sup>27</sup> Annas, *Morality*, 409.

<sup>28</sup> A Christian account of *makarios* refuses a superficial discipleship. Reintegrating blessed and happy is not an attempt to portray the Christian life as blissful or some form of “moralistic therapeutic deism” (Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 162-163. In fact, discipleship promises hardship, cross bearing. Stanley Hauerwas and Charles Pinches, *Christians among the Virtues* (Notre Dame, In: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 14. In *The Bible and the Pursuit of Happiness*, William Brown argues the Psalmists “chart a happy life through misery, not around it,” Strawn, ed., 24, 95-116. When in fact, a synthesis of the two makes for a more robust and demanding discipleship. The relationship between lack of external goods and happiness is detailed in Chapter 9.

<sup>29</sup> EE I.3.

<sup>30</sup> Reinforcing this point, consider for the Greeks, a formula for constancy as the most evasive parameter for happiness and what primarily differentiates the schools from one another.

harmony, tranquility and alignment with the divine will promises nothing about the quality of comforts in one's life. In fact, biblically we know that alignment with God's will leads to confrontation and even persecution. As the lives of so many Israelite prophets illustrate, so long as the world exists in a state that is unaligned with God's intentions for it, the life of obedience will be culturally disruptive.<sup>31</sup>

When I argue a life in accord with nature is the path to blessedness, I am referring to our true nature as revealed in the New Adam (Rom 5:12-18). Perhaps it would be more helpful to refer to a life in accord with the supernatural, but adding "super" weakens the assertion that our essential selves are the actual reality of life. Our true nature, though hidden by sin, is in fact revealed fully in Jesus Christ.<sup>32</sup>

Despite the advent of promises of an unencumbered life, the scriptures, the early church, and theologians through the centuries have not wavered on the hardships of the Christian life. Christians, after all, worship a crucified Christ. Paul, after all, is beaten, jailed, and shipwrecked. Persecution and being reviled are to be expected and marks of blessedness (Matt 5:12, John 15:18). Shockingly, the faithful are promised hardship for their obedience. Paul promises "all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tim 3:12). Not surprisingly then a driving premise of Augustine's *City of God* is the clash between the two cities.

Augustine assesses there are "two kinds of human society, which we may justly call two cities, according to the language of our Scriptures. The one consists of those

---

<sup>31</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, XIV.1, 441

<sup>32</sup> See Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 118-119. "New Being is essential being under the conditions of existence, conquering the gap between essence and existence."

who wish to live after the flesh, the other of those who wish to live after the spirit; and when they severally achieve what they wish, they live in peace, each after its kind.”

The sinful disorder of the world leads Paul to declare followers of Jesus citizens of heaven who must differentiate themselves from the ways of the flesh (Phil 3:20).<sup>33</sup> Dr. Martin Luther King eloquently captures the life of a disciple of Jesus in a sinful world. In a speech in 1963, King introduces the locution of *maladjustment* to the Christian faith:

...There are certain things in our nation and in the world which I am proud to be maladjusted and which I hope all men of good-will will be maladjusted until the good societies realize. I say very honestly that I never intend to become adjusted to segregation and discrimination. I never intend to become adjusted to religious bigotry. I never intend to adjust myself to economic conditions that will take necessities from the many to give luxuries to the few. I never intend to adjust myself to the madness of militarism, to self-defeating effects of physical violence...<sup>34</sup>

He is maladjusted to the world but aligned with God’s will. Obedience to God puts Dr. King at odds with racism, materialism, and militarism.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> In *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony*, William H. Willimon and Stanley Hauerwas welcome post-Christendom as an opportunity for Christians to live as resident aliens taking up Kingdom of Heaven norms and resisting the principalities and powers (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2014).

<sup>34</sup> Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “MLK at Western,” December 1963. <http://wmich.edu/sites/default/files/attachments/MLK.pdf>. Accessed February 26, 2016.

<sup>35</sup> Key to Karl Barth’s new orthodoxy was the already—not yetness of Kingdom of God. Jesus Christ has this goal (completing the inauguration of the Kingdom of God). “In this commencement, however, the goal is not yet reached except in Him. It is not yet reached in the situation of the world and man.” Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, ed. G.W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans. G.W. Bromiley. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958). Volume IV.3.1 of the *Church Dogmatics*, 327.

To be clear, the struggle is not simply between Christians and non-Christians. Aligning with God is a lifelong journey. With each day Christians strive towards holiness and resist the desires of the flesh. In Galatians, the apostle Paul identifies the internal tension of living before the final consummation of the Kingdom of God. He exhorts the people of Galatia to “Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want” (Gal 5:16, 17). The question remains: can we be called happy along the way?

### **Deuteronomic Blessedness**

The book of Deuteronomy provides a detailed covenant with promises of rewards for faithfulness to God and obedience to God’s commands and ordinances. *The mechanism is very simple: obedience yields blessings.* Likewise, Deuteronomy promises curses for those who do not obey the law.<sup>36</sup> The chapter begins with a stipulation and a promise: obey God’s commandments and “all these blessings shall come upon you” (28:2). The blessings include progeny, abundant harvests, defeat of enemies and being revered by other nations (28:3-14). Aristotle would classify these rewards as external goods. And as noted above, wealth is instrumental but not choice worthy for itself and honor is dependent on another’s opinion. Furthermore, these blessings can be taken away by God without warning, resulting in an unstable and unhappy welfare. Most importantly, even within the Hebrew bible this system is

---

<sup>36</sup> See especially Deuteronomy 27-30.

unstable and unreliable. For that reason, the following argument, despite its reliance on special revelation, is also arguing from things known, arguing from familiar towards principle.<sup>37</sup> As we shall see the appearance of the Josiah narrative will reveal a claim that will be familiar; meaning from experience we know bad things happen to good people.

Granted the motivation for the Torah is not individual welfare. Rather, the law is given to restore the created order and for Israel to be a light to the nations.<sup>38</sup> The law is also set forth as a reminder of the source of Israel's prosperity. Hence before the first saying of the Decalogue, Israel is reminded: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" (Deut 5:6).<sup>39</sup> At its heart, though, the Torah seeks alignment with YHWH. The Hebrew people are commanded to "Be Holy as the Lord your God is Holy" (Lev 11:45). Obedience is not about advantage, rather, it is about harmony with the divine will. Surely, then the subtext suggests internal goods are distributed as well.<sup>40</sup> Looking at the plain sense of the text, this system of blessedness is about external goods. When blessings and curses are viewed historically, the poor and the blind are judged as wicked and the rich and healthy as righteous. Certainly this was the disciples' understanding when they ask

---

<sup>37</sup> I.4.5.

<sup>38</sup> In the pursuit of a redeemed creation, the law organizes social, political, and economic life in a way that is just and most beneficial for the common good.

<sup>39</sup> See also Exodus 20:1.

<sup>40</sup> Wilson argues in *Between Text and Sermon* the presence of an internal reward for obedience. He writes, "For Josiah, the message arrives too late, but he reads it anyway because these words are the words of life even when obedience provides no insurance of diving blessing," 415.

Jesus about the sins of the blind man (John 9:2).<sup>41</sup> Similarly in Luke 13, “some present” infers the Galileans killed by Pilate must have failed to meet the “shalls” and “oughts” of God and were therefore punished by God.

At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He asked them, “Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did (Luke 13:1-5).

While Jesus does not say their deaths are not caused by God, Jesus does challenge the presumption of guilt of the unfortunate. This text could of course be used to support divine retribution. After all, Jesus ends by saying “unless you repent you will perish just as they did.” For the sake of this argument, these two examples clearly support the claim that a Deuteronomic understanding of blessings and curses is the conventional wisdom and is used to determine the righteous from the unrighteous in Jesus’ time.

The Hebrew Bible, and the New Testament for that matter, is polyvalent on the issue of blessedness and theodicy. The wisdom literature and the Psalms add nuance to the rigid system of retribution found in the Torah. The book of Job squarely addresses the problem of misfortune in the lives of the faithful. (My focus

---

<sup>41</sup> “His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” (John 9:2). Granted Jesus’ explanation does not paint a favorable picture of God. “Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him.” (9:3). See also Luke 13 where Jesus asks about the sins of the Galileans and the sins of eighteen who were killed when the Tower of Siloam fell. (While it does not say outright that their deaths were not supernatural acts, Jesus does challenge the presumption of guilt of the unfortunate.)

on the Deuteronomic rubric is driven by society's preoccupation and homogenization of both testaments to define blessedness as receipt of eternal rewards). Rivalled only by Job, the life and death of Josiah squarely address the theodicy crisis through the *lens of Deuteronomy* and therefore invite a nuanced understanding of blessedness in the Hebrew bible.

As will be demonstrated in Josiah's case, extreme faithfulness and even prophetic promises are no guarantee for a long and blissful life. The scriptures declare Josiah is a good king, rivalled in greatness only by his great grandfather Hezekiah and King David. Josiah's father, Ammon, and grandfather, Manasseh, on the other hand, are wicked kings. Manasseh does much evil in the sight of the Lord, commits abominations, rebuilds the high places for false worship that his father, Hezekiah, had destroyed, erects altars for Baal, makes sacred poles, deals with wizards, and has an image of Asherah carved and put in the temple (2 Kgs 21:1-9). Considering God's promised curse in Deuteronomy to deliver Israel into the hands of their enemies, it is no surprise when God declares, He will bring "upon Jerusalem and Judah such evil that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle...I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down. I will cast off the remnant of my heritage, and give them into the hand of their enemies; they shall become a prey and a spoil to all enemies; because they have done what is evil in my

sight” (2 Kgs 21:12b, 13b, 14-15a).<sup>42</sup> Divine retribution is reliable. Obedience yields blessings; disobedience yields curses.

Manasseh’s son, Ammon inherits the flaws of his father. He too does what is evil in the sight of the Lord. Ammon “served idols that his father served, and worshiped them; he abandoned the Lord, the God of his ancestors, and did not walk in the way of the Lord” (2 Kgs 21:21-22). Turning again to our Deuteronomic formula, it is no surprise when after just two years on the throne, Ammon is murdered in his house by his servants. Again, the demise of a wicked king is no surprise to the Deuteronomist.

But with Josiah this retributive justice goes awry. Josiah is a good king who dies a violent death. Josiah is introduced as one who “did what was right in the sight of the Lord...(and) did not turn aside to the right or to the left.” The latter phrase foreshadows the prominence of Deuteronomy in Josiah’s life (Deut 5:32).<sup>43</sup> Following payment of workers for temple repairs, Josiah’s secretary Shaphan returns with the “book of the law” that the high priest Hilkiah found. When Shaphan reads it to Josiah, Josiah tears his clothes and laments his ancestors’ failure to obey the words of the book. Members of his cabinet then consult with the prophetess Huldah. Consistent with the promised curse after the reign of Manasseh, Huldah

---

<sup>42</sup> “But if you will not obey the Lord your God by diligently observing all his commandments and decrees, which I am commanding you today, then all these curses shall come upon you.... The Lord will cause you to be defeated before your enemies.... You shall be an object of horror to all the kingdoms of the earth.... And just as the Lord took delight in making you prosperous and numerous, so the Lord will take delight in bringing you to ruin and destruction” (Deut 28:15, 25, 65).

announces the wrath of God and the impending disaster of Judah. However, Josiah's repentance does not go unnoticed by God. Huldah concludes her prophecy with hope.

But as to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the Lord, say to him, "Thus says the Lord...Because your heart was penitent, and you humbled yourself before the Lord, when you heard how I spoke against this place... and because you have torn your clothes and wept before me, I also have heard you...Therefore, I will gather you to your ancestors, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; your eyes shall not see the disaster that I will bring on this place" (2 Kgs 22:18-20).

It is too late for Judah, but the king will be spared the sight of destruction.

Undeterred by the looming prophecy Josiah has the book of the law read to the people and initiates sweeping reforms. He makes a covenant with the Lord: to keep the commandments, decrees, and statutes "with all his heart and all his soul" (2 Kgs 23:3).<sup>44</sup> He is joined by all the people in this covenant. The reforms are exhaustive and are informed by Deuteronomy.<sup>45</sup>

Josiah made a covenant between YHWH and Israel	2 Kings 23:2-4	Deuteronomy 5:3, 29:1,9
Josiah follows the laws of YHWH	2 Kings 23:3	Deuteronomy 6:1, 5
Elimination of idol worship	2 Kings 23:4-7	Deuteronomy 13
Astral cult destroyed	2 Kings 23:5, 11-12	Deuteronomy 17:3
Cultic prostitution eliminated	2 Kings 23:7	Deuteronomy 23:17-18
Sacrifice of children forbidden	2 Kings 23:10	Deuteronomy 18:10
Passover festival at Temple	2 Kings 23:21-23	Deuteronomy 16:1-8
Illegal divination eliminated	2 Kings 23:24	Deuteronomy 18:11-14
Centralization of the cult	2 Kings 23:8-9, 19	Deuteronomy 12

<sup>44</sup> Dominik Markl traces intertextual allusions of Deuteronomy and the Josiah chapters. Markl, Dominik. 2014. "No future without Moses: the disastrous end of 2 Kings 22-25 and the chance of the Moab covenant (Deut 29-30)." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 133, no. 4: 711-728.

<sup>45</sup> This chart is from Antti Laato and Johannes Cornelis de Moor, eds., *Theodicy in the World of the Bible*. (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2003), 218.

The purification includes tearing down shrines, cleansing the temple, removing idols, burning and grinding to dust the image of Asherah his grandfather had made, breaking down the houses of the male temple prostitutes and reinstating the observance of Passover. Considering Josiah's unprecedented efforts to purify the land and his reliance on Deuteronomy, we expect some blessings in the near future. However following the litany of reforms and another praise report of Josiah, the curse *still* stands. His good deeds are acknowledged but are not enough. We read Josiah is like no other king before or after him: "*Still* the Lord did not turn from the fierceness of his great wrath...because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked him" (2 Kgs 23:26). Judah must be punished.

Moreover, despite Huldah's prophecy of a peaceful death, Josiah's life ends in violence, not peace. When Josiah goes to Meggido to meet the Egyptians, he is killed by Pharaoh Neco. His death evokes the memory of the wicked King Ahaziah's death. Ahaziah, who was "doing evil in the sight of the Lord" and shot with an arrow, also died at Meggido (2 Kgs 8:27, 9:27).

Laato and Moor conclude, "This description of Josiah in the Deuteronomistic History should imply that he would have merited blessings from YHWH according to the prescriptions of Deuteronomy 28– 29. However, the final analysis of the reign of Josiah does not follow this Deuteronomic idea of retribution."<sup>46</sup> Of course it could be argued that it was too late for reform and the judgment (curse) has been announced

---

<sup>46</sup> Laato, *Theodicy*, 219.

two kings previous. The destruction could also be justified by the corporate and intergenerational nature of the covenant; all must pay for the disobedience of the previous generation. However there is no explanation for Josiah's violent death. Not only does his death smash the Deuteronomic code, it makes Huldah a liar and God unreliable.

The significance of Josiah's death on the Hebrew Bible cannot be overstated. The Torah, the prophets, and wisdom literature must all pass through Meggido on their way to interpreting the word. Likewise, today's Christian leadership must consider the polyvalence of the Hebrew Bible and the theodic crisis of Josiah when presenting an account of the blessed life.

### **Prosperity Gospel: Soft and Hard**

Tragically, the promises of fragments of Deuteronomy have been isolated and exploited by contemporary Christian leaders. The polyvalence of the Hebrew Bible, the life of Josiah, scriptures on hardship of the Christian life, the sufferings of Paul, and the persecution of the early church and through the ages have all been swept aside.

The rise of the Prosperity Gospel in the 1950s is the most unapologetic and overt distortion of blessedness. Preachers point to the power of prayer, faith and the tithe as a means to personal wealth and good health. Whereas in Deuteronomy the front end of the transaction is obedience to the law; in the Prosperity Gospel, faith in God's power is the lynchpin that opens the window to the riches of heaven. The premium on a financial divine reciprocity sidelined the Deuteronomic emphasis on

obedience. This shift is understandable; after all, members' obedience to the law will not buy the preacher a new Cadillac. The new premium on speaking prosperity into existence undermines the sovereignty of God. In his article on the use of Old Testament texts by Prosperity Gospel preachers, Walter Kaiser warns, "the effect of this (teaching) would be to make God our servant and to render prayer unnecessary."<sup>47</sup> And so preachers lean heavily on scriptures with "references to giving and getting (Luke 6:38), hundredfold return (Mark 10:29-31), tithing (Mal 3:10-11), and God's abundant provision (Phil 4:19)."<sup>48</sup> The promise of divine reciprocity often comes with a 90-day money back guarantee. Believers are encouraged to "sow a seed" and to expect an "abundant return." Evangelists tout "blessing covenants" and even call on the faithful to "prove God."<sup>49</sup>

More recently, blessings are promised through a therapeutic, positive thinking gospel. Joel Osteen encourages daily "positive confessions." Members of his Lakewood Church are taught daily to "say things such as, 'I am blessed. I am prosperous. I am healthy. I am talented. I am creative. I am wise.'"<sup>50</sup> In his sermon *It's Your Due Season*, Osteen presents his theology of the nature of blessedness (health, fertility, and wealth) as well as how blessedness is achieved.

---

<sup>47</sup> Walter Kaiser's critique could be more precise. The emphasis on speaking prosperity into existence does nullify the function of prayers of intercession. Nonetheless prayers of adoration, confession and thanksgiving still have their place in the Prosperity Gospel movement. Kaiser, Walter C Jr. 1988. "The Old Testament promise of material blessings and the contemporary believer." *Trinity Journal* 9, no. 2: 151-170.

<sup>48</sup> Kate Bowler, *Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 50.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, 64-65.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, 125-126.

Scripture talks about how God has blessings stored up for those that love the Lord. There are blessings that have your name on them right now stored up. There is promotion stored up. Healing stored up. That baby you've been dreaming about. It's stored up. God has already destined it to be yours, but if you never believe...God will never bless me I've made too many mistakes...try a different approach. Say God I believe you want to be good to me. I believe you have surprises in my future. I believe this is my due season year. When you live with this expectancy God can give you something to talk about.<sup>51</sup>

While Osteen borrows from the Deuteronomic script for the list of blessings, he spends little time on obedience as the mechanism for receiving blessings. Instead, Osteen leans more towards a New Age view of the law of attraction and positive thinking.<sup>52</sup> What is required is the right frame of mind: "keep believing, keep expecting, keep honoring God, abundance is heading your way."<sup>53</sup> Osteen replaces the law's stipulations for concrete material, legal, and economic acts on behalf of the neighbor and for the common good, with the psychologized emphases on belief, thoughts, and expectations. It is scandalous that the benefits of the Deuteronomic system are promised by the Prosperity Gospel churches, while leaving the hard work of obedience to God's commandments out of the equation. I propose just the opposite. The Lord requires obedience as the path to blessedness, and the blessed rewards of Christ are a far cry from Osteen or Deuteronomy.

Osteen is just one of thousands of mega church preachers who misconstrue the nature of blessings. Across the country, Christians attending Prosperity Gospel

---

<sup>51</sup> Joel Osteen, "It's Your Due Season," Sermon 641. Accessed on February 26, 2016. <https://www.joelosteen.com/Pages/WatchOnline.aspx>.

<sup>52</sup> In *Live Your Best Life Now*, Joel Osteen writes: "If you develop an image of victory, success, health, abundance, joy, peace, and happiness, nothing on earth will be able to hold those things from you." (Brentwood, TN: Hachette Publishers, 2014), 5.

<sup>53</sup> Joel Osteen "It's Your Due Season," Sermon 641.

churches are reminded they are “victors,” “winners,” “God-men,” and “little gods.”<sup>54</sup> Meekness and lowliness are discarded and replaced with a promise to create “People That Cannot Be Destroyed.”<sup>55</sup> While all the faithful are not reaching for the heavens and praying “money cometh to me now,” the notion of being blessed and highly favored by God is now as American as apple pie.<sup>56</sup>

The confusion about the nature of blessedness is not limited to Prosperity Gospel churches. When stewardship season rolls around, Presbyterians and Roman Catholics alike base their stewardship campaigns on gratitude for what we have (possess) and repeat the mantra “blessed to be a blessing.” Believers are called to “give from what you have *received*” and to be “good stewards of the gifts you have been *given*.” Compared to hard Prosperity Gospel, the subtlety feels more sophisticated but is equally, if not more so, deceptive and destructive.<sup>57</sup> Both styles teach wealth is a blessing from God. Catechisms and church resources are more careful about how blessed is used, but are no match for the weekly call for offering that presumes wealth comes from God. Consider this recommended Prayer of Dedication from the Presbyterian Church (USA) *Book of Common Worship*:

Blessed are you, God of all creation;  
Through your goodness we have these gifts to share.  
Accept and use our offerings for your glory  
And for the service of your kingdom.<sup>58</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup> Osteen, *Live Your Best*, 178-179.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, 179.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, 236.

<sup>57</sup> Bowler introduces the terms hard and soft prosperity gospel. I argue the effects are equally damaging and hinder a true understanding of blessedness.

<sup>58</sup> *Book of Common Worship* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 68.

Blessedness as external reward has been ingrained on the hearts and minds of the faithful for three generations. The social construct of blessing has solidified around external goods.

Broadly, the confusion regarding blessing is evident in statements about one's blessedness. Instead of identifying blessedness as relationship with God, most Christians will list material examples of divine favor. For example, "I am so blessed. I have four beautiful, healthy children." "We are so blessed to be able to vacation on the Gulf coast at our beach house." As explained above, this understanding of blessedness cannot be supported biblically or theologically. Nonetheless, Christians, in soft and hard Prosperity Gospel churches, are encouraged to "count your blessings." Stock answers include: a roof over my head, my health (at least less sick than the miserable person down the street), my finances (again at least better off than the next one down the line), family, church and friends. Ostensibly these statements are expressions of gratitude or at least meant to evoke gratitude. However, within the reciprocity paradigm, the implications of such statements are destructive and contrary to Jesus' teachings on the Kingdom of God.<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>59</sup> This argument creates a dilemma for the cultivation of the virtue of thankfulness. If the divine is not responsible, whom are we thanking for our friends, riches, and health? Fate? Luck? A primary argument in this thesis is a proper understanding of blessedness will yield a richer and transformative thankfulness for Christians.

#### IV.

### PLUNDERING ATHENS: ARISTOTLE'S ACCOUNT OF HAPPINESS

After establishing what happiness is not, Aristotle proposes criteria for the best good. The human good must be complete (chosen for its own sake), self-sufficient (lacking in nothing), and according to reason. Throughout *Nicomachean Ethics* a number of other secondary characteristics appear. These characteristics are not used to determine the highest good, but are nonetheless required. They include friendship, good upbringing, external goods, constancy, and pleasure. In this examination of Aristotle's account, I will consider the strengths, controversies, and implications for a Christian account of the good.

#### Complete

Aristotle's account of the good builds on the hierarchy of ends that he introduced in his opening argument. All actions and crafts have a good and an end (*telos*) they pursue.<sup>1</sup> For example, health is the end of medicine, but there are many subordinate ends between enrolling in medical school and practicing medicine. Going to medical school is a laudable end, but a physician does not study medicine in order to be well rounded. When she studies for her final exam on pharmacology her *telos* is to get a passing grade, but high marks are subordinate to earning a doctorate of medicine, and a doctorate is subordinate to practicing medicine, and practicing

---

<sup>1</sup> *Telos* could also be defined as 'final' or 'perfect' in "Every craft and every line of inquiry, and likewise every action and decision, seems to seek some good," EN I.I.1, and, "Since every sort of knowledge and decision pursues some good, what is the good that we say political science seeks?" EN I.4.1. See Terence Irwin's notes, 180.

medicine is for the sake of health. Even the practice of health is a subordinate end to longevity or avoidance of pain, and therefore, even health is an incomplete end. It can be concluded that even the practice of health is incomplete; it is done for the sake of something else—longevity or avoidance of pain. The best good must not be a subordinate end, or in other words, the best good must be chosen for its own sake. A favorite pretender for the best good is wealth. Even if people actually accumulated wealth in order to swim in it, wealth would be subordinate to the pleasure of swimming. Wealth is pursued for the sake of other things: pleasure, power, reputation, friends etc. While desirable, wealth is incomplete because it is pursued for the sake of something else. Happiness, *eudaimonia*, on the other hand is,

complete without qualification. For we always choose it because of itself, never because of something else. Honor, pleasure, understanding, and every virtue we certainly choose because of themselves, since we would choose each of them even if it had no further result; but we also choose them each for the sake of happiness, supposing that through them we shall be happy.<sup>2</sup>

At this point Aristotle does not resolve whether the best end is singular or a composite. He concludes, “the best good is apparently something complete. And so, if only one end is complete, the good we are looking for will be this end; if more ends than one are complete, it will be the most complete end of these.”<sup>3</sup> The condition of completeness is the least contested of all Aristotle’s arguments and will be fully employed for an account of *makarios*.

### **Self-sufficient**

---

<sup>2</sup> EN I.7.5.

<sup>3</sup> EN I.7.3.

Considering the best good is not in service to any other end but is in fact complete (perfect), Aristotle quickly concludes the best good is self-sufficient.<sup>4</sup> The best good is self-sufficient “when all by itself it makes a life choice worthy and lacking nothing.”<sup>5</sup> He quickly clarifies he is not proposing a solitary life is best, given humans are “naturally political.”<sup>6</sup> The best good must also suffice for immediate family and friends.<sup>7</sup> Still a premium on self-sufficiency, desiring nothing, results in isolationist behavior. The magnanimous man has trouble receiving goods because it demonstrates inferiority.<sup>8</sup> In other words, receiving goods is a concession to both an unfulfilled desire and that something is lacking. More alarming is his glorification of the wise person who is “able, and more able the wiser he is, to study even by himself...he is more self-sufficient than any other [virtuous person].”<sup>9</sup> Prioritizing solitude contradicts Aristotle’s celebration of the polis, as well as, the method he proposes for habituation of virtues. Political science is superior to ethics, and “the good of the city is apparently a greater and more complete good to acquire and preserve. For while it is satisfactory to acquire and preserve the good even for an individual, it is finer and more divine to acquire and preserve it for a people and for

---

<sup>4</sup> See Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 41ff. Subsequent philosophers drop self-sufficiency.

<sup>5</sup> EN I.7.7.

<sup>6</sup> EN I.7.6.

<sup>7</sup> “Here, however, we must impose some limit; for if we extend the good to parents’ parents and children’s children and to friends of friends, we shall go on without limit,” EN I.7.7.

<sup>8</sup> EN IV.3.24-25.

<sup>9</sup> See Jennifer Herdt, *Putting On Virtue: The Legacy of the Splendid Vices* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), footnote 34, 361.

cities.”<sup>10</sup> Sequestering oneself and limiting how goods are exchanged in order to preserve superiority and self-sufficiency hardly seems to serve the good of the polis. Further, a virtuous woman who withdraws neglects her responsibility to teach and be an exemplar. If early training of children “makes a very great difference, or rather all the difference,” aspiring for seclusion is shirking one’s duties. Jennifer Herdt summarizes the disastrous consequences of venerating self-sufficiency:

It now seems, in contrast, that magnanimity, in failing to recognize the way in which the virtuous person is indebted to those responsible for her good upbringing, actually threatens to undermine communal understanding of the ways in which virtuous character is passed on. If ordinary people accept the magnanimous person’s claim to self-sufficiency, they will themselves be even less capable of forming virtuous character in their own children, students, and fellow citizens, since they will fail to grasp that virtue emerges through relationships of dependency and interdependency.<sup>11</sup>

On the other hand, Amélie O. Rorty argues self-sufficiency “has of course nothing to do with isolation or even with self-development. A self-sufficient life is one whose activities are intrinsically worthy, have their ends in themselves, are worth choosing regardless of what may come of them.”<sup>12</sup> In her defense of self-sufficiency, Rorty merges “complete” with “self-sufficient.” Herdt’s critique and the problem of the ivory tower make the merits of self-sufficiency suspect. Terrence Irwin does offer a redeeming footnote. He interprets the social animal aspect to include others in the “weak sense that (i) it requires some contribution by other people, but also in the

---

<sup>10</sup> EN I.2.8.

<sup>11</sup> Herdt, *Putting on Virtue*, 43.

<sup>12</sup> Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, ed. *Essays on Aristotle’s Ethics* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 389.

strong sense that (ii) it includes the happiness of these other people.”<sup>13</sup> A final critique is offered by Richard Lear who challenges the desirability of desiring nothing at all:

The claim that happiness is that which makes life desirable and lacking in nothing is a tautology shaped by our deepest fantasies. It is a fantasy, moreover, that turns out to be deadly, for a life that lacks nothing is a life beyond desire, that is, a life that is equivalent to a living death.<sup>14</sup>

However, Aristotle’s account of the good is not void of desire. Rather, he argues the rational part of the soul must condition appetites and desires. It is a good thing to have an appetite “for health and learning.”<sup>15</sup> Clearly a tension exists in his account between sufficiency and an appetite that desires more.

A strict interpretation of self-sufficiency is the least constructive parameter for an account of *makarios*. Clearly dependence on others and on God are fixed parameters for Christian *makarios*. The critiques of self-sufficiency most often highlight the importance Aristotle’s work places on friendship. His nod to interdependence will support my account of *makarios*. The need for community in cultivation of virtues and the priority of the polis are arguments Christians can get behind.

---

<sup>13</sup> Irwin endnotes, 182.

<sup>14</sup> Jonathan Lear, *Happiness, Death, and the Remainder of Life: The Tanner Lectures on Human Values* (Cambridge, MA: President and Fellows of Harvard College, 2000), 27 quoted in Stanley Hauerwas, *Approaching the End: Eschatological Reflections on Church, Politics, and Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2007), 207.

<sup>15</sup> EN I.13.9-19, EN III.1.24.

## Active and Rational

In order to narrow the field further, Aristotle proposes a thing's function (*ergon*) determines its good.<sup>16</sup> He notes various trades have functions; even body parts have a function. The function of an eye is seeing. Seeing distinguishes the eye from the ear. Seeing is essential to the eye, and therefore, to the good of the eye. Human beings are more complex. Our work is a composite of functions. Aristotle must then identify a function that is distinct and essential. He eliminates functions humans share with plants and animals and then, rather quickly, concludes, the human function is a "life of action of [the part of the soul] that has reason."<sup>17</sup> In this definition he is making two new claims. The human function is active and reasoned. Of course there are other characteristics that are distinct to humans such as written communication based on symbols, clothing, emotional blushing, cosmetics, weapons of mass destruction. However, reason coordinates the various functions humans do, and unlike clothing or blushing, reason makes us what we are. Hauerwas and Pinches explain that Aristotle is not dismissing other distinguishing characteristics of human beings. Instead, Aristotle is proposing rationality coordinates the many "capacities and skills" humans possess and that reason "pervades all we do."<sup>18</sup> The

---

<sup>16</sup> *Ergon* can also be translated as work, deed or action. William F. Arndt et al., *A . A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature: A Translation and Adaptation of the Fourth Revised and Augmented Edition of Walter Bauer's Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der übrigen urchristlichen Literatur* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979), 307-308.

<sup>17</sup> EN I.7.13, "[E]rgon anthropou psuxis energeia kata lovon."

<sup>18</sup> Stanley Hauerwas and Charles Pinches, *Christians among the Virtues: Theological Conversations with Ancient and Modern Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 10.

coordination is between the two parts of the soul. The lesser part “obeying reason” must be persuaded by the part of the soul that has “reason and thinking.”<sup>19</sup> The two parts working together move the human being from capacity (*dunamis*) to activity (*energeian*). An active life lived in accord with (obeying) reason wins the prize. In defense of reason, Thomas Nagel notes “the supreme good for man must be measured in terms of that around which all other human functions are organized.”<sup>20</sup> To identify with a single distinction or disparate distinctions of human beings would not help us understand the human good. Nagel explains “we must identify with the highest part of ourselves rather than with the whole...this is because men are not simply the most complex species of animals but possess as their essential nature a capacity to transcend themselves and become like gods.”<sup>21</sup>

The novelty of Aristotle’s proposal is not the identification of reason as the human function; rather, it is his requirement of activity. In Book II of *Eudemian Ethics* Aristotle foregoes reason in his definition of the human function and proposes “the work of the soul is to be alive.”<sup>22</sup> This is not surprising given his goal in both works is to find the origins of happiness in order to pursue happiness. The end of political science, the best science, is action not knowledge.<sup>23</sup> He questions the helpfulness of Plato’s idea of the good. Showing preference to truth over friendship, Aristotle states, “it is a puzzle to know what the weaver or carpenter will gain for his

---

<sup>19</sup> EN I.7.13.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas Nagel, “Aristotle on *Eudaimonia*” in *Essays on Aristotle’s Ethics*, Rorty, ed., 11.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>22</sup> EE II.1.

<sup>23</sup> EN I.3.6.

own craft from knowing this Good Itself, or how anyone will be better at medicine or generalship from having gazed on the Idea Itself.”<sup>24</sup> He is critical of Socrates who claims knowing virtue will make one virtuous. Likewise, in *Eudemian Ethics* Aristotle critiques Socrates’ system as being appropriate for theoretical sciences (e.g. geometry) but not for productive sciences. The following argument is convincing and fundamental; and therefore, deserves to be cited at length:

The elder Socrates believed that the goal of life was to know virtue, and he used to ask what justice is, what courage is, and so with every part of virtue. This was an intelligible way to proceed, since he thought that the virtues themselves were pieces of knowledge, so that once you know what justice is, you are a just person...(appropriate for theoretical sciences)...In the case of productive sciences, however, the aim of the science is different from the science itself and not a mere matter of knowledge: health is different from medicine...in the case of virtue the most valuable thing is to know whence it arises rather than to know its nature. For what we want is not simply to know what courage is, but actually to be courageous; and we do not want simply to know what justice is, but rather to be just ourselves. It is parallel to the way in which we want to be healthy rather than simply to know what health is.<sup>25</sup>

Similarly, when he debunks the “Three Lives,” he discounts the virtue of political life as a candidate for happiness, because it is possible to “possess virtue but be asleep or inactive throughout his life.”<sup>26</sup> Martha Nussbaum summarizes, “Aristotle rejects virtue as a candidate (for the highest good), but accepts as his own candidate a lifetime’s virtuous activity.”<sup>27</sup> To illustrate the sterility of merely possessing virtue Aristotle uses the example of competition. It is “just as Olympic prizes are not for the

---

<sup>24</sup> EN I.6.16.

<sup>25</sup> EE I.5 (1216b3-24).

<sup>26</sup> EN I.5.6.

<sup>27</sup> Martha Craven Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 367.

finest and strongest, but for the contestants—since it is only those who act correctly win the prize.”<sup>28</sup> Clearly, the best good is achieved through employment of reason in a life of action and not simply the capacity or state of goodness.

The criteria of activity, employment of capacity and state, will be key to understanding a Christian account of *makarios*. After all, the analogue of the movement from capacity to activity is passivity to agency. Activity, more specifically human participation in divine energies, is the difference between a future eschatology and a realizing eschatology.

Before completing his account of the good, Aristotle tweaks the human function from “activity of the soul in accord *with reason*” to “activity of the soul in accord *with virtue*.”<sup>29</sup> With this move, Aristotle does not dismiss reason, rather, he distinguishes the mere use of reason from employing reason well and finely. His argument is “the function of the harpist is to play the harp, but the function of a good harpist is to play it well.” Therefore, the work of an excellent man is to live life well. His suggestion that there is a different function for a harpist and a good harpist is far-fetched and unnecessary. Surely, all harpists’ *work* is to play the harp well, otherwise they are not harpists; but clowns playing strings is an entirely different function. In his introduction to virtues in *Eudemian Ethics* Aristotle notes “because a cloak has a use and has work (*ergon*) to do, there is such a thing as the goodness or virtue of a cloak, that is to say, the best state for a cloak to be in.” Clearly, the

---

<sup>28</sup> EN I.8.9.

<sup>29</sup> EN I.7.15.

function of a thing is its best state. Therefore, I argue all human beings' function is excellent activity of the soul in accord with reason (the best state).

Creating different functions within a single species is the equivalent to claiming the function of some knives is to cut a steak well and finely, while the function of other knives is to separate a bite-sized portion of a steak, regardless of how long it takes. If this is the case, a spoon can be a knife, for what distinguishes a knife from a spoon is not simply its ability to separate one object from another, but to do it well and finely. So why does Aristotle introduce tiers of human functions? It is likely because he does not believe everyone is predisposed to pursue excellence. The magnanimous group is narrow and elitist. The activity of the soul in accord with virtue is far beyond the pedestrian class of women, slaves and children. Aristotle then must identify similar but distinct functions of human beings: one of mere employment of reason; the second of excellent employment of reason. For my account of *makarios*, I will make no distinction in functions between different groups.

### **Complete Life and Complete Virtue**

Aristotle is concerned with the stability of happiness. In order for something to be the best good, it must have some staying power or else the anxiety of losing *eudaimonia* will preclude flourishing. Like his emphasis on activity, constancy will be a condition considered throughout his argument. At the conclusion of his sketch of the good, he says the human function requires the best and complete virtue and a

complete life.<sup>30</sup> Considering the self-sufficiency requirement [lacking or desiring nothing], it is no surprise that virtue must be best and complete. His argument for a complete life certainly rules out popular understandings of happiness as a feeling or pleasure. A person cannot be happy on Tuesday and unhappy on Wednesday, “For one swallow does not make a spring, nor does one day; nor, similarly, does one day or a short time make us blessed and happy.”<sup>31</sup>

Complete virtue makes theoretical sense, but in practice is impossible. Logically, this criterion leads to the conclusion that no one is happy. For Christians, complete virtue presents two problems. First, as philosophers would agree, perfection is impossible, and second, the belief in an afterlife with God subordinates the completeness of this life. The tendency among Western theologians has been to embrace the necessity of complete virtue, and therefore, to reserve happiness for the life hereafter. Interestingly, in the original version of *The Happy Life*, Augustine describes his friend Manlius Theodorus as happy. However, later in consideration of the Apostle Paul’s teaching on perfect knowledge, Augustine revises his assessment of Manlius and deems his happiness incomplete.<sup>32</sup> Incomplete virtue or knowledge suggests one is lacking and therefore desiring and therefore not happy in the fullest

---

<sup>30</sup> EN I.7.15-16.

<sup>31</sup> EN I.7.16.

<sup>32</sup> Augustine. *Trilogy on Faith and Happiness*. Edited by Boniface Ramsey, (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 2010), 21. Reference I Corinthians 13:12.

sense. Similarly Aquinas, wanting to identify an achievable goal, proposes the notion of “imperfect happiness.”<sup>33</sup>

Perhaps anticipating detractors, Aristotle is clear he is not providing a recipe with precise measurements of ingredients. His account of the good is not meant to have the same degree of precision as required in carpentry or geometry. Rather, he seeks the “degree that accords with a given subject matter and is proper to a given line of inquiry.”<sup>34</sup> The standards he places on his arguments are quite liberal. Based on the nature of the subject he claims, “we shall be satisfied to indicate the truth roughly and in outline; since our subject and our premises are things that hold good usually [but not universally]...For the educated person seeks exactness in each area to the extent that the nature of the subject allows.”<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, the alternative to a standard of best or complete would be absurd. Is above average virtue the best life? No, a step above mediocrity is not excellence, and therefore, not the highest good.

More than an idealistic and perfect life, Aristotle is seeking permanence. He is chasing the best possible and resilient life, not a perfect life.<sup>36</sup> If sudden misfortune hinders one’s ability to be completely generous, said person is not immediately reclassified as unhappy. Externals are necessary, as I will discuss later, but they do

---

<sup>33</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas, vol. 2*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican, (Province, New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1947).

<sup>34</sup> EN I.7.18-19.

<sup>35</sup> EN I.3.4.

<sup>36</sup> Hauerwas and Pinches, *Christians among Virtues*, 17. “The twin errors of associating happiness either with a transitory emotional state that is the reverse of sadness, or with a terminus reached by a human life that has been both virtuous and fortunate.”

not control happiness. Aristotle will not leave happiness to chance or luck. Instead, Aristotle claims,

...Happiness is enduring and definitely not prone to fluctuate, *but* the same person's fortune often turn to and fro. For clearly, if we take our cue from his fortunes, we shall often call him happy and then miserable again, thereby representing the happy person as a kind of chameleon, insecurely based...(instead) a happy person has the [stability] we are looking for and keeps the character he has throughout his life. For always, or more than anything else, he will do and study the actions in accord with virtue, and will bear fortunes most finely, in every way and in all conditions appropriately, since his truly 'good, foursquare and blameless.'<sup>37</sup>

To be clear, Aristotle is not a Stoic or Epicurean. He unequivocally rejects their claims of *eudaimonic* constancy in the midst of tragedy. He contends those who "assert that a man is happy even on the rack...are talking nonsense."<sup>38</sup> In part the person on the rack cannot be happy because happiness requires activity.

Destitution, illness, torture or imprisonment would prevent the happy man from being able to practice virtues. He also rejects Epicurus' proposal that tranquility rooted in inner disposition and memory is the key to happiness.<sup>39</sup>

But again, happiness cannot be easily shaken. The happy person will be able to overcome small impediments. He will make the best of his resources (good or bad) just as a "good shoemaker will make the finest shoe from the hides given to

---

<sup>37</sup> EN I.10.6, 11.

<sup>38</sup> EN VIII.13.3.

<sup>39</sup> On Epicureanism, see Annas, *Morality*, 334-350. On the rejection of Epicureanism by Stoics and Aristotle see Annas, *Morality*, 409-410. In *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle illustrates the need for happiness for a lifetime by reflecting on the life of Priam, I.10.14. In his old age, Priam is killed after watching his family killed. Horrible, yes, but at the same time Priam could very well have lived a long and active life in accord with virtue. He could have lived the best life possible. Based on Aristotle's account of the good, it is not clear how a tragic death can undo a lifetime of *eudaimonia*.

him.”<sup>40</sup> Terence Irwin summarizes “happiness is not completely stable, but it is stable *enough* to justify us calling people happy in their lifetime.”<sup>41</sup>

The emphasis on durability is the best lens for understanding complete life and complete virtue. Note Aristotle is not an absolutist, for in the above indented quotation he follows “always” with “more than anything else.” Hauerwas and Pinches propose that happiness is not “some ideal state, realizable only in the distant future. For happiness is not so much the end, but the way.”<sup>42</sup> Recall that complete (*telos*) is the end we are aiming for, just as an archer takes aim at her target.<sup>43</sup> After considering the problem of misfortune, Aristotle revises his definition to say, “The happy person is the one whose activities accord with complete virtue, with an adequate supply of external goods, not for just any time but for a complete life?”<sup>44</sup>

Like the criteria of activity, the stability of happiness [its ability to withstand misfortune] is fundamental to a Christian account of *makarios*. While ironic, Aristotle’s reasoning on endurance will greatly inform how Christians can endure suffering and still be called *makarios*.

### **Further Requirements**

Departing from the Stoics, Aristotle claims a certain amount of external goods is required for someone to be called happy. It is clearly a concession for him:

---

<sup>40</sup> I.10.13.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, Irwin, 188 (endnotes). Italics mine.

<sup>42</sup> Hauerwas, *Christians among Virtues*, 13.

<sup>43</sup> EN I.2.2.

<sup>44</sup> EN I.10.15.

Nonetheless, happiness also needs external goods to be added...we cannot easily do fine actions without resources. In many actions we use friends, wealth, and political power just as we use instruments...deprivation of certain externals—for instance, good birth, good children, beauty—mars our blessedness. For we do not altogether have the character of happiness if we look utterly repulsive,<sup>45</sup> or are ill-born, solitary, or childless...and so...happiness would seem to need this sort of prosperity added also. That is why some people identify happiness with good fortune, and others identify it with virtue.<sup>46</sup>

As noted above, external goods enable someone to perform virtuous actions. A woman cannot be generous if she has nothing to share. I will address the problem that the addition of externals creates for Aristotle's argument in the following chapter.

While at times it sounds as if Aristotle is describing an autonomous hero, the active life in accord with virtue is not a solitary endeavor. In addition to external goods, *eudaimonia* requires friends. In fact, friendship is "not only necessary but fine."<sup>47</sup> Friendship is a virtue and cultivates virtue.<sup>48</sup> Aristotle is not content to have just any friends. Friends of utility and pleasure, the most common kinds of friendships, are not loved for who they are but for what is useful or pleasant.<sup>49</sup> Given that what someone needs or enjoys changes with time, these friendships will

---

<sup>45</sup> This statement is odd given his critique of honor's dependence on other's opinion (political life).

<sup>46</sup> EN I.8.15-16. On Aristotle's "unstable view" see Annas, *Morality of Happiness*, 382-384. Aristotle is torn between observation/intuition (appearances) and the theoretical pull of virtues.

<sup>47</sup> EN VIII.1.5.

<sup>48</sup> EN VIII 1.1.

<sup>49</sup> EN VIII.3.2.

come and go. A complete or perfect friendship, however, does not seek advantage in the other. Terence Irwin outlines the three conditions of complete friendship:<sup>50</sup>

(1) A loves B for B's own sake.

(2) A loves B for what B really is.

(3) A loves B because B has a virtuous character.

Interestingly, while the aim is not advantage, it is advantageous to be in a mutual friendship. It is in fact how virtue is best developed. Starting from a point where both parties are virtuous, Aristotle concludes 'we are better able to observe our neighbors than ourselves, and their actions better than our own...the blessed person, therefore, will need virtuous friends, given that he decides to observe virtuous actions of a virtuous friend are of this sort.'<sup>51</sup> Virtue is learned in community:

For they (base people) are unstable, and share base pursuits; and by becoming similar to each other, they grow vicious. But the friendship of decent people is decent, and increases the more often they meet. And they seem to become still better from their activities and their mutual correction. For each molds the other in what they approve of, so that '[you will learn] what is noble from noble people'.<sup>52</sup>

The weakness of communal cultivation is that we do not know for certain whether we are reinforcing one another's virtues or vices. While discussing responsibility, Aristotle notes some "may say that all men aim at the apparent good, but have no

---

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, Irwin, endnotes, 276.

<sup>51</sup> EN IX.9.5.

<sup>52</sup> EN IX.12.3.

control over the appearance, but the end appears to each man in a form answering to his character.”<sup>53</sup> Here the advantage of a universal, objective exemplar is evident.

Similar to the requirement of needing external resources to perform virtuous actions, friendships also provide opportunity for virtue. In prosperity we need friends to share our wealth for “the best works done and those which deserve the highest praise are those that are done to one’s friends.”<sup>54</sup> It appears complete friendships are more pleasurable and useful, than the inferior forms of friendship by the same name.

Finally, Aristotle uses friendship in a very broad sense. He is not speaking strictly of peers or fraternal relations. He includes “natural friendships” such as the relationship between a parent and child. In the church, friendship is extended to the entire ecclesial family. The connection between friendship and the cultivation of virtue will be instrumental to pursuing *makarios*.

### **Conditions: Pleasure and Precision**

While not requirements, pleasure and precision are characteristics of *eudaimonia*. The truly good person will find pleasure in virtuous acts. Each person takes pleasure in whatever she loves. A lover of food finds a fine meal pleasing. A lover of drink finds Tennessee Whisky pleasing. So too, a lover of virtue finds all things virtuous to be pleasing. Aristotle explains, “someone who does not enjoy fine actions is not good; for no one would call a person just, for instance, if he did not

---

<sup>53</sup> EN III.5.17. Aristotle does not argue the point but counters, “We reply that if each person is in some way responsible for his own state, he is also himself in some way responsible for how [the end] appears.”

<sup>54</sup> EN VIII.1.1., trans., Martin Otswald (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1962).

enjoy doing just actions, or generous if he did not enjoy generous actions.”<sup>55</sup> The pleasure Aristotle commends is not the end for which an action is performed. That would be hedonism. Rather, pleasure is an adornment and a teacher. Amélia Rorty explains: “Learning to be virtuous involves learning to take pleasure in virtuous activities; the latter is not something added on to the former but is part of it and bound up with it.”<sup>56</sup> Over time the feeling of pleasure or repulsion will steer the virtuous man in the right direction, for he will find pleasure in good things.

---

<sup>55</sup> EN I.8.12. Aristotle revisits pleasure as a litmus test in II.3.1: “But we must take someone’s pleasure or pain following on his actions to be a sign of his state. For if someone who abstains from bodily pleasures enjoys the abstinence itself, he is temperate; if he is grieved by it, he is intemperate. Again, if he stands firm against terrifying situations and enjoys it, or at least does not find it painful, he is brave; if he finds it painful, he is cowardly.”

<sup>56</sup> Rorty, *Essays*, 289.

## V.

### ARISTOTELIAN CONTROVERSIES

The two most significant controversies in *Nicomachean Ethics* are the announcement of study as the best virtue and the requirement of external goods for happiness. More than anything else, the role of externals separated the various Greek philosophical schools. Aristotle attempted to find the golden mean between internal and external goods, but in doing so, weakened the cohesiveness of his account. The elevation of study in Book X rails against Aristotle's key components of his thesis. Therefore, Book X must be interpreted in light of the claims previously made by Aristotle.

#### I. vs X.

Much ink has been spilled over the seemingly contradictory claims in Book I and X.<sup>1</sup> In Book I, Aristotle employs human function and distinction to determine the highest good. He concludes that the *eudaimonic life* is the "activity of the soul in accord with virtue."<sup>2</sup> Therefore we are surprised, when in Book X, he identifies study as the supreme virtue:

The best is understanding, or whatever else seems to be the natural ruler and leader, and to understand what is fine and divine, by being itself either divine or the most divine element in us. Hence complete happiness will be its activity in accord with its proper virtue; and we have said that this activity is the activity of study.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Note Aristotle's *Eudemian Ethics* does not include the final move prioritizing contemplation found in *Nicomachean Ethics*.

<sup>2</sup> EN I.7.15.

<sup>3</sup> EN X.7.1.

Study is self-sufficient, pleasurable and requires fewer externals than virtues of character.<sup>4</sup> Further, he demotes the practical life (activities in accord with virtue) to a secondary (*deuteros*) happiness.<sup>5</sup> In doing so, he leaves little room for a composite of moral and intellectual virtue. This debate is significant for my account. I will be presenting *makarios* as noetic/epistemic and virtuous activity (a composite.)<sup>6</sup>

In response to Book I's and X's opposing claims, philosophers propose three interpretations: monism, inclusivism and dualism.<sup>7</sup> Monism accepts Book X's claim that contemplation *is* happiness, but it fails to engage the importance of activity and the political life, which are particularly prevalent in Book I. Besides the plain sense of the text, the monistic interpretation agrees with Aristotle's emphasis on a hierarchy of ends. From the beginning, he is clear that any subordinate (or lower) end cannot be the best good.<sup>8</sup> Even his account of the good *as activity of the soul in accord with virtue* in Book I lends itself to support a monistic understanding--for on the heels of the definition he adds the caveat, "and indeed with the best (*ariston*) and most complete virtue, if there are more virtues than one."<sup>9</sup> If contemplation is superior, nothing else can be placed alongside it as the *best* good. The departure in

---

<sup>4</sup> EN X.7.3,4; X.8.4.

<sup>5</sup> EN X.8.1.

<sup>6</sup> A synergistic relationship between reflection and action exists in the manner of Paulo Friere, Stanley Hauerwas, and Charles Pinches.

<sup>7</sup> Stephen S. Bush outlines the various interpretations and arguments in "Divine and Human Happiness in Nicomachean Ethics," in *Philosophical Review* 117, 1 (2008): 49-75. See also Ackrill, J.L. "Aristotle on Eudaimonia." In Rorty, Amélie Oksenberg, ed. *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 15-33.

<sup>8</sup> EN I.2.1.

<sup>9</sup> EN I.7.15.

Book X from the virtuous activity leads Martha Nussbaum to conclude “ethical Platonism of some sort exercised a hold over Aristotle’s imagination in one or more periods of his career.”<sup>10</sup>

The demotion of morally virtuous activity in Book X makes monism the obvious interpretive choice. Further, a singular supreme virtue is the logical conclusion of Aristotle’s presentation of the hierarchy of ends. Ironically the presence of morally virtuous activity as secondarily happy undermines the completeness of the intellectualist’s happiness. Stephen Bush identifies the inconsistency of the monistic approach.<sup>11</sup> He contends the following are incompatible:

- (a) happiness is monistic,
- (b) contemplative activity exclusively is happiness,
- (c) contemplative activity and morally virtuous activity are two distinct activities, and
- (d) morally virtuous activity is happiness.

The first three hold together and contemplative activity is complete. However, if morally virtuous activity has intrinsic worth, contemplation without activity is not sufficient; it lacks something choice worthy.

---

<sup>10</sup> Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 377. Nussbaum is not arguing for Monism as the best interpretation; instead she is seeking an explanation for the strange departure at the end of *Nicomachean Ethics*.

<sup>11</sup> Bush, “Divine and Human,” 54.

In addition to the problem of the intrinsic worth of a “secondary happiness,” Aristotle’s fundamental and pervasive claim of the necessity of activity quashes the monistic interpretation. In Book I, reason as the distinct human function must be employed to move us from capacity *to* activity. In Aristotle’s section on the three lives, he discounts virtue in general (inactive virtue) because it is too “incomplete to be the good” given one could be asleep or inactive and possess virtue.<sup>12</sup> Recall that the emphasis on activity is what makes Aristotle’s account of the good distinct from Socrates’ idealistic approach. While Socrates “believed that the goal of life was to know virtue,” Aristotle argues the “most valuable thing is to know whence it arises rather than to know its nature.”<sup>13</sup> Building on Aristotle’s example that “Olympic prizes are not for the finest and strongest but for the contestants,” Nussbaum declares the athlete would be pitied not praised.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, without activity the virtuous character remains in a “state of concealment” and is prevented from “flourishing or blooming.”<sup>15</sup> Monism clearly violates Aristotle’s assertion that “no activity is complete if it is impeded; but *eudaimonia* is something complete.”<sup>16</sup> Finally, Aristotle’s hierarchy of sciences, that productive science is superior to theoretical science and political is the highest productive science (a science that

---

<sup>12</sup> EN I.5.6.

<sup>13</sup> EE I.5.

<sup>14</sup> EN I.8.9.

<sup>15</sup> Nussbaum, *Fragility*, 324. She continues, “Without that the good condition is seriously incomplete. Like an actor who is always waiting in the wings and never gets a chance to appear on the stage, it is not doing its job, and, in consequence, is only in a shadowy way itself.”

<sup>16</sup> EN VII.13.2.

culminates in activity), and his understanding of the soul (dynamic relationship between the rational and non-rational) makes the monistic interpretation irreconcilable with the distinct claims prized by Aristotle.<sup>17</sup>

Inclusivism, a combination of moral and intellectual virtue best honors Book I and is guided by Aristotle's position that happiness is complete and sufficient, not lacking.<sup>18</sup> Everything with intrinsic value must be achieved. However inclusivism also falls short because it does not address the clear hierarchy presented by Aristotle in Book X. He writes, "The life in accord with the other kind of virtue [i.e., the kind concerned with action] is [happiness] in a secondary way, because the activities in accord with this virtue are human."<sup>19</sup> Stephen Bush argues for a dualistic interpretation. Teeing off on Aristotle's claim that understanding is divine, Bush argues Book I's claim is not undermined; but instead, the virtues of character, which shape moral activity, are decidedly human. Therefore for humans to live well as humans, the requirement for happiness is a life lived in accord with reason.<sup>20</sup> Yet,

---

<sup>17</sup> For political science as the "highest ruling science," see EN I.2.2-8. For superiority of productive sciences, see EE I.5. On separability by nature of rational and nonrational parts of the soul, see EN I.13.10-19.

<sup>18</sup> See J. L. Ackrill, "Aristotle on *Eudaimonia*" in Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 21. Ackrill argues for an inclusivist interpretation. He contends Aristotle is presenting "*eudaimonia*, being absolutely final and genuinely self sufficient, is more desirable than anything else in that it *includes* everything desirable in itself. It is best, and better than everything else, not in the way that bacon is better than eggs and than tomatoes (and therefore the best of *the three* to choose), but in the way that bacon, eggs, and tomatoes is a better breakfast than either bacon or eggs or tomatoes—is indeed the best breakfast without qualification.

<sup>19</sup> EN X.8.1.

<sup>20</sup> Bush, in "Divine and Human," notes his interpretation is weakened by Book I's suggestion that the key characteristic of human being is *nous*. "What belongs to each

given there is a divine element within the human being, there is another kind of happiness: that of the gods.<sup>21</sup> Because for Aristotle “understanding is something divine in comparison with a human being” the virtue of contemplation is superhuman, outside the human telos.<sup>22</sup> Scott proposes that Aristotle understood humans to have two natures. The first, intellect, is divine, and the second, practical reason, is anthropic.<sup>23</sup> Bush agrees with Scott and says the intellectual function, “is shared with the gods and therefore not peculiar to human beings.”<sup>24</sup> Bush’s interpretation will support a Christian interpretation that contends human beings are created in *imago dei* and therefore their function must be informed by the divine; perhaps, to whatever extent they participate they are more *makarios*.<sup>25</sup>

The obvious synergy between moral and intellectual virtues lends support to an inclusivist interpretation. Contemplation absent political activity is inferior to the combination of the two. Likewise, righteous action without contemplation is lesser.

---

kind of creature by nature is best and most pleasant for each; for man, then, the life in accordance with intelligence is so too, given that man is this most of all. This life, then, will also be happiest,” EN X.8.9.

<sup>21</sup> EN X.7.8.

<sup>22</sup> X.7.8.

<sup>23</sup> Bush, “Divine and Human,” 61.

<sup>24</sup> Bush, “Divine and Human,” 65. See also footnote 22, citing David Keyt, “Man does not engage in this activity as man but only as possessor of something divine, namely, reason or *nous*.” Consider II Peter 1:3-4, which describes “partakers in the divine.”

<sup>25</sup> Genesis 1:27. Aquinas’ understanding of contemplation falls somewhere between monism and dualism. He writes, “Man’s ultimate happiness consists in the contemplation of truth, for this operation is specific to man and is shared with no other animals. Also it is not directed to any other end since contemplation of truth is sought for its own sake. In addition, in this operation man is united to higher beings (substances) since this is the only human operation that is carried out both by God and by the separate substances (angels).” *Summa Contra Gentiles*, book 3, chapter 37.

J. L. Ackrill defends the inclusive interpretation with an illustration of a good or rather “the best” breakfast. By advocating for intellectual and moral virtues, Aristotle claims “*eudaimonia*, being absolutely final and genuinely self-sufficient, is more desirable than anything else in that it *includes* everything desirable in itself. It is best, and better than everything else, not in the way that bacon is better than eggs and than tomatoes (and therefore the best of the three to choose), but in the way that bacon, eggs, and tomatoes is a better breakfast than either bacon or eggs or tomatoes—and is indeed the best breakfast without qualification.”<sup>26</sup> Rorty argues that a misunderstanding of contemplation has created a false dichotomy. One can contemplate about and act on practical wisdom. Rorty explains, “It is only a corrupt polity that the contemplative life need be other-worldly, and only in a corrupt polity that the policies promoting the development and exercise of contemplative activity would come into *conflict* with those establishing requirements for the best practical life.”<sup>27</sup> Rorty is correct. Aristotle’s notion of contemplation is not Zen, “no mindedness” or an ecstatic state. Rather, the study (*theori*) he pursues actively serves the individual and the polis.

A composite understanding, regardless of the tension within Aristotle’s 2<sup>nd</sup> treatise on ethics, is best. The best good includes moral and intellectual activity. Aristotle’s “known to us” definition of *eudaimonia*, *eu zen kai to eu pratein*, requires understanding to lead to action (*praxis*).

### **Intuitive vs. Theoretical**

---

<sup>26</sup> Ackrill in Rorty, *Essays*, 21.

<sup>27</sup> Rorty, 378.

Any ethical theory on happiness must address the problem of misfortune and the need for external goods. Annas contends, the theoretical pull seeks a happiness that is complete, sufficient, secure and under the agent's control. The theoretical is seeking the best 'kind' of life and not the merely satisfying life. However, the intuitive pull, common sense, leads us to doubt the possibility of an impervious happiness. Intuition drives Aristotle to assert that those who say a man can be happy on the rack are speaking nonsense.<sup>28</sup> Aristotle's concession for the need for externals is not surprising given at the outset he would be arguing from things "known to us" and not from principle. Observation, the familiar, and appearance all support the conclusion that happiness requires external goods. Honoring the power of suffering and the advantage of privilege is noble and honest. As Abraham Maslow teaches us there are many fixed things in our environment (safety, belonging, love relations) that we have little control over.<sup>29</sup> These variables are dependent on others and can be of great benefit or harm. And so Aristotle counters the extreme theoretical, *contra* Socrates before him and the Stoics after him, with a somewhat reluctant concession requiring external goods.

In *The Morality of Happiness*, Julia Annas identifies two roles of external goods in Aristotle's account.<sup>30</sup> External goods are instrumental for performing virtuous activity and have intrinsic worth. Aristotle does not outright say external goods have intrinsic worth, or are choice worthy for themselves, but based on his

---

<sup>28</sup> EN VII.14.3.

<sup>29</sup> Abraham H. Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation," *Psychological Review* 50.4 (1943), 370-396.

<sup>30</sup> Annas, *Morality*, 381.

description of their power—assigning intrinsic value is a safe deduction. In addition to Annas two functions, I add the physiological. Nothing is more fixed and beyond the agent’s control to change than physiological needs (e.g. water, salt, sugar).<sup>31</sup> These essential needs precede instrumentality and therefore deserve their own place in the list of external roles.

### 1. **Instrumental**

“Nevertheless happiness evidently is in need of the externals goods, as we said, since it is impossible, or not easy, to do fine actions if one lacks resources. For many actions are done by means of friends, wealth and political power, just as by means of tools.”<sup>32</sup>

### 2. **Physiological** (hierarchy of needs)

“Our nature is not self sufficient for engaging in study, but we need a healthy body, and need to have food and the other services provided. Still, even though no one can be blessedly happy without external goods, we must not think that to be happy we will need *many* large goods. For self-sufficiency and action do not depend on excess (of possessions).”<sup>33</sup>

### 3. **Intrinsic Value**

“...when deprived of some things people ruin their happiness—things such as good birth, good children, beauty. Someone is not exactly a

---

<sup>31</sup> Maslow, “Motivation,” 370-396.

<sup>32</sup> EN I.8.15.

<sup>33</sup> EN X.8.9 (1178b31-1179a22) italics and parenthetical comment are mine.

happy kind of person if he is completely hideous or of low birth, solitary and childless, and perhaps even less if his children and friends are utterly evil, or good but die.”<sup>34</sup>

The three concessions on externals make up a tiny fraction of Aristotle’s sketch of the good, but their implications color his entire account. By focusing on external goods’ instrumentality, Aristotle seeks to maintain his hierarchy of ends, and thus, in a sense, the activity of the soul in accord with virtue is *still* complete. Annas thinks it strange to prioritize the utility of external goods for virtuous activity. Is not “health straightforwardly to be preferred to disease”?<sup>35</sup> However, Annas relies too heavily on the intuitive and popular understanding of happiness. In the context of Aristotle’s focus on what is good and leads to happiness, health is preferred because it allows us to pursue a virtuous life.

Ultimately, Annas deems Aristotle’s account of the good to be unstable. She purports, given that externals are beyond the agent’s control, happiness is vulnerable and “dependent on external goods, and so on luck, on what is not under the agent’s control.”<sup>36</sup> The Stoics will resolve the issue by dismissing the need for external goods completely. As a theory, Stoicism is sound; intuitively, however, it leaves us wanting an explanation for how happiness can be sustained under duress.

Annas presents the solutions of Arius Didymus and Antiochus who straddled the Stoic and Peripatetic schools. Arius and Antiochus sought to resolve the

---

<sup>34</sup> EN I.8.16.

<sup>35</sup> Annas, *Morality*, 380.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 365.

contradiction created between the theoretical and the intuitive pull. Arius, a defender of Aristotle's, would classify externals as "prerequisites" but not parts of happiness.<sup>37</sup> They are required, but externals are not a part of the composition of happiness. This begs the question, what if someone has the components of happiness but not externals? Arius says you can lose externals and retain virtue (the essence of happiness). However he has already argued externals are required. His solution to the contradictory claims is the existence of a middle state.

The person who has lost happiness is not unhappy (*kakodaimon*), like the person who never had it at all, but can be in the middle. For both the wise person and the unwise sometimes live what is called the middle life, a life that is neither happy nor unhappy.<sup>38</sup>

Recall Aristotle's awkward argument that extreme misfortune could never make a blessed person miserable, but "he is not blessed either, if he meets the fortunes like Priam's."<sup>39</sup> If he is neither blessed nor miserable, he is something in between (a middle state). Given Aristotle's use of *makarios* in this passage and disproportionately in passages relating to divine things, it is tempting to distinguish between *makarios* and *eudaimonia*. In fact, some translators give into this temptation by replacing the typical translation, "blessed", with "supremely happy."<sup>40</sup> Elevating *makarios* in this fashion to create a middle state is sheer redaction and

---

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 415.

<sup>38</sup> 133.7-11,19,134.1 in Annas, *Morality*, 417.

<sup>39</sup> EN I.10.14.

<sup>40</sup> See Martin Oswald's translation. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. Martin Oswald (Indianapolis: Howard W. Sams, 1962).

cannot be supported based on the ancients' writings; especially in Arius' case, who makes the plainest argument that *makarios* and *eudaimonia* are equivalents.<sup>41</sup>

Despite his Stoic influences, Arius honors the potency of externals. However it is to the detriment of the capacity of virtue. Virtue cannot make you happy—all virtue has to offer is a “middle state.” Unfortunately, the mediocre life is hardly appealing. Annas agrees, “What is the point of holding, as Arius so insistently does, that virtue in rags is not happy, if we have to hold that the wicked person in luxury, apparently flourishing and unrepentant, is really unhappy? Why is vice so much more powerful in its effects than virtue?”<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, Arius' solution undermines the first two requirements of Aristotle's account of the good. If the lack of external goods downgrades the magnanimous man to a middle state, *activity of the soul in accord with virtue* is no longer self-sufficient. In fact, it desires quite a bit—for external advantages make all the difference between *eudaimon* and *kakodaimon*.

Antiochus offers a similar solution. Rather than a “middle state,” Antiochus envisions a spectrum of happiness. Beginning with the theoretical pull, virtues are the source of happiness, and recognizing intuitively that some people are happier than others, Antiochus proposes the happy life and the completely happy life:

...the happy life is located in virtue alone, 'yet the completely happy life [(*vita*) *beatissima*] is not so located, unless goods of the body are added, as well as the other things already mentioned, which are suitable for use by virtue.<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>41</sup> Annas, *Morality*, 44. See Chapter 1 for a more in depth discussion of the interchangeability of *eudaimon* and *makarios*.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 418.

<sup>43</sup> Varro 22 cited in Annas, *Morality*, 420.

In a sense, compared to Arius, this is simply a difference of semantics.<sup>44</sup> Antiochus offers an incomplete happy life, and Arius offers a “middle state.” Notably, Antiochus’ proposal does tilt towards the stability of happiness through virtuous activity more than Arius’ “middle state.”

Antiochus’ argument is logical. If an increase in resources will increase opportunities for virtuous activity, there will be a spectrum of happiness. While physiological, external goods are either met or they are not; the instrumentality and intrinsic worth of external goods are affected by quantity. Aristotle agrees that more external goods, prosperity, create increased opportunities to be generous. Further, it is reasonable that prosperity yields increased time to visit the sick and care for the disadvantaged. A more compassionate life would increase *eudaimonia*. In Antiochus’ view, the most prosperous life (with the most external goods) allows for the most virtuous life and produces a completely happy life. Likewise, the virtuous person with no opportunity to be compassionate or generous, such as a person working in a mine or in solitary confinement, will not be completely happy.

Augustine, summarizing Varro and Antiochus, neatly classifies three kinds of happiness in Greek Philosophy:

The life of man, then, is called *happy* when it enjoys virtue and these other spiritual and bodily good things without which virtue is impossible. It is called *happier* if it enjoys some or many other good things which are not

---

<sup>44</sup> It is also the same maneuver translators carelessly make when they translate *makarios* as “supremely happy.” Drawing a distinction between the *makarios* and *eudaimon* creates a tiered happiness that is not present in *Nicomachean Ethics*.

essential to virtue; and *happiest* of all, if it lacks not one of the good things which pertain to the body and the soul.<sup>45</sup>

Augustine's presentation of a spectrum of happiness draws the most attention to the compromises of the Peripatetics. Aristotle's aim was to identify the highest or best good and from whence it comes. The spectrum account is a theory of a scale including (pretty) good things. If *eudaimonia*, is lacking in nothing, the creation of intermediary states of the best life is incongruent with Aristotle's account.

The role of external goods in regards to happiness was of course never settled. The following dialogue between Piso and Cicero highlights the intractable and irreducible nature of the argument.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> Augustine, *City of God* XIX 3, trans, Marcus Dodd, (New York: Modern Library, 1993), 675 (italics mine].

<sup>46</sup> Annas' book *The Morality of Happiness* guided me through the (in)stability of Aristotle's account and the response of the Stoics and the Peripatetics to Aristotle.

### Cicero debates Piso

Cicero objects to making happiness a matter of degrees. Can someone be *sort of* happy?

Piso replies, “more absurd to deny that happiness does come in degrees: that commits you to saying that a virtuous person with every worldly success and comfort is no happier than a virtuous person in pain and disgrace.”<sup>47</sup>

Cicero identifies the contradiction. Either external advantages (health and wealth) have intrinsic value or they do not. If they do, virtue is no longer sufficient. If they do not, incremental happiness is a myth.

Piso replies, “virtue can make us happy even among poverty, pain, and so on; to deny this is like denying that a crop is good if there are a few weeds in it, or a business profitable overall if it sustains a few losses. ‘Won’t you judge of the whole from its greatest part? And is there any doubt that virtue so occupies the greatest part of human affairs that it obliterates the other parts?’<sup>48</sup>

Finally, Piso with an air of Stoicism, defends the stability of virtuous activity.

“Thus I will venture to call the other natural things ‘goods’; I will not cheat them of their old name rather than think up a new one; but I will place the great bulk of virtue in the other scale of the balance. That scale will weigh down both earth and sea, believe me.”<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 421 (Annas does not provide a citation for Piso on this quote).

<sup>48</sup> Fin V 91 cited in Annas, *Morality*, 422.

<sup>49</sup> Fin V 91-92 cited in Annas, *Morality*, 422.

## VI.

### PLUNDERING HIPPO: AUGUSTINE'S ACCOUNT OF HAPPINESS

Augustine and Aquinas wrote extensively on happiness. Both considered pagan accounts of happiness and offered their amendments and corrections. Augustine fell in love with philosophy first, and then with God. Not surprisingly, Augustine then encouraged his peers to plunder the wisdom of philosophers just as the Hebrew people were commanded to “plunder the Egyptians.”<sup>1</sup> Rather than shrinking away from truths pagans discovered, Christians should claim the best of philosophy and put it to use for Christian goals. Augustine and Aquinas' accounts are full of truths that inform my account of happiness. However, during the course of their lifetimes, both men modify and sometimes reverse their views on the nature of happiness. In this chapter I will identify some early Christian writings that will support my account and address Augustine's protests against happiness in this life.

*The Happy Life* is Augustine's first completed work. At this time, Augustine is more versed in philosophy than theology. Unlike in his later works, Augustine is operating with the same logic as the philosophers. The conclusions in this first attempt to define happiness are as bold as Aristotle's. Happiness is possible here and now.

*The Happy Life* is a dialogue among Augustine, his mother, and friends. Augustine begins with a metaphor about a philosophical seafarer. He places himself in a vessel that encounters obstacles in search of safe harbor. He then turns to his

---

<sup>1</sup> Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana* II.60. Exodus 3:21-22; 12:35-36.

friend Manlius Theodorus, to whom the book is dedicated, for guidance to the land of happiness. Augustine pleads:

I beg you by your goodness, by your kindness, and by our bond of mutual friendship to give me your hand, that is, to love me and believe that you are likewise loved and held dear to me. And if I obtain this favor, I shall arrive with little effort at the happy life itself to which you, I believe, already cling.<sup>2</sup>

With help from Theodorus, his friends, and his mother, Augustine concludes, “Whoever shall have come to the highest limit through the truth is happy. For minds to have God is precisely this: To enjoy God.”<sup>3</sup> The banquet concludes with Augustine’s mother citing Ambrose’s hymn: “Cherish (help) us as we pray, O Trinity...This is without doubt the happy life, and that life is perfect toward which we can, we must presume, be quickly brought through solid faith, lively hope, and burning love.”<sup>4</sup> The debate ends with a prayer for God’s help in the quest for happiness. Happiness is attainable in this life with God’s help, and Theodorus is living proof.

After completing *The Academics* Augustine chooses to add a drastic revision to his first work, *The Happy Life*. With age and study Augustine becomes convinced only after someone has died and has come face to face with God can she be called happy. He gently renounces Theodorus’ happy state and pushes the “land of happiness” out of the reach of seafaring mortals. He notes the Apostle Paul’s “hope for perfect knowledge of God—meaning that which nothing can be greater for a

---

<sup>2</sup> Augustine, *Trilogy on Faith and Happiness*, ed. Boniface Ramsey (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 2010), 30.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 53.

person—in the life to come, which alone can be called the happy life, when the incorruptible and immortal body will be subordinate to its spirit without any disturbance or reluctance.”<sup>5</sup>

Augustine’s argument for the demotion of happiness in this life is flawed by two primary misunderstandings:

- He compares eternal happiness to terrestrial happiness, whereas the question he should ask is “what is the best *possible* life?”
- He contends that desiring is a sign of incompleteness.

First, Augustine misunderstands or changes the framework of the pagan pursuit of happiness. In *City of God* he enumerates the many ways philosophers have “attempted to make for themselves a happiness in this unhappy life.”<sup>6</sup> However, the philosophers he speaks of, Aristotle among them, are not interested in proposing something unattainable in this life. Instead, they appeal to the natural order of things and seek the best *possible* life in accordance with nature and virtue. Augustine rightfully concludes the best possible life is not superior to the life to come when “the incorruptible and immortal body will be subordinate to its spirit without any disturbance or reluctance,”<sup>7</sup> but he must concede the existence of a best *possible* terrestrial life.<sup>8</sup> Aristotle never sought to compare the *eudaimon* to the

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>6</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, 669.

<sup>7</sup> Augustine, *Trilogy*, 21.

<sup>8</sup> With Augustine’s reasoning, I could not claim to have the best phone. After all, one day there will surely be a better phone.

eternity or the life of the gods.<sup>9</sup> Comparing this life to an afterlife was certainly an alternative for the Greeks. Like Augustine, I imagine Plato and Aristotle would conclude the stability, peace and goodness of an afterlife is superior to *eudaimon* of this life, but their quest is to identify happiness for mortal man – for terrestrial life. Aristotle argues that our chief end, *telos*, is determined by our human function. That is, nature informs our *telos* and humans are naturally mortal, therefore, the pursuit of human *telos* by Greek standards is constrained by mortality. More simply Augustine’s denial of *eudaimon* in this life is irrational; to deny a best *possible* life is to deny that humans have a chief end. Even if that chief end is substantially lower than what is proposed by the Greeks; by default it becomes the best *possible* life.

Ambrose of Milan, Augustine’s greatest influence, did not share Augustine’s reservations about happiness in this life. He wrote, “a happy life is the reward that we have in the *present*; eternal life is the hope that we have for the *future*.”<sup>10</sup> By maintaining the distinction between present and future, Ambrose is addressing the same question as the philosophers. Following Ambrose and the Greek *eudaimonic* sense of happiness, Hauerwas and Pinches rightly argue happiness is not a terminus or “some ideal final state, realizable only in the distant future. For happiness is not

---

<sup>9</sup> On the goodness and beauty of eternity see Plato’s dialogue, *Phaedo*.

<sup>10</sup> Ambrose, *De Officiis* 2.5.18, ed. and trans., Ivor J. Davidson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) cited in Kenneth Steinhauser, “Augustine Laughed (*De beata vita* 2, 10),” *Tradition and the Rule of Faith in the Early Church*, ed. Ronnie Rombs and Alexander Hwang (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 226. See also Ambrose, *De Iacob et beata vita*, I.7.29: “The happy life, then, does exist among men, but I mean only among those in whom life has been made perfect,” 138.

so much an end, but the way.”<sup>11</sup> It is our future hopes that sustain our happiness along the way.

In *City of God* Augustine further demotes human agency and chastises pagan philosophers for their “marvelous shallowness” to wish “to be happy here on earth and to achieve bliss by their own efforts.”<sup>12</sup> He is saying that not only do we not have control over external goods or eternal life; we do not even have the power to achieve virtue. Augustine rejects both the assumption that our final good must be something that we can achieve for ourselves and the assumption that the happy person seeks to be self-sufficient by making her happiness as dependent as possible on herself rather than anything outside of herself. The aspiration of self-sufficiency leads Augustine to brand pagan accounts *superbia* and render pagan virtues as only a semblance of virtue.

Besides the prideful nature of self-sufficiency, Augustine is also concerned about the vulnerability created by dependency on God. The lack of self-sufficiency leads Augustine to ask, “For if not yet safe, how could it be happy?”<sup>13</sup> The apostle Paul finds himself in a vulnerable and compromised state. He appeals to the Lord three times for relief. However, Paul’s weaknesses are overcome not by the elimination of suffering, but by grace. In his Second Letter to the Corinthians he writes:

---

<sup>11</sup> Stanley Hauerwas and Charles Pinches are addressing Aristotle’s question about whether someone can be declared happy in this life. *Christians among the Virtues: Theological Conversations with Ancient and Modern Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 13.

<sup>12</sup> Augustine, *City of God* XIX 4, 676.

<sup>13</sup> Augustine, *City of God* XIX 4, 680, 678.

My grace (χάρις) is sufficient (άρκεῖ) for you, for power is made perfect (τελεῖται) in weakness. So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore, I am content (εὐδοκῶ) with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities

for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong (2 Cor 12:9-10).

Paul's evaluation of the Lord's presence elevates dependency on God as perfect sufficiency. Rather than instability or the absence of safety, dependency on the grace of God is the solitary course to constancy in happiness. The love of God we know in Jesus Christ cannot be removed (Rom 8:31-38).

Augustine's protest is mostly rooted in Aristotle's weakest and least popular criterion: self-sufficiency. A self-sufficient happiness lacks nothing, and so Augustine deduces felicity is "complete attainment of all we desire."<sup>14</sup> If you can know God and love God more perfectly once you are dead, mortal happiness is lacking (not sufficient) and inferior (not complete) to eternal happiness.

### **Desire**

Augustine understands desire to be instrumental to happiness. Faithfulness is the reordering of our love. God transforms our desires so that we love properly.<sup>15</sup> Augustine's theology of happiness is built around desire. His most famous prayer, "my heart is restless (unquiet) until it rests in thee" is addressing our unmet desires. More explicitly, Augustine proposes "to strive after God, then, is to desire happiness,

---

<sup>14</sup> Augustine, *City of God* V. Preface, 142. Aristotle, EN I.7.3, 7.

<sup>15</sup> Augustine, *Confessions* VIII 5-6, 164-168.

to reach God is happiness itself.”<sup>16</sup> Foreshadowing his revision, Augustine ends *The Happy Life* with caution:

As long as we’re seeking and our thirst isn’t yet quenched by the fountain itself...we haven’t yet arrived at our limit. Thus even though God is helping us, we are not yet wise and happy. That, then, is full satiety of minds, namely the happy life, to know precisely and perfectly him through whom you are led into the truth.<sup>17</sup>

Originally, Augustine believed Theodorus, by grace, had received full satiety of mind.

In part I agree with the revision because I cannot imagine a fully satiated mind.

However, the presence of desire, via lack of complete attainment or an insatiated appetite for God, is not a convincing reason to rule out happiness in this life.

The presence of desire does not necessarily mean you are unhappy. More accurately, desiring means that you are alive. Desiring is natural. Without desire we have no appetite, and therefore, we will spiritually and physically starve. Intuitively, the relationship of desire and love is obvious. If desire ceases, love ceases along with it. Richardson Lear shows the undesirability of desiring nothing. She writes:

The claim that happiness is that which makes life desirable and lacking in nothing is a tautology shaped by our deepest fantasies. It is a fantasy, moreover, that turns out to be deadly, for a life that lacks nothing is a life beyond desire, that is, a life that is equivalent to a living death.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Augustine, *The Way of Life of the Catholic Church*, XI, xviii cited in Paul Wadell, *Happiness and the Christian Moral Life: An Introduction to Christian Ethics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1991), 252, footnote 27.

<sup>17</sup> Augustine, *Trilogy*, 52-53.

<sup>18</sup> Jonathan Lear, *Happiness, Death, and the Remainder of Life: Tanner Lectures of Human Values* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2000), 27 cited in Hauerwas, *Approaching the End: Eschatological Reflections on Church, Politics, and Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2007), 207. Lear is arguing with Aristotle, not Augustine. Specifically, he is challenging the claim in EN X, that study is the best virtue because it desires nothing further.

Augustine believes the Christian life is about changing our desires. In *Confessions*, Augustine notes happiness will be more demanding than misery. For happiness “will ask him to change his heart and refashion his attachments.”<sup>19</sup> Perhaps hindered by sin, this refashioning of loves occurs only up to a point. Charry highlights Aquinas’ departure from Augustine’s negative understanding of desire.<sup>20</sup> Whereas, Augustine argues that desire undermines happiness, Aquinas views a desiring heart as an attribute. He writes:

We might say that heat is necessary for fire. And in this way delight is necessary for happiness. For it is caused by the appetite being at rest in the good attained. Wherefore, since happiness is nothing else but the attainment of the Sovereign Good, it cannot be without concomitant delight.<sup>21</sup>

The synthesis between desire and pleasure suggests happiness can be experienced while one still desires. Aquinas emphasizes “the philosopher’s” (Aristotle) differentiation between process and pleasure.<sup>22</sup> Whereas, building a house takes time and its end is complete when it produces the product it seeks, pleasure (or desire) is complete at any time.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, seeing is complete at any time for it has nothing to be gained with time, but more of the same—so too, no pleasure will “have its form completed by coming to be for a longer time.”<sup>24</sup> Aristotle’s point that more of the same does not mean more complete is more evident when viewed through the theological lens of eternity.

---

<sup>19</sup> Wadell, *Happiness*, 9.

<sup>20</sup> Ellen T. Charry, *God and the Art of Happiness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 103.

<sup>21</sup> *Summa Theologica* II.4.1.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘reply to objection 3.’

<sup>23</sup> EN X.4.2-4.

<sup>24</sup> EN X.4.1.

Essential to the nature of complete happiness for Augustine is an eternal and perfect life, but Aquinas concludes that enjoying a desired object, even incompletely, is natural to desire and does not prevent happiness. It seems that Augustine's very argument against complete happiness in this life (desiring=lacking something and therefore not sufficient) could be used to support complete happiness. To be clear, Aquinas is not offering complete happiness, but he questions Augustine's rationale that happiness in this life is unattainable. Aquinas offers a spectrum of happiness that has continuity between the earthly and the celestial.

Somewhat counterintuitive to his claims about satiating desire, Aquinas argues an increase in happiness can also be manipulated by an increase in desire that is fueled by an increase in virtue. Writing about seeing the essence of God, he explains,

The intellect which has more of the light of glory will see God the *more* perfectly; and he will have a *fuller* participation of the light of glory who has *more* charity; because where there is the greater charity, there is the more desire; and desire in a certain degree makes the one desiring apt and prepared to receive the object desired. Hence he who possesses the *more* charity, will see God the *more* perfectly, and will be *more* beatified.<sup>25</sup>

In the end Aquinas shares the flaw of Augustine and the hedonist: adaptation. Over time the hedonist no longer finds satisfaction in present pleasures. Likewise, Augustine and Aquinas adapt to internal goods (knowledge of God) received and find the experience unsatisfying. Augustine maintains his love and knowledge for God does not make him completely happy because it is not perfected. As he increases in love and knowledge, he adapts to the new level and desires more. He is

---

<sup>25</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* [ST. Ia. A.12 A.6]. Emphasis added.

on the hedonic treadmill of sapience. Even in the afterlife, humans are stuck on the treadmill. With the soul separated from the body, one is not perfectly happy and vision is inferior to that of the angels.<sup>26</sup>

### Summary

Augustine's arguments against the possibility of happiness in this life are the presence of desire, instability because of dependency, and most of all, a more supreme happiness in the afterlife. In response, I propose that desire does not prevent someone from being happy, but rather, is the fuel for sustaining happiness. Dependency relies on grace and is therefore more secure than self-sufficiency; a better afterlife does not negate a best possible this-life.

---

<sup>26</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* II. Q.3.5 OTC & reply to objection 6).

## VII.

### HUMAN *TELOS* AND *ERGON*

This account of *makarios* considers the basic criteria that early philosophers and Augustine place on *eudaimonia*. I will argue that if it is the best good, *makarios* must be complete, determined by the function of a human being (*ergon tov anthropon*), and that self-sufficiency must be replaced with its antithesis—dependency and desiring. Classifying dependency and desiring as an attribute, versus an obstacle, makes happiness in this life attainable and is a dramatic departure from Augustinian theology. As noted in Chapter 5 the two primary problems with Aristotle’s account are stability and conflicting claims in Book I and Book X. This account will demonstrate that *makarios*’ stability is superior to Aristotelian *eudaimonia* and resolve the tension within *Nicomachean Ethics* between contemplation and activity. Guided by Aristotle’s framework, I will identify the human *telos* by exploring the unique function of humankind.

#### **To Glorify God and Enjoy God Forever**

*“The glory of God is a human being fully alive.”* St. Irenaeus of Lyons<sup>1</sup>

Aristotle’s distinction of ends, more specifically that there is a hierarchy of ends, is sound. The highest good Christians aim for must not be a subordinate end; otherwise, the thing to which it is subordinate would in fact be the best good. The

---

<sup>1</sup> St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus Haereses*, IV.20 (Charleston, SC: Nabu Press, 2010).

best end is “alone complete” (*monon teleion*). Likewise, “if more ends than one are complete, it will be the *most* complete end of these.”<sup>2</sup>

The first question in the Westminster Catechism is “What is the chief end of human beings?” The answer given is “to glorify God and enjoy him [sic] forever.”<sup>3</sup> In Protestantism, this answer is considered *the* orthodox answer and certainly the most familiar. Westminster’s answer makes three claims about the chief end. The *telos* of human beings is endless, enjoyable and centers on glorification of the Other. The chief end is never complete; it is an eternal purpose. The inclusion of enjoyment is a refreshing claim compared to the often dour depictions of the Christian life. From an Aristotelian perspective, glorification presents more difficulty. If glorification is indeed the chief end, then, humans living into their *telos* will find enjoyment (pleasure, *axcrasia*) in glorifying. Joy must be intrinsic to glorifying. Enjoyment can then also function as a mechanism to determine authentic glorification. Recall Aristotle’s argument that it would be absurd to call someone a lover of justice, if she did not enjoy the virtue of justice. Likewise, in the Westminster formula someone achieving his or her *telos* must find joy in glorification. Thus, because enjoyment is intrinsic to a *telos*, the chief end can be condensed to glorify God forever. The call for enjoyment and an eternal relationship are straightforward. What it means to glorify God requires more attention.

---

<sup>2</sup> EN I.7.3.

<sup>3</sup> “Westminster Shorter Catechism,” in the *Book of Confessions*, (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Church USA), 229.

Glorification of God, praise and honor to God, is the effect of God-ordained behavior or of realized potential. This definition claims humans are created for the purpose of praising and honoring God. As a definition of the human end (*telos*), glorification of God is unnecessarily Delphic. In a sense, it is the equivalent to telling a child to do what is pleasing to his mother without any guidance about what brings pleasure to his mother. Because we are seeking the activity and state that fulfills the function of human beings, we must be more precise. Glorification is superior to human happiness and it is the effect of the best possible life. But what is the best possible life? Based on Aristotle's conception of *complete* and the hierarchy of ends, some might charge that if glorification is the final effect, it must be the chief end. However, Aristotle recognizes a superior end beyond the individual pursuit of *eudaimonia*. Before his account of the human good, he elevates the good for the city over the good for an individual.

For even if the good is the same for a city as for an individual, still the good of the city is apparently a greater and more complete good to acquire and preserve. For while it is satisfactory to acquire and preserve the good even in an individual, it is finer and more divine to acquire and preserve it for a people and for cities.<sup>4</sup>

Most would agree with Aristotle that the good of the polis is superior to the good of an individual. In Christianity there are a number of ends that are superior to the ends of an individual. In Corinthians Paul prioritizes the collective over the individual and declares the gifts of the Spirit are for the "common good."<sup>5</sup> For Aristotle *and* Christians, the good of the *polis* is superior to the *telos* of the

---

<sup>4</sup> EN I.2.8.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Corinthians 12, especially verse 7.

individual, and yet, the good of the *polis* (or Kingdom of God) does not supplant or become the individual *telos*.<sup>6</sup>

The hierarchy of greater good (from individual to church to community to Kingdom of God to glorification) is not in question; rather, like Aristotle, our pursuit is to first identify the best possible life for the *individual*. If done well and finely, the *makarios anthropon* will participate in the upbuilding of the corporate body, the healing of the nations (all peoples), and the glorification of God. While we are pursuing an individual definition of *makarios*, Christian's *makarios* is interwoven with the happiness of the neighbor and the stranger.

Finally, glorification of God as the *telos* also fails Aristotle's requirement that the *telos* be determined by the *unique* human (*ergon*).<sup>7</sup> The Glorification of God is not unique to humanity. In the scriptures, the whole of creation shares in the activity of glorifying God.<sup>8</sup> Our *telos* is what makes us human and is unique and essential to our humanity.

---

<sup>6</sup> Individuals' dependence on community and God to achieve their *telos* will be addressed in Chapter 8.

<sup>7</sup> EN I.7.13. On the requirement for a distinct function see Nagel's essay, "Aristotle on *Eudaimonia*," in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 7-14.

<sup>8</sup> Revelation 5:13, "Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, singing, 'To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!'" Psalm 145:10, "All your works shall praise you, O LORD; and your saints shall bless you." Psalm 66:4, "All the earth worships you; they sing praises to you, sing praises to your name." Psalm 19:1, "The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork."

## Imago Dei

A more precise and constructive definition is possible. Aristotle is unsatisfied with the identification of *eudaimonia* as the highest good or *telos*. He argues a clear statement of the good can be found by identifying the particular human function. After rejecting things in common with plants (living) and animals (sense perception), Aristotle concludes a “life of action that has reason” is the unique human function.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Thomas Aquinas proposes:

Man’s ultimate happiness consists in the contemplation of truth, for this operation is specific to man and is shared with no other animals. Also it is not directed to any other end since contemplation of truth is sought for its own sake. In addition, in this operation man is united to higher beings (substances) since this is the only human operation that is carried out both by God and by the separate substances (angels).<sup>10</sup>

I agree reason is the distinguishing characteristic of humans. However, I disagree with Aquinas’ isolation of contemplation from activity and his view that contemplation is an end for its own sake. Aristotle rightly identifies the human *ergon* as rational *and* active. More specifically, the human *ergon* is rational activity versus perceptual activity that separates humans from other animals.

I contend rational activity serves the end of becoming *like* God. As noted in Chapter 4, philosopher Thomas Nagel also thinks Aristotle understands

---

<sup>9</sup> EN I.7.9-13. After illustrating that the goal was to perform rational actions well and finely, he substitutes virtue for reason. This change to virtue improves on rational action but does not place it.

<sup>10</sup> *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book 3, Chapter 37. Aquinas’ angelology and the apparent shared *telos* of humans and angels are beside the point.

contemplation to be a divine characteristic.<sup>11</sup> He explains humans “are not simply the most complex species of animals but possess as their essential nature a capacity to transcend themselves and become like gods.”<sup>12</sup> Genesis 1 clearly captures the unique and essential human capacity for transcendence, contemplation and rational action. God created “humankind in the image of God” (Gen 1:27). Godlikeness is what distinguishes human beings from the rest of creation, and therefore human likeness to God best informs the work (*ergon*) humans are made for.<sup>13</sup>

Given the Homeric and Hesiodic uses of *makar*, it is not at all surprising that godliness is the same as blessedness or happiness.<sup>14</sup> Equating godliness with blessedness can also be supported by Aristotle’s choosing elevation of understanding as the supreme virtue. In Book X he concludes:

The best is understanding...and to understand is fine and divine, by being itself either divine or the most divine element in us.<sup>15</sup>

For someone will live in it (*eudaimonia*) not insofar as he is a human being, but insofar as he has some divine element in him.<sup>16</sup>

As far as we can, we ought to be pro-immortal, and go to all lengths to live a life in accord with our supreme element; for however much this element may lack in bulk, by much more it surpasses everything in power and value.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Contemplation as a divine characteristic fuels the dualistic interpretation of Book X’s assertion that contemplation is the supreme virtue. See Chapter 5.

<sup>12</sup> Nagel “*Eudaimonia*” in *Essays*, ed. Rorty, 11.

<sup>13</sup> Genesis 2-3 reveals the fine line between human godliness and God. See especially Genesis 2:16-17; 3:22.

<sup>14</sup> See Cornelius de Heer, *A Study of the Semantic Field Denoting Happiness in Ancient Greek to the End of the 5<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.* (Amsterdam: University of Western Australia in Association with A. M. Hakkert, 1968), 1-27.

<sup>15</sup> EN X.7.1

<sup>16</sup> EN X.7.8

<sup>17</sup> EN X.7.8

For Christians, living fully into the *imago Dei* is the path to *makarios*. Our *telos* is fulfilled to the extent we become like God. Where Aristotle refers to the divine element, Christianity refers to *Christus in Nobis* and *imago Dei*. Christ-in-us allows us to become *makarios*. Terence Frethheim writes, “Because God’s life is characterized by happiness, those made in God’s image are also so gifted.”<sup>18</sup>

Based on things known to us, the sinfulness of humankind, blessedness as godliness may appear to be impossible, and therefore would not qualify as the best *possible* life. However, numerous scriptures and a diverse assortment of theologians support godliness as the *telos*. In Second Peter godliness is given so that Christians may become partakers in the divine.

His divine power has given us everything needed for life and *godliness*, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Thus he has given us, through these things, his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust, and may become participants of the divine nature (2 Pet 1:3-4).

The Apostle Paul maintains, as new creations, Christians strive to live into the fullness (*telos*) of humanity, taking off the old and putting on the new and returning to the prelapsarian state (2 Cor 5:17). The early patriarchs who propose Christians could become little Christs are well aware the achievement would not be their own. Blessedness is dependent on the Spirit. Athanasius wrote, “The Word was made flesh in order to offer up this body for all, and that we, partaking of His Spirit, might

---

<sup>18</sup> Terence Frethheim, “God, Creation, and the Pursuit of Happiness” in ed. Brent A. Strawn, *The Bible and the Pursuit of Happiness: What the Old and New Testaments Teach Us about the Good Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 45. For a catalogue of scriptures on God’s happiness see 34-35 and Appendix A, 321-370.

be deified, a gift which we could not otherwise have gained than by His clothing Himself in our created body.”<sup>19</sup> Athanasius also is sure to make the distinction between human participation in the divine and truly divine.<sup>20</sup> Christians participate in the energies of God and not the essence of God. Further, he explains if and when we achieve full humanity and godliness it is by grace: *we are by grace what Christ is by nature.*<sup>21</sup> The Reformed emphasis on the sovereignty of God and depravity leaves little room for the human telos to be so optimistic. However, even John Calvin affirms *Christus in Nobis*. In the *Institutes of Christian Religion*, Calvin teaches that through the *unio mystica* with Christ, believers are “truly joined to God in perfect blessedness.”<sup>22</sup> Further, he believes “we are substantially righteous in God by the infusion of his essence and of his quality.”<sup>23</sup> These scriptures are how theologians teach godliness is possible, when commanded and empowered by God.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> St Athanasius, *Defense*, 3.14.

<sup>20</sup> “For as, although there be one Son by nature, True and Only-begotten, we too become sons, not as He in nature and truth, but according to the grace of Him that calls, and though we are human beings from the earth, are yet called gods, not as the True God or His Word, but as has pleased God who has given us that grace,” Athanasius, *Discourse*, 3.19.

<sup>21</sup> St. Athanasius, “For what the Word has by nature, as I said, in the Father, that He wishes to be given to us through the Spirit irrevocably.” *Discourse* 3.19, 25 and “[God] was made human that we might be made God,” St. Athanasius, *De Incarnatione Verbi Dei*, 54.3.

<sup>22</sup> Calvin, *The Institutes of Christian Religion*, Volume XX, Book II, Chapter 25, Section 4.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 730.

<sup>24</sup> See also C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), 199, 216. “The Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs. If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time. God became Man for no other purpose. It is even doubtful, you know, whether the whole universe was created for any other purpose.” And again: “Every Christian is to become a little

## According to Nature

The chief end as godliness follows the philosophical appeal to nature. Underneath a teleological argument is a presumption that nature is not neutral and non-ethical.<sup>25</sup> Building on Aristotle's *eudaimonia*, the Stoics lean heavily on the natural order as the guide. As Stoic Arius Didymus explains, happiness "consists in living according to virtue, in living in agreement and further (it is the same thing) in living according to nature. Happiness, Zeno defines as follows: happiness is a smooth flow of life."<sup>26</sup> The Stoics' belief in the reliability of the cosmic order undergirds their confidence in virtue as impervious to misfortune. What makes virtue excellent is its alignment with nature. Justice is not nebulous. It is fixed, and therefore one can be perfectly just (*arête dikaios*). When our life is in accord with the natural order of things we shall be happy.<sup>27</sup> Christians also subscribe to a cosmic "order." However, the order is interwoven with chaos and certainly not fixed. As John Howard Yoder explains, "people who bear crosses are working with the grain

---

Christ. The whole purpose of becoming a Christian is simply nothing else." And yet again: "God became man to turn creatures into sons: not simply to produce better men of the old kind but to produce a new kind of man." Lewis continues: "It is not like teaching a horse to jump better and better but like turning a horse into a winged creature. Of course, once it has got its wings, it will soar over fences which could never have been jumped and thus beat the natural horse at its own game."

<sup>25</sup> Annas, *Morality*, 161. "...[E]thics requires conformity to cosmic nature because cosmic nature displays a model of rational order, which was as rational beings can come to appreciate."

<sup>26</sup> Annas, *Morality*, 163. Arius 77.16-78.6 (*stroebus ecologiae*). See also Seneca who concludes the happy life is the life "in harmony with its own nature." Seneca, *De vita beata* 3.3 cited in Kenneth Steinhauser, "Augustine Laughed (*De beata vita* 2, 10)," *Tradition and the Rule of Faith in the Early Church*, edited by Ronnie Rombs and Alexander Hwang (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 222.

<sup>27</sup> EN I.7.13. See also the doctrine of the golden mean as an example of alignment with natural order in EN II.8-9.

of the universe.”<sup>28</sup> Cross bearing does not lead to an aggregation of worldly power or quell the chaos of the cosmos. Instead, cross-bearing is living in accord with nature by aligning your life with God’s purposes. Christians “working with the (divine) grain” are on “crooked paths made straight and rough ways made smooth.” is another way of saying it.<sup>29</sup> Perfect alignment with God is taught by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Echoing the Levitical command to be holy, Jesus commands his followers to be perfect (*teleioi*) (Lev 19:2; Matt 5:48).

σεσθε οὖν ὑμεῖς τέλειοι ὡς ὁ πατήρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος τέλειός ἐστιν.  
Therefore you shall be complete, as your Father who is in heaven is complete.<sup>30</sup>

The human *telos* is to mirror the divine *telos*. Through the special revelation of Christ, though we see in the mirror dimly, we do have a mirror. While many would brush aside Jesus’ teaching on mirroring the *Pater teleios*, Yoder argues Jesus is the revelation of the norm for humanity. He asks, “If Jesus is human but not normative, is this not the ancient ebionitic heresy? If he be somehow authoritative but not in his humanness, is this not a new Gnosticism?”<sup>31</sup> Similarly, Paul Tillich describes Jesus as the New Being who conquers the gap between the existential and the essential. Christ is the “undistorted nature” of humanity, and therefore, participation in Christ

---

<sup>28</sup> John Howard Yoder, “Armaments and Eschatology,” in *Studies in Christian Ethics 1*, no.1 (1998): 58. cited in Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church’s Witness and Natural Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 17.

<sup>29</sup> Isaiah 40:4, Luke 3:5.

<sup>30</sup> Matthew 5:48 (my translation). *Telos*—complete, final or perfect.

<sup>31</sup> John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 10.

moves one from estranged existence to human essence.<sup>32</sup> Humans in their essential state are godly and *makarios*. Godliness is living in accord with undistorted natural state. The human *telos* is to be essentially human or in other words to be in full alignment with one's ordained essence. Granted this definition sounds a bit tautological, but godliness as the *telos* is anything but obscure. In fact, godliness in the human form has literally been fleshed out for us. In the incarnation, the *telos* of humankind is fully revealed. In other words, Christ displays a human life lived according to human nature.

The one who imitates Jesus Christ, fully human and fully divine, brings forth her humanity, her godliness and is therefore truly *makarios*. In sum, the Christian *telos* meets Aristotle's parameter that the highest end must be complete. *Makarios* is the best *possible* life. James' letter leads one to believe that he is considering the Greek understanding of *eudaimonia* and completeness. He explains the full effect of endurance is "so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing" (Jas 1:2-4).

In response to the Greeks, I do not argue that *makarios* is self-sufficient, but instead, that it is dependent on the Holy Spirit and community. However, recall that Aristotle's account is not self-sufficient either. His sketch of the good requires externals, exemplars, friends, and those to share the benefits of virtues. Finally, like

---

<sup>32</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology I* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 202-203 and *Systematic Theology II* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 118-119.

Aristotle, *makarios* builds on rational action in obedience to the teachings of Jesus and the scriptures.

## VIII.

### **MAKARIOS NOW: CHRISTIAN PARAMETERS**

Given that previous chapters address Aristotle and Augustine's weaknesses, the following paragraphs will include less critique and focus instead on constructing my own, positive account of *makarios* for the contemporary church and its members. My account of *makarios* or godliness shares much in common with Aristotle, Augustine, and Aquinas. It differs in the following ways:

- **Present:** it can be enjoyed here on earth—contra Augustine
- **Relational:** relationship with God through special revelation and action—contra Aristotle
- **Dependent:** requires God and community—contra Aristotle
- **Agency:** *makarios* is commanded and requires obedience—contra spectrum of contemporary theologians
- **Stable:** external threats cannot remove constancy—contra Aristotle
- **Dispossessing and Suffering:** changing the understanding or meaning of “flourishing”—contra Prosperity gospel
- **Inclusive**—as best *possible* life, it considers potential—contra Aristotle

#### **Present: *Makarios* Is at Hand for Christians.**

Happiness in this life is promised in scripture. Detractors of *makarios now* argue because eternal life follows this life, the end (*telos*) and therefore *makarios* in this life will always be incomplete. The infinite possibility of a greater good, perfect knowledge, along with the stumbling block of sin, has led many theologians to

declare authentic happiness in this life as an impossibility. However, a study of the Sermon on the Mount and supporting scriptures will reveal the New Testament promises happiness in this life. Earthly happiness also has champions throughout church history. Ambrose of Milan teaches “a happy life is the reward that we have in the *present*; eternal life is the hope that we have for the *future*.”<sup>1</sup> While Augustine backs away from his early confessions about happiness, his arguments for happiness in this life are informative.

In the scriptures the promise of *makarios now* is offered in the beatitudes, commanded by Jesus and Paul, and used as encouragement throughout the epistles. Jesus commands the disciples to be perfect, complete, love unconditionally, and to be holy and godly. C. S. Lewis tells Christians to take this at face value and believe that Jesus “meant what he said.”<sup>2</sup> Interpretations that conclude the Beatitudes are

---

<sup>1</sup> Ambrose, *De Officiis* 2.5.18, ed. and trans. Ivor J. Davidson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) per Kenneth Steinhauser, “Augustine Laughed (*De beata vita* 2, 10),” *Tradition and the Rule of Faith in the Early Church*, edited by Ronnie Rombs and Alexander Hwang (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 226 (underlined used in chapter 6).

<sup>2</sup> *Telios* in Matthew 5:48 can be translated complete or perfect, according to Arndt et al, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979), 809; as unconditional love according to John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 116-117; or as holy (Lev 19:2); or godly (contextually, “as your Father”). Yoder contends as “indiscriminate” or “unconditional”, *telios* of the Father, is an attainable imperative. In *Mere Christianity: Comprising the Case for Christianity, Christian Behaviour, and Beyond Personality* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), C. S. Lewis shares the confidence of Athanasius. He writes, “The command ‘Be ye perfect’ is not idealistic gas. Nor is it a command to do the impossible. He is going to make us into creatures that can obey that command. He said that we were ‘gods’ and He is going to make good His words. If we let Him — for we can prevent Him, if we choose — he will make the feeblest and filthiest of us into a god or goddess, dazzling, radiant, immortal creatures, pulsating all through with such energy and joy and wisdom and love as

unattainable, optional, and only meant to demonstrate the need for grace are blatantly eisegetical attempts to nullify the very words of Jesus.<sup>3</sup> Willimon and Hauerwas argue that although the call to act like God borders on the absurd, the practical nature of Jesus' teachings—e.g., what to do when someone strikes you on the cheek—conveys, "Jesus certainly thought he was giving us practical, everyday guidance on how to live like disciples."<sup>4</sup>

The resistance to the Sermon on the Mount has cheapened and short changed the benefits of discipleship.<sup>5</sup> Ambrose argues for *makarios now*.<sup>6</sup> He supports his claim for present happiness with Jesus' promise of peace (John 14:27). This peace is a gift and indicative of "perfect virtue (that) possesses tranquility and a calm steadfastness."<sup>7</sup> Further the peace of Christ combats the "enticements of the bodily passions" and more powerful than the "peace that checks the attacks of

---

we cannot now imagine, a bright stainless mirror which reflects back to him perfectly (though, of course, on a smaller scale) His own boundless power and delight and goodness. The process will be long and in parts very painful; but that is what we are in for. Nothing less. He meant what he said," 205-206

<sup>3</sup> In *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, ed. Mary Thomas Noble (Washington: Catholic University Press, 1995), Servais Pinckaers challenges unattainable (135-136), optional (137), and the didactic hermeneutic of harmatology (139-140).

<sup>4</sup> In reference to Luke 5:39. Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1989), 75-76. Similarly, Augustine believed the Sermon on the Mount was the perfect model for Christian living. In his commentary, *Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount*, he writes, "This affirmation is not really rash; it is based on the Lord's own words." cited in Pinckaers, 142.

<sup>5</sup> See Jeffrey P. Greenman, Timothy Larsen, and Stephen R. Spencer, eds. *The Sermon on the Mount through the Centuries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Pinckaers, *Sources*, 139.

<sup>7</sup> Ambrose, "Jacob and the Happy Life" *Seven Exegetical Works* (Washington: Catholic University of America in Association with Consortium, 1972), 162.

barbarians.”<sup>8</sup> Therefore according to Ambrose the gift of Christ’ peace diffuses internal threats (sin) and external threats. Grace overpowers sin and makes the way for *makarios*.

In Chapter 6, I explore Western Christianity’s emphasis on Augustine’s denial of happiness in this life. Pinckaers explains that Protestantism and Roman Catholicism marginalize the Sermon on the Mount preferring to describe it as counsel, not command, because it is unworkable.<sup>9</sup> Both traditions claim the Decalogue as the primary guide for Christian ethics.<sup>10</sup> It could be argued Methodism’s concentration on holiness is an exception to this trend. John Wesley describes authentic faith in action as true religion, “and this is happiness, the happiness for which we were made.”<sup>11</sup> Ellen Charry’s arguments in *God and the Art of Happiness* could be used to show that Western Christianity has focused on Augustine’s doctrines of harmatology and future eschatology to the detriment of his more confident therapeutic soteriology.<sup>12</sup> Augustine actually returns in multiple later writings to his original proposals in *The Happy Life*. Unfortunately, such moments are consistently ignored or marginalized by Western Christian

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 163.

<sup>9</sup> Pinckaers, *Sources*, 134-139.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 139.

<sup>11</sup> Sarah Heaner Lancaster, *The Pursuit of Happiness: Blessing and Fulfillment in Christian Faith* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 39. John Wesley, *Works*, ed. Albert Outler (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987) 4:67.

<sup>12</sup> Ellen Charry, *God and the Art of Happiness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 251-277. Charry’s chapter on Augustine gives great insight into the complexity of Augustine’s understanding of happiness, 25-62.

theologians.<sup>13</sup> His commentary on the Sermon on the Mount is optimistic. He begins with Jesus' warning at the end of the Sermon on the Mount: The one who hears and does is like a wise man who built his house on the rock; the foolish man who does not do what is commanded is like a man who built his house on sand (Matt 7:24-27). From this Augustine infers the Sermon on the Mount is truly meant to be a guide for Christian living.<sup>14</sup> The benefits are peace and perfection in *this* life. Of the beatitude "blessed are the peacemakers," Augustine deduces "this is the peace which is given on earth to men of goodwill; this the life of the fully developed and perfect wise man" and assumes the "likeness of God."<sup>15</sup> Augustine's letter to Proba on prayer also can be used to support *makarios now*. Answering her inquiry about what to pray for, Augustine encourages her to simply "pray for the happy life."<sup>16</sup> It would be illogical to assert Augustine is encouraging her to ask for something God cannot give her.

---

<sup>13</sup> For instance, building on Augustine's doctrine of original sin, John Calvin warned Christians to "keep sobriety, lest forgetful of our limitations we should soar aloft with the greater boldness, and be overcome by the brightness of the heavenly glory. We also feel how we are titillated by an immoderate desire to know more than is lawful." Calvin, *Institutes of The Christian Religion* III.25.10, trans. John Thomas McNeill and Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 988-89, cited in Charry, *Art of Happiness*, 116.

<sup>14</sup> In Augustine's commentary, *Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount*, he writes, "This affirmation is not really rash; it is based on the Lord's own words." Cited in Pinckaers, *Sources*, 142. See also Charry, *Art of Happiness*, 36; *City of God* 19:18; and *On Free Will* asks the question, "does God make us happy or do we make ourselves happy?"

<sup>15</sup> Augustine, *Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount*, II.9 and III.10 in *Commentary on the Lord's Sermon on the Mount: With Seventeen Related Sermons*, trans. Denis J. Kavanagh (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1951). See Pinckaers, *Sources*, for a more hopeful interpretation of Augustine, 141-163.

<sup>16</sup> Pinckaers, *Sources*, 18. Augustine, *Letter 130 to Proba*, The Latin counsel to Proba is "*ora beatum vitam.*"

Similarly, interpreters of John Calvin focus on his teachings on depravity and self-denial. I am cognizant this thesis has depicted Calvin and others with less complexity than they deserve. Calvin's doctrine of sanctification is rigorous and at times places a great deal of confidence in God's ability to work with the sin-sick soul of humanity. For example, reflecting on Titus, Calvin concludes that by grace God "removed the obstacles that chiefly hinder us: namely, ungodliness, to which by nature we are too inclined; and second, worldly desires, which extend more widely."<sup>17</sup> However, the portrayal of Calvin as pessimistic about the capacity of happiness is justified. Despite his claim about the removal of obstacles, he explicitly denies happiness in this life. In fact, he believes the misery and depravity of this life should motivate humans to cast their eyes toward heaven instead of pursuing happiness. Calvin's understanding of cross-bearing serves to illuminate the sinfulness of this world, while my understanding of cross-bearing is that it demands kingdom living and reconciling the world (2 Cor 5:18-20). For Calvin, following Jesus opens one's eyes to a life that is "unhappy in countless ways, and in no respect clearly happy."<sup>18</sup> On my reading of the New Testament, however, Jesus calls followers to a life of obedience with the promise that it offers, presently, a deep sense of happiness.

Jesus offers abundant life now to the disciples and living water now to the Samaritan woman (John 4:14; John 10:10). It is commonly understood the benefits *are* enjoyed in the present. When the conversation moves to *makarios*, the popular

---

<sup>17</sup> John Calvin, *The Institutes of Christian Religion*, 692 on Titus 2:11-14.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 713.

interpretation is that the benefits are pushed to the future. Based on popular understandings, it is hard to imagine Jesus really believes happiness is at hand for those who are persecuted for righteousness sake. However, in his commentary on the Gospel of John, Raymond Brown makes a simple but undeniable grammatical case to support *makarios now*. He explains the problem is that translators fail to differentiate between *eulogeo* and *makarios*. The first is a passive participle; the latter is an adjective. *Eulogeo* is an invocation; *makarios* is a proclamation of fact, involving an evaluative judgment.<sup>19</sup> Building on Brown's argument, Joseph Fitzmeyer reports the adjective *makarios* in Luke 6 emphasizes "resultant

---

<sup>19</sup> Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 553. Brown's argument is remarkably persuasive. He explains, "The Greek *makarios* is often translated 'blessed,' but this leads to confusion; for two sets of words (and ideas) should be kept distinct, one that we may call 'participial,' the other 'adjectival'. Passive participle: Heb. *Barak*, Gr. *Eulogetos*, Lat. *Benedictus*, Eng. Blessed. Adjective: Heb. *Asre*, Gr. *Makarios*, Lat. *Beatus*, Eng. Happy (or as an adjective 'blessed' but there is no way to keep this distinct from the participle). In its proper sense as a passive participle *baruk* is used only of God. 'Blessed be the Lord' (Ps 38:6) means: let the Lord be blessed by men; let him be adored and worshipped. When this participle is extended to men, it invokes on them the benevolence of God and other men. Thus, a "blessing" is an invocation asking that it come about that one is blessed or praised or granted favors. On the other hand, the adjectival set of words represented by *arse* are not part of a wish and do not invoke a blessing; they recognize an existing state of happiness or good fortune. In the OT the adjectival words are used only of men, although in the NT *makarios* is used twice of God (1 Tim 1:11; 6:15). The recognition of the good fortune of men is often implicitly from God's point of view; occasionally the happiness is a future joy that will be received in judgment, but toward which one is well on the way and of which one has incipient possession. Consequently, a *macarism* or beatitude is properly an approving proclamation of fact, involving an evaluative judgment. In the NT the *macarism* reflects the judgment that an eschatological state has been made possible by the heralding of the Kingdom. Matthew and Luke have many of Jesus' *macarisms*; John has only two (here and 20:29); Revelation has seven."

happiness” and the “concrete manifestation of blessing.”<sup>20</sup> Ken Bailey also puts Brown’s argument to use in his chapter on the Sermon on the Mount. He criticizes those who would relegate the beatitudes to the future and claims instead that *makarios* “already exists.”<sup>21</sup>

### **Relational: *Makarios* Builds on Knowledge and Activity**

Over the course of Church history there is little debate that a relationship with God is at the root of discipleship. Aquinas believes our ultimate end is friendship with God.<sup>22</sup> Further, for most theologians that relationship is built on knowledge of God and self. There is also a long history of emphasis on the improvement of knowing through action. Obedience yields deeper understanding. In much contemporary theology, however, I see two competing but equally dangerous trends. The first is an excessive amount of caution about the power of human actions. After the horrifying atrocities of the twentieth century this sentiment is certainly understandable; but should Christian theology grant depravity more power than the Holy Spirit or instead, should Christian theology profess the Spirit’s ability to overcome sin? I think the answer is clear, and all the more so, if we consider the detrimental, practical consequences of believing sin to be more powerful than Spirit. Such belief surely begets passive disciples. The second trend is most prominent in the Prosperity Gospel tradition. Action is demoted and replaced

---

<sup>20</sup> Joseph Fitzmeyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX)* (New York: Doubleday & Co, 1982), 633.

<sup>21</sup> Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 67-68.

<sup>22</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (I-II, 56,3). Jesus’ declaration of friendship in John 15:15 supports my proposal of *makarios now*.

by believing and speaking one's way into blessedness. *Makarios*, however, requires a symbiotic relationship between thought and action.

The noetic role in the pursuit of happiness precedes the Christian tradition. The Delphic oracle, "know thyself" is the point of departure for Socrates' teaching on introspection. Aristotle goes a step further and invites humans to understand as the gods understand.<sup>23</sup> Christian theologians, informed by the unique *ergon, imago Dei* and incarnational theology, almost universally contend one could not "know thyself" without "knowing God." Augustine's dialogue in his *Soliloquies* informs his prayer, "Let me know myself, let me know thee:"

Reason: Now what do you want to know?  
Augustine: All those things which I prayed for.  
Reason: Sum them up briefly.  
Augustine: I desire to know God and the soul.  
Reason: Nothing more?  
Augustine: Absolutely nothing.<sup>24</sup>

Similarly, John Calvin's point of departure in *Institutes on Christian Religion* orders knowledge above all things. He explains, "it is certain that man never achieves a clear knowledge of himself unless he has first looked upon God's face and then

---

<sup>23</sup> EN X.7.8.

<sup>24</sup> Augustine, *Soliloquies* 1. 2. 7. Calvin builds on Augustine's prayer in the first chapter of the *Christian Institutes*, 37, (MPL 32, 872, 886; tr. LCC IV. 26, 41). Augustine's noetic emphasis first appears in *The Happy Life*. "to know precisely and perfectly Him through whom you are led into the truth [the Son], the nature of the truth you enjoy, and the bond [the Holy Spirit] that connects you with the Supreme Measure [the Father] ...is unmistakably the happy life, a life which is perfect, toward which it must be presumed that, hastening, we can be led by a well-founded faith, joyful hope, and ardent love," 53.

descends from contemplating him to scrutinize himself.”<sup>25</sup> The intertwining relationship is also supported by the two natures of Christ. One cannot know what it means to be fully human without knowing Christ.

While the above writings prioritize knowledge of God and self, they do not directly link it to blessedness in this life. In the gospels Jesus equates knowing (seeing) with blessedness. In Matthew he tells the disciples, “Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear” (Matt 13:16).<sup>26</sup> After satisfying Thomas’ doubts, Jesus identifies the happiness that can be found through belief without seeing: “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe” (John 20:29). With the popularity of virtue ethics, there has come the positive development of knowing God through the sacraments. This is a welcomed shift, given quandary ethics did not offer much in the way of maturation. Stanley Hauerwas, Charles Pinches, and Samuel Wells contend that worship and the sacraments are the means to a virtuous life.<sup>27</sup> Their emphasis on spiritual practices will find much support from the desert fathers and the Eastern Orthodox practice of *askesis*.<sup>28</sup> Worship, the sacraments, and self-denying practices, such as fasting, certainly lead to a more blessed life; however, the New Testament scriptures are

---

<sup>25</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes*, 37.

<sup>26</sup> See also Luke 10:23. Ignatian Spirituality utilizes the sense of seeing as a means for knowing, as do other writings of beatific visions.

<sup>27</sup> Stanley Hauerwas and Charles Pinches, *Christians Among the Virtues: Theological Conversations with Ancient and Modern Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 68-69. Samuel Wells, *Improvisation: The Drama of Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 82-85.

<sup>28</sup> For example, John Climacus’ *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, trans. Colm Luibheid and Norman Russell (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1982), includes the practices of fasting and prayer throughout the thirty stages on the way to *theosis*.

greatly skewed toward activity in accord with Christ teachings as the means to blessedness.

The priority of action over knowledge is found throughout *Nicomachean Ethics*. Despite his concluding remarks in Book X, Aristotle begins his account of good by declaring that a life of activity is “called life more fully.”<sup>29</sup> It is not enough to simply know what happiness is—you must strive for it. He plainly illustrates his point: “Just as Olympic prizes are not for the finest and strongest, but for the contestants—since it is only these who win—the same is true in life; among the fine and good people, only those who *act* correctly win the prize.”<sup>30</sup> Having knowledge of goodness or capacity for goodness is not enough. Studying medicine is not an end in itself. Unlike the Platonist who preferred seeking the *Idea of Good*, he points out that “we want to be healthy rather than simply to know what health is.” The same is true of Christian pursuit of *makarios*—we do not want to simply know what human nature is; we want to be fully human.

Ambrose connects happiness in this life with reason and action. In *Jacob and the Happy Life*, he writes:

Now the perfect life is not that of the senses, but the life of reason, lived according to management exercised by the reason and natural vigor possessed by the mind. In this there is found, not a part of man, but his completion, which appears not so much in his status as in his actions, and these, after all make a man happy.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> EN I.7.13 Prior to this declaration he purports, “Happiness, then, is apparently something complete and self-sufficient, since it is the end of the things achievable in action.” EN.7.8.

<sup>30</sup> EN I.8.10.

<sup>31</sup> *De Iacob et beata vita*, I.7.29.

Reason put into action completes humankind and produces happiness. While many virtue ethicists point to worship, sacraments or orthodox belief for the development of virtues and the pursuit of blessedness, the scriptures connect blessedness with action. The sheer number of verses that connect *makarios* and action speak for themselves.

Blessed is that slave whom his master will find at work (*poiouvta*) when he arrives<sup>32</sup> (Matt 24:46).

While he was saying this, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you!" But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and *obey* it"<sup>33</sup> (Luke 11:27-28)!

Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it; for the time is near (Rev 1:3).

See, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book (Rev 22:7).

Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they will have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by the gates (Rev 22:14).

In these passages it is evident that *makarios* is formulaic. Two more scriptures on knowing and doing support my argument that action leads to *blessedness*. First,

---

<sup>32</sup> *Poiouvta* from *poiew* is most commonly translated "do" or "make"; secondary translations include: perform, keep, carry out, practice. Arndt, *Lexicon*, 680-683. See also Luke 12:37, 38, 43.

<sup>33</sup> Note in this passage, Mary, the mother of God, is sidelined for hearers who act. This passage is consistent with John the Baptist's denial of the power of ancestral lineage (Luke 3:7-9) and the paradigmatic shift to a gospel for the Jews and Gentiles who act.

consider Jesus' teaching in John after washing the disciples' feet (John 13:17).<sup>34</sup>

( X) If you know (*oidate*) these things,

(+Y) if you *do* (*poiouta*) them

(=Z) you are blessed (*makario*).

Equally striking is James 1:25.<sup>35</sup> Hearing (*knowing*) is not sufficient. Instead those doers (*poietes*) who act (*ergou*)—they will be blessed in their doing. Knowing (x) requires doing (y) equals blessedness (z). The formula is the same as in the Torah; obedience yields blessedness, but the nature of blessedness in the New Testament excludes external goods. Obedience will not produce fortune, progeny, or victory in battle. It will however nurture the best *possible* life, a life of godliness and happiness.

### **Dependency and Agency**

The emphasis on obedience may lead some to charge this proposal with the Pelagian heresy of works righteousness. Ellen Charry deduces Augustine's struggle with Pelagius prodded him towards a conservative approach. She writes that Augustine "teeters on a trembling fence, fearing that any concession of power to us would undermine God's power, but also knowing that denying all power to humans would destroy moral responsibility."<sup>36</sup> Jennifer Herdt argues that the Reformers overlook the balance of human and divine agency in Augustine's work and instead focus on Augustine's assertion that the pagans' pursuit of virtues is a rejection of

---

<sup>34</sup> If you know (*oidate*) these things, you are blessed (*makario*) if you *do* (*poiouta*) them (John 13:17).

<sup>35</sup> But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers (*poietes*) who act (*ergou*)—they will be blessed in their doing (Jas 1:25).

<sup>36</sup> Charry, *God and Art*, 36.

grace. She dubs Luther and Calvin's theology of agency "hyperaugustianism."<sup>37</sup> Martin Luther's preoccupation with sin led him to teach that "all genuine development in goodness rests on a prior recognition...of the bankruptcy of human moral agency and of utter dependency on God."<sup>38</sup> As noted, Calvin understands the response to the knowledge of God to be self-scrutiny. Human agency becomes an exercise of self-eradication and rooting out sin.<sup>39</sup> Their unwillingness to couple knowledge of God with human capacity for good results in radical passivity. Karl Barth is concerned with an emphasis on human agency because it operates under the pretense that humans are in control. Hauerwas interprets Barth's understanding "to be out of control is what it means to learn to live eschatologically."<sup>40</sup> I appreciate this critique, but argue Barth is addressing the myth of autonomy in favor of dependency. Humans' ability to pursue goodness is revealed in the economic Trinity. God, the creator, creates us in the image of God and with the capacity for godliness. Christ, the redeemer, extends saving grace for healing (*sozo*) of humankind. The Holy Spirit then empowers human agency as guide, advocate and giver of gifts. Finally, knowing God through the revelation of full humanity in Jesus

---

<sup>37</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes* III.XIV.3, 770. Ratcheting it up a notch, John Calvin contends the vain effort to pursue virtue is not only undeserving of reward but instead the prideful deserve punishment, "because by the pollution of their hearts they defile God's good works."

<sup>38</sup> Herdt, *Putting on Virtues*, 341.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid; See also Jacqueline Lapsley, "A Happy Blend: Isaiah's Vision of Happiness (and Beyond)," ed. Brent Strawn, *The Bible and the Pursuit of Happiness: What the Old and New Testaments Teach Us about the Good Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 93-94.

<sup>40</sup> Hauerwas, *Approaching the End*, 219.

Christ, not only illuminates sinfulness but also godliness. This account affirms that it is only by God's grace that humans can become and, in fact, are commanded, to become *makarios*.<sup>41</sup>

For humans alone it is impossible, but with God all things are possible (Matt 19:26). Aquinas' commentary on *Nicomachean Ethics* creates space for divine and human agency to work in tandem. He writes, "the fact that happiness has a human cause does not do away with its chief characteristic, that is most excellent and divine...a thing is not called divine only because it comes from God but also because it makes us like God in goodness."<sup>42</sup> That is to say, our participation in the pursuit of virtue makes us like God in goodness. Herdt describes this as grace-enabled human agency.

Herdt also addresses modern philosophers' rejection of virtues. Protestant hyper-Augustinians claim acquisition of virtue via human moral agency is a rejection of grace. Eighteenth century modern philosophers (Rousseau, Hume, and Kant) claim the quest to acquire virtues is primarily an expression of self-love, recognition, and pride, and therefore, the quest to be virtuous is motivated by second order aims. Like Augustine and Calvin, these philosophers argue putting on virtues is an exercise in hypocrisy. Herdt classifies Luther's critique of virtues as one

---

<sup>41</sup> Karl Barth was as equally concerned about works righteousness as the Reformers; however, he asserts that the Spirit not only gives humans the capacity to be agents, but also eases them towards godliness. To leave humanity neutral would "be a strange freedom."

<sup>42</sup> Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. C. I. Litzinger (Notre Dame, IN: Dumb Ox, 1993), 56.

of pure passivity and Kant's understanding of virtues as one of pure activity. Neither Luther nor Kant can imagine grace-enabled agency.<sup>43</sup>

Further, the pursuit of virtues has always been argued to occur in community. McIntyre demonstrates that the common Athenian assumption is that the development and execution of virtues occur in community. He assesses "to be a good man will in every Greek view be at least closely allied to being a good citizen."<sup>44</sup> Certainly for Aristotle *eudaimonia* requires friends and not just any friends, but friends in likeness of virtue.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, Hauerwas and Pinches conclude, "*our* living well (*eu zen*) is *my* living well. I must see that I cannot live well without this other's guidance. So it is that I need her friendship for happiness, and for virtue."<sup>46</sup> In contrast to zero-sum theory, the upbuilding of a community is intertwined with living the good life. In addition to a dependency on God, Christians understand the pursuit of happiness is only possible within the ecclesial community. Individual pursuits lack the necessary guides for knowing and acting. Habituation for Christians occurs in the church—encountering the gospel through scripture, worship and acts of justice, mercy and peace. The need for community is at the heart of Judaism. The Decalogue, while addressed to the individual, is for the purpose of

---

<sup>43</sup> Herdt, *Putting on Virtues*, 341-352.

<sup>44</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 135.

<sup>45</sup> EN VIII.3; EN VIII.9-12 provides further commentary on political benefits.

<sup>46</sup> Hauerwas and Pinches *Christians among Virtues*, 51. In EN, *eu zen* (living well or having a good life) suggests the whole life. EN IV.2 Irwin notes, 175.

fostering a faithful, vibrant covenantal community.<sup>47</sup> Rather than contributing to pride and self-love, the pursuit of *makarios* is dependent on community and fosters humility.

If humans participate in their own happiness through faithfulness, then empowered by the Spirit, their happiness can increase over a lifetime. John Wesley preaches that through rejoicing and prayer one's "happiness still increases as they grow up into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." The move away from passivity towards grace-enabled agency inevitably creates fluidity in happiness. Any movement of happiness from one degree to the next begs the question is happiness ever complete. Aristotle's notion of sufficiency (lacking in nothing) makes theoretical sense, but intuitively the idea of a static state of goodness is absurd. Human beings grow and stumble through a lifetime. While malleable, the standing of human happiness is steadfast. This resiliency of happiness is as Brent Strawn describes "dynamic of sober-eyed happiness— the 'triumph of life.'"<sup>48</sup> The triumph is made possible by the immovable Holy Spirit.<sup>49</sup>

### **Excursus: Understanding Human Agency**

Aristotle is critical of Plato and Socrates who "believe that the goal of life is to know virtue."<sup>50</sup> According to Aristotle, Socrates presumes "once you know what

---

<sup>47</sup> Jacqueline Lapsley points to the prophet Isaiah's connection of righteous living in community to "peaceful habitation" (Isa 37:17-18). Lapsley, "Happy Blend," 88.

<sup>48</sup> Strawn, *Bible and Pursuit*, 289.

<sup>49</sup> "But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads in every place the fragrance that comes from knowing him" (2 Cor 2:14).

<sup>50</sup> EE I.5.

justice is, you are a just person,” but in the productive sciences (versus theoretical) what is most valuable is to “know whence it (virtue) arises rather than to know its nature.”<sup>51</sup> The desire is to be courageous, just, and healthy; not simply to know what courage, justice and health are.

Even though the acquisition of virtue is referred to as the mystery of habituation, there is general consensus about the key factors. First, it is necessary to demonstrate virtues can be learned. Philosophers and theologians agree virtue development is acquired through the repetition of acts, imitation, and in community. Secondly, in Christianity virtue cultivation also requires the gifts and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Servais Pinckaers provides a robust definition of ethics that doubles as a description of the means to blessedness. Ethics are “the branch of theology that studies human acts so as to direct them to a loving vision of God seen as our true, complete happiness and our final end. The vision is *attained* by means of grace, the virtues, and the gifts, in the light of revelation and reason.”<sup>52</sup> The path to *makarios* is dependent on God (infused virtues, revelation, gifts).

Virtues of character result from habit and can be taught. They are not contrary to nature: “habit will not change the direction of a falling stone”; nor are they by nature: if something has one condition by nature, habituation cannot bring it

---

<sup>51</sup> Ibid I.5.

<sup>52</sup> Pinckaers, *Sources*, 8. See also Jennifer Herdt, *Putting on Virtues*, 350. “Thus it is emphasized that habituation in the Christian life takes place through the encounter with scriptural narratives and more generally through participation in the practices and traditions of the church, including the sacramental life of the church.”

to another.<sup>53</sup> Aristotle's elimination of "by nature or contrary to nature" mirrors the relationship of existential and essential in Christianity. Bridging the two requires the Holy Spirit. Jesus relieves the disciples' anxiety of knowing righteousness by promising the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of Truth is *paraclete* (comes alongside, advocate) and "will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you" (John 14:17, 26). Timothy describes the scriptures as "useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16). The two are intertwined. Calvin teaches "the Word will not find acceptance in men's hearts before it is sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit."<sup>54</sup> The third component for illumination is the gift of a covenant community.

Aristotle's requirement for friendship is echoed by the essential need for a covenant community. The church is the community where discourse, prudence and reason lead to the discovery of truth.<sup>55</sup> Beyond the discourse, the community informs orthodox imitation. Paul implores the church in Corinth as a community to "be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1). This passage not only reveals the call to imitate Christ; it also introduces the community as the source of a mentor/mentee relationship. As Hauerwas teaches, "one can only learn how to be virtuous, to be like Jesus, by learning from others how that is done. To be like Jesus

---

<sup>53</sup> EN II.1.1-2.

<sup>54</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, VII.4, 79

<sup>55</sup> Ambrose, *Exegetical Works*, 119. "Necessary for the training of all men is good discourse, full of prudence, while the mind given to reason excels in virtue and restrains its passions, for virtue is teachable. Craig Dykstra provides a similar list in his essay "Reconceiving Christian Practices," in *Virtues & practices in the Christian tradition: Christian ethics after MacIntyre*. Harrisburg, Pa: Trinity Pr Int'l, 1997, 176.

requires that I become part of a community that practices (Christian) virtues..."<sup>56</sup>

Hauerwas compares the role of mentors in Christian living to his own experience learning to lay bricks. As a novice, he had to first learn the most basic skills, e.g. the consistency of the mud, long before he could actually begin laying bricks. The craft is learned from an experienced craftsman. Christians must "apprentice himself or herself to moral people."<sup>57</sup> Hauerwas did not learn to make mud to the precise consistency on his first attempt. A novice learns a craft through repetitive actions.

Aristotle taught the virtues are learned the same way someone acquires a craft. We become builders by building and harpists by playing the harp.<sup>58</sup> So too, we become forgiving persons by forgiving. We become Christ-like by acting like Christ. The connection between doing and blessedness is demonstrated above. The repetition of *doing* merciful, loving, and sacrificial acts makes the virtues part of who we are. Over time, being merciful and forgiving becomes second nature. Decisions actually become non-decisions. We do not decide whether to forgive, it just becomes a part of who we are. Conversely, if we hold onto grudges, it becomes a part of who we are and our cultivated instinct. Coming full circle to community and mimesis, the right guides are necessary to insure the actions being repeated are virtuous.

Repetitive actions can foster vices just as well as virtues. As Aristotle says, "playing

---

<sup>56</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, "The Peaceable Kingdom," from *The Hauerwas Reader* (London: Duke University Press, 2001), 121.

<sup>57</sup> Hauerwas, *Reader*, 528-529. In addition to Aristotle, Hauerwas is influenced by the work of Alasdair McIntyre. McIntyre taught, "that it is only by participation in a rational practice-based community that one becomes rational." Alasdair McIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (London: Duckworth, 1988), 396.

<sup>58</sup> EN II.1.4 "Similarly, we become just by doing just actions, temperate by doing temperate actions, brave by doing brave actions."

the harp makes both good and bad harpists. Building well makes good builders, building badly makes bad ones.”<sup>59</sup> Music teachers often say, “Practice makes permanent, not perfect.”

Finally, the good requires pleasure in the right things, in the right amounts and for the right reasons.<sup>60</sup> Aristotle argues virtuous activity is pleasant in itself. He illustrates the correlation first with the familiar and then with virtues. Everyone would agree that “each type of person finds pleasure in whatever he is called a lover of; a horse, for instance, pleases the horse-lover.”<sup>61</sup> Likewise, if someone loves virtue, she will find pleasure in performing said virtue. “No one would call a person just if he did not enjoy doing just actions, or generous if he did not enjoy generous actions.”<sup>62</sup> Therefore virtuous Christians will find pleasure in their acts of mercy, forgiveness and justice. Julia Annas explains, “One’s conception of pleasure is internal to one’s notion of the good.”<sup>63</sup> If Christians did not find pleasure in merciful acts; their understanding of the good is perverted and their virtues are mere semblances of virtue.

Along the Way, Christians encounter fewer moral dilemmas and discover the virtuous and happy life. The path is long and requires vigilance in addition to the

---

<sup>59</sup> EN II.1.6.

<sup>60</sup> EN II.7.2, “in the right way, as prescribed for the sake of what is fine, since this is the end aimed at by virtue.”

<sup>61</sup> EN I.8.10.

<sup>62</sup> EN I.8.12.

<sup>63</sup> Annas, *Morality*, 291. “Learning to be virtuous involves learning to take pleasure in virtuous activities; the latter is not something added on to the former but is part of it and bound up with it,” 289.

above means of cultivation. As Aristotle wrote, “one swallow does not make a spring nor does one day make us a blessed and happy life.”

### **Threats to Makarios: Internal and External**

The greatest weakness to Aristotle’s account of happiness is his compromise on constancy. He classifies good strokes of fortune as adornment to the one who is already happy, and he argues “no blessed person could ever become miserable.”<sup>64</sup> A happy person will make good use of whatever externals, good or bad, come her way, just as a “good shoemaker will make the finest shoe from the hides given to him.”<sup>65</sup> Up to this point, Aristotle sounds much like the Stoics, but when he considers the tragedy of Priam, he concludes such a person will never become miserable or blessed. Further he says it is nonsense that a truly virtuous person could be happy on the rack.<sup>66</sup> He does believe a happy person can recover from misfortune, which furthers my claim that Aristotle’s account contains fluidity. In the chapter that follows these statements, Aristotle ultimately concedes to the intuitive pull and tacks on a myriad of required externals:

Nonetheless, happiness evidently also needs external goods to be added, as we said, since we cannot, or cannot easily, do fine actions if we lack the resources. For first of all, in many actions we use friends, wealth, and political power just as we use instruments. Further deprivation of certain [externals]—for instance, good birth, good children, beauty---mars our blessedness. For we do not altogether have the character of happiness if we look utterly repulsive or are ill-born, solitary, or childless; and we have it even less, presumably, if our children or friends are totally bad, or were good but have died.<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup> EN I.10.12-13.

<sup>65</sup> EN I.10.13.

<sup>66</sup> EN VII.13.3.

<sup>67</sup> EN I.8.15.

It appears the *activity of the soul according to virtue* is only half of the formula for *eudaimonia*. I have already reviewed Arius Didymus' and Antiochus' proposals for some sort of middle state. While noble, their theories do not resolve the inherent contradiction of Aristotle's requirement for external goods.

A Christian account is obligated to determine the impact of external goods on *makarios*. The ostensibly contradictory Christian claim that suffering is a mark of blessedness is a departure from any philosophical or other religious teaching. If misfortune, e.g. persecution, leads to *makarios*, does prosperity yield unhappiness? One might argue a Christian account has much in common with the Stoics; however for Stoics *eudaimonia* is sustained *despite* misfortune. Whereas for Christians, misfortune can be a means to *makarios*. The following section will also counter any claims that Christian happiness is acquisitive.

A Christian account must also consider the impact of a deficiency of internal or spiritual goods. The religious presumption of and preoccupation with disordered love, or sin, makes the relationship between virtuous activity and *makarios* much more complex. Unlike Aristotle, Christians cannot presume magnanimity is within their grasp while they are in a fallen state. Instead, they must consider the impact of internal weaknesses on *makarios*.

### **Internal**

The sinfulness of humanity is obvious and from Paul, it is known that "all fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). Yet, it is also Paul who invites Christians to "be transformed by the renewing of your minds" so that they may know God's

perfect will (Rom 12:2). Christ's death on the cross overcomes sinfulness "so that the many will be righteous" (Rom 5:18-19). The impediment of flawed internal goods is swept away by grace. According to Paul, partners in the new covenant are new creations.<sup>68</sup> A graced state is indicative and makes up for insufficient internal goods. Similarly, in Judaism, God's faithfulness overcomes the shortcomings of the Hebrew people (Jer 31:33). The righteousness of the people of God does not free them from insufficient internal goods; rather, God's righteousness and steadfast love (*hesed*) overcomes human deficiencies. John Wesley is credited with saying, "God can do something with sin beyond forgiving it." I agree and I think that something is godliness, and godliness yields happiness. The issue of sin and internal weakness follows the previous argument on agency; so I will move to the more challenging Christian claim of resiliency in the midst of suffering.

### **External Goods**

In the Bible the connection between blessedness and persecution is as strong as the tie of blessedness to obedience. Of course, it is obedience to God's will that leads to persecution.

Blessed are those who are persecuted *for righteousness' sake*, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matt 5:10).

Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely *on my account* (Matt 5:11).

Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you *on account of the Son of Man* (Luke 6:22).

Blessed is anyone who endures *temptation (hypomeno)*. Such a one has stood

---

<sup>68</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:17.

the test and will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him (Jas 1:12).

But even if you do suffer *for doing what is right*, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated (1 Pet 3:14).

If you are reviled *for the name of Christ*, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God, is resting on you (1 Pet 4:14).

Like the *macarisms* on action, the above verses are formulaic: obedience that results in suffering or being reviled = *makarios*. In addition to these scriptures, the lives of Jesus and the apostles illustrate the dispossessing nature of Christian happiness.

The narratives in the following paragraphs reveal that Christian *makarios* is antithetical to Greek philosophy, Deuteronomic thinking, and the Prosperity Gospel. Besides the above scriptures, the life of Jesus and lives of the apostles illustrate the claim.

Peter, Simon, James and John respond to Jesus' invitation to come and follow by giving up their livelihood (Matt 4:18-22). The apostle Paul is the most dramatic example of an apostle who gives up privilege for a more blessed life that is marked by sufferings. Paul is powerful and wealthy. He is born a Roman citizen, educated—bilingual in fact, sent off to school to study under the most esteemed Rabbi, Rabbi Gimiel, and “advanced in Judaism beyond many among his people of the same age.” In his own words, he “a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless” (Phil 3:5-6). He knows Deuteronomy—and keeps the law down to the letter. According to Deuteronomy, one would presume Paul's life is blessed. However, in verse 8 Paul

calls these attributes dog scraps in comparison to knowing Christ. *Gnoseos Christou* is the beginning of true blessedness; without it knowledge of God and self is incomplete.

The dog scraps are traded for a great deal of suffering. In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul waves his credentials against his detractors so the Corinthians will see he is a true apostle—blessed by the Spirit. Consider Paul’s biography in 2 Corinthians that sums up his new blessed life:

I am a better one: with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless floggings, and often near death. Five times I have received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I received a stoning. Three times I was shipwrecked; for a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from bandits, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers and sisters; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, hungry and thirsty, often without food, cold and naked. And, besides other things, I am under daily pressure because of my anxiety for all the churches (2 Cor 23b-29).

Does he sound cursed or blessed? Paul understands persecution to be connected to faithfulness so strongly that he uses his suffering to demonstrate authenticity. If we consider the blessings and the curses found in Deuteronomy 28, there is no doubt that Paul would be considered cursed and the presumption would be that he did something evil in the sight of the Lord. The Greek and the Deuteronomist would conclude: this man is cursed—he is not *makarios* or *eu zen kai eu prattein*. Yet, Paul sees himself as extremely blessed. His letters are laden with gratitude for the blessing of knowing Christ. More specifically, knowing that the blessed one, Jesus

the Christ, was crucified assures him that the benefits of faithfulness are not external rewards, but an immovable relationship with God.

This brings us to the most important narrative display of blessedness—a refugee as a child, a common laborer, owning nothing, no wife, no progeny, no land, no crops, dying homeless; at his worst moment friends betray him, abandon him, and deny him. He is tortured, stripped, beaten, and left to die on a cross. Left alone to cry out his God forsakenness. Is Jesus blessed? Yes, of course. Perfect and obedient to the point of death, he achieves the human *telos* (Phil 2:8; 1 John 3:5; 2 Cor 5:21). Does he live the happy life—not superficial happiness—a happy life that is a life as God intends? Yes, he lives the best *possible* life fulfilling the *ergon* of humanity by taking on human form and aligning his life in his obedience to God’s will (Phi 2:6-8). But the Pharisees would say, “Certainly he is cursed.” Perhaps they would highlight Deuteronomy 21:22, “Cursed is anyone who hangs on a tree.” But, the Christian interpretation of the cross is the opposite of a curse (separation from God). The cross is the beginning of blessedness for all of humankind. In Jesus’ life, death and resurrection, we see God; know God. We stumble into blessedness.

The New Testament claims of happiness in the midst of suffering are upheld by Ambrose. Ambrose affirms happiness in the present, but denies external benefits through divine favor. He writes, “it is certain, too, that it is not in the possession of external or bodily advantages that life is rendered happy, but only in the display of virtue, through which eternal life is gained.”<sup>69</sup> In Ambrose’s essay *Jacob and the*

---

<sup>69</sup> *De Officiis* 2.5.18, per Steinhauser, “Augustine Laughed,” 226 (italics mine).

*Happy Life* he declares Jacob's blindness does not interfere with his happiness, which is stable, because Jacob's spiritual vision remains. He then confidently defends the happiness of the heroes of the faith:

Who would say Joseph was not happy in prison, where, with the spirit of wisdom, he interpreted the truth of the dreams he had learned and revealed the course of future events? Who would say that Isaia was not happy, when he was being cut in two? Or Jeremia, when he was being drowned? Or holy Daniel, when he stood fearlessly among the lions and a prophet seized by an angel brought him his midday meal?<sup>70</sup>

As if these examples were not strong enough to make his point about the stability of happiness in God, Ambrose follows these examples with a commentary on the mother and seven sons who were executed in 4 Maccabees.<sup>71</sup> After the priest Eleazar was killed, the writer of Maccabees declares "What person who lives...by the whole rule of philosophy, and trusts in God, and knows that it is blessed to endure any suffering for the sake of virtue, would not be able to overcome the emotions through godliness?"<sup>72</sup> The author then provides a gruesome account of each son's torture and execution. The mother watches and encourages her children to remain steadfast in their faith. After all her children have been killed, the mother, unnamed but declared a soldier of God, throws herself into the fire.<sup>73</sup> Ambrose boldly, invidiously, asks, "Who would say that she was not happy?"<sup>74</sup> His question is

---

<sup>70</sup> Ambrose, *Fathers*, 172-173. Genesis 40; Hebrews 11:37; and Daniel 6:2-29; 14:33-39.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid* 173-182.

<sup>72</sup> 4 Maccabees 7:21-22.

<sup>73</sup> 4 Maccabees 8:3-17:1.

<sup>74</sup> Ambrose, *Fathers*, 181.

invidious, but Ambrose precisely represents the scriptures by ascribing blessedness to the persecution.

It is no coincidence that the Maccabees' account and the later epistles (James, 1 Peter) interpret persecution for faithfulness as a mark of blessedness. These accounts and the Revelation of John are exhortations for the people of God to keep the faith in the face of Roman tyranny. Accounts of Christian martyrs are circulated to encourage others to find happiness in the opportunity to be faithful witnesses to God and not renounce Christ as their Lord and Savior.<sup>75</sup>

The loss of external goods, suffering and persecution are marks of blessedness. Given the explicit connection between persecution and *makarios* in the New Testament and that there are no scriptures in the New Testament to counter the connection, the claim is not debatable. Clearly the Christian account of the relation between external goods and *makarios* is one hundred and eighty degrees from the Deuteronomic account. If the gospels and epistles are not enough, the

---

<sup>75</sup> Like Maccabees, Christian martyrs facing torture and execution were recorded to have smiled in the face of death. An account of the death of twenty-two year-old Perpetua states the Christians, "marched joyfully as though they were going to heaven, with calm faces, trembling, with joy rather than fear." Karen Louise Jolly, *Tradition and Diversity: Christianity in a World Context to 1500* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), 81. St. Ignatius of Antioch actively pursued persecution. "For he (Ignatius) inwardly reflected, that the confession which is made by **martyrdom**, would bring him into a yet more intimate relation to the **Lord**...(after being sentenced by Trajan to be devoured by beasts) he (Ignatius) cried out with joy, "I thank you, O Lord, that You have vouchsafed to **honour** me with a perfect **love** towards You, and have made me to be bound with iron chains, like Your **Apostle Paul**." *The Martyrdom of Ignatius*, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0123.htm>. For more accounts of joy in the face of torment see Thielemann J. van Braght, *Martyrs Mirror: The Story of Seventeen Centuries of Christian Martyrdom from the Time of Christ to A.D. 1660* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 1938).

narratives of Jesus, Paul and the disciples display happiness is not related to external goods. It is not until the twentieth century that the Deuteronomic model, known in Christianity as the Prosperity Gospel, gains widespread attention from preachers and theologians. The idea that the accumulation of power and wealth as blessedness is hedonic, sinful and laden with causalities. Returning to our *arche* (known to us), moving from familiar to principle, the scriptures on persecution and the narrative displays in the New Testament are familiar and the appearances of the martyrs are known to us. *Makarios* is undeniably dispossessing. While the above claim is plain and irrefutable, the explanation for how hardship gains happiness and blessedness is far more complex, and theologians have not provided a satisfactory explanation.

### **Constancy**

Aristotle writes that anyone who claims someone could be happy on the rack is speaking nonsense.<sup>76</sup> Christians claim persecution is at the heart of happiness. The paradox is understandably a stumbling block. Paul knew preaching Christ crucified would be perceived as *morian* to the Gentiles and a *skandalon* to the Jews. In today's terms, Christ crucified is oxymoronic (sharply stupid) to the Greek philosophers and a scandalous affront to God for the Jews. Secular and popular Christian understandings concur with the ancient Greeks. I contend the root cause of this misunderstanding is a failure of Christian teachers to provide a compelling

---

<sup>76</sup> EN VII.13.3.

account of the human *telos*, the nature of happiness, and how Christian *makarios* provides the greatest stability for happiness.

The stability of Christian *makarios* is intertwined with a robust account of the nature of happiness. In sum, the essential and unique *telos* of humankind must be identified as godlikeness. Godlikeness, living fully into *imago Dei* is blessedness, and blessedness is relational, dependent, knowing and active.

Jesus Christ is the roadmap for humankind's *telos* and *makarios*. Christians confess Jesus Christ is fully human and fully divine. They also agree that he teaches with his words and his acts. Jesus embodies almost all of the macarisms discussed. Jesus first washes the disciples feet and is blessed (godly) in his doing (John 13:17). Jesus mourns and is meek (Matt 5:4-5). He hungers for righteousness, is merciful, pure in heart and a peacemaker (Matt 5:7-9). Jesus is persecuted and reviled (Matt 5:11). All these things reveal the nature of God and the nature of humankind in its fullest. When Christians participate in or experience these things, they are godly and fully alive.

*Makarios* as a relationship with God in a covenantal community is unyielding and resilient. The sidelining of external goods contributes to stability, rather than to detriment. The stability of the relationship is rooted in the stability of God's steadfast love and abiding presence and not in the ups and downs of life. Brent Strawn recognizes that external threats are inevitable, but claims that they do not have the power to undermine happiness. He concludes,

...the truly happy life, the flourishing life in all its fullness, is never removed from real life in all its fullness, and that such fullness experiences real pain as

well as pleasure. And yet, despite all that, life “finds a way” because, in no small part, it is on its way.<sup>77</sup>

The peace and tranquility the Greeks sought is found in the belief that Christians are justified by grace - a grace that is indicative, four-square, unconditional and complete (2 Cor 5:17). In Romans Paul specifically addresses the issue of constancy and stability of blessedness despite severe external threats.

If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else?...Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered” (Rom 8:31b, 32, 35).

The above litany of hardships is not theoretical. Rather, he is speaking from “things known” to him from experience and special revelation. Relationship and dependency on God and covenant community are constants. *Makarios* is dynamic in the realm of agency. The deeper one knows and acts on the truth of the Gospel, the stronger the relationship and, in turn, the more blessed they become. Fluidity within *makarios* faces the same protests as Aristotle’s magnanimous person. Kraut challenges objectionists by asking, what is the required proximity to the ideal?<sup>78</sup> Accounts that emphasize external goods are vulnerable to slipping into some sort of middle state. The dynamism of *makarios* does not waiver back and forth across the threshold of happiness. Happiness in God is present and achieves the ideal. Through relationship, knowledge, and action, Christians enjoy *makarios* now and eternally.

---

<sup>77</sup> Strawn, *Bible and Pursuit*, 311.

<sup>78</sup> Richard Kraut, “Two Conceptions of Happiness,” *The Philosophical Review* 88.2 (1979), 190.

The apostle Paul captures the present state and future state by declaring Christians are *being transformed* (past participle).

We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image [image of God] from one degree of glory to another (2 Cor 3:18a).

Already, Christians are living in the same image of God. This state of godliness is the *telos* of humanity and complete. In this state Christians welcome the eternal desire to behold the glory of God.

Finally, constancy is interrelated to *makarios* now (present). Ecstatic states or theophanies are temporary, transitory and vulnerable to external threats. It is the constancy of a *makarios* rooted in dependence, relationship, knowledge, and action that makes *makarios* now a possibility. Christians can resolutely affirm the principle: a Christian account of blessedness is stable against external threats *because* of things known to us.

## CONCLUSION

Jesus believes in happiness (*makarios*) and wants us to be happy in this life. Through Jesus' teachings, we learn about happiness and what it looks like. Against Aristotle, I celebrate the dependency of the individual on God and community for happiness. Contrary to Aristotle's fear of vulnerability, dependence strengthens and makes happiness resilient. Contrary to Augustine, I argue happiness is achievable in this life.

The soteriological emphases in the New Testament favor healing (*sozo*) of the human condition in this life. A saved human is a new creation living fully into their human essence as ordained at creation. Working from an Aristotelian framework, whoever is achieving their *telos* is in the best possible state, and therefore living the best possible life (*eudaimonia*).

## Implications

At the outset I identified four casualties of blessed distortion: the cursed, humanist, literalist and disciple. By providing an alternative understanding of blessedness, the poor cannot be deemed cursed because they lack external goods. In fact, the poor will be called blessed. The humanist will not be given a theology to disdain that portrays God as arbitrary and cruel. The literalist who suffers the fate of Priam will look to Paul, instead of Josiah, to understand how God is at work in his life. Considering the grievances of the first three, it is apparent a theology of happiness could contribute to conversations regarding theodicy. Finally, the disciple will better organize her life around a divinely ordained *telos*. Instead of a theology

that focuses on gaining eternal life or acquisitiveness, she will strive for terrestrial godliness. Like the shift in ethics from quandary to virtue and in the sciences from pathology to well being, this account is concerned with being fully human and not simply avoiding sin. The blessed life is a rigorous and demanding life, but as the best possible life, is compelling.

It is also my hope that conveying a theology of blessedness will be useful to the evangelist. Given the universal desire for happiness *and* meaning, the evangelist would be wise to share this as a part of the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

One of the dangers of this account is it could be perceived as deistic. If God does not shower us with jobs, children and vacation homes; and if God does not shield us from wars, abuse and terrorism, how is God providential? What is the purpose of prayer? Further, if God does give us external goods, for what do we have to be grateful? I contend the issues of intercessory prayer and providence are external to the question of blessedness. This thesis addresses the nature of blessedness, but in no way seeks to limit what God can or cannot do. Anyone, who confesses Jesus rose from the dead, cannot at the same time put parameters on how God can act in history. I welcome the critique regarding gratitude. The sooner churches move away from motivating generosity by pointing to external goods (and guilt) the better. Gratitude must be driven by the recognition of the value of grace and a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. A well-done theology of happiness is a sufficient and more effective motivation for disciples to be generous.

## Further Research

As noted in the thesis, the Hebrew Bible is polyphonic. I have presented a Christian account in contrast with Deuteronomic retribution. Deuteronomy serves as a bit of a straw man. This move is substantiated, not because Deuteronomic justice is foundational for Judaism, but because Deuteronomy is the dominant paradigm throughout culture and churches alike. Like the New Testament, the Hebrew Bible has champions of a blessed life that is noetic, relational and active. I recommend two works that give careful consideration to happiness in the Hebrew Bible: *The Bible and the Pursuit of Happiness* edited by Brent Strawn, and *God and the Art of Happiness* by Ellen Charry.

While I stand by a flexible objectionism, each person must embrace their lot as blessed and ultimately, this is a subjective assumption. Further exploration of the Spirit's, community's and tradition's roles may illumine how one is able to recognize their own happiness. This work should begin with the theory of habituation as presented by Aristotle and developed by Stanley Hauerwas and others.

## Bibliography

- Albright, W. F. and C. S. Mann. "Matthew" in *The Anchor Bible Series*. New York: Doubleday & Company, 1971.
- Ambrose and Ivor J. Davidson. *Ambrose: De Officiis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Ambrose. *Seven Exegetical Works*. Washington: Catholic University of America in Association with Consortium, 1972.
- Annas, Julia. *The Morality of Happiness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Anscombe, G. E. M. "Modern Moral Philosophy." *Philosophy* 33.124 (1958): 1-19.
- Aquinas, Thomas. *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by C. I. Litzinger. Notre Dame, IN: Dumb Ox, 1993.
- Aquinas, Thomas. *Disputed Questions on Virtue*. Translated by Jeffrey Hause and Claudia Eisen Murphy. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2010.
- Aquinas, Thomas. *The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas, vol. 2*. Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1947.
- Aristotle. *The Eudemian Ethics*. Translated by Anthony Kenny. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by Terence Irwin. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999.
- Arndt, William F., F. Wilbur Gingrich, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature: A Translation and Adaptation of the Fourth Revised and Augmented Edition of Walter Bauer's Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der übrigen urchristlichen Literatur*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979.
- Arius Didymus. *Epitome of Stoic Ethics*. Edited by Arthur J. Pomeroy. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999.
- Augustine, and R. S. Pine-Coffin. *Confessions*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1961.

- Augustine. *Trilogy on Faith and Happiness*. Edited by Boniface Ramsey. Hyde Park, NY: New City, 2010.
- Augustine. *The City of God*. Translated by Marcus Dods. New York: Modern Library, 1993.
- Augustine. *Commentary on the Lord's Sermon on the Mount: With Seventeen Related Sermons*. Translated by Denis J. Kavanagh. New York: Fathers of the Church, 1951.
- Bailey, Kenneth E. *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008.
- Barth, Karl. *The Doctrine of Reconciliation*. Edited by G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958. Vol. 4 of *Church Dogmatics*. (Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag A. G., 1936-1977).
- Barth, Karl. *The Humanity of God*. Richmond: John Knox, 1960.
- Book of Common Worship*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1993.
- Book of Confessions: Study Edition*. Louisville, KY: Geneva, 1999.
- Bowler, Kate. *Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Brown, Francis, S. R. Driver, Charles A. Briggs, Edward Robinson, James Strong, and Wilhelm Gesenius. *The Brown, Driver, Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic: Coded with the Numbering System from Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007.
- Brown, Raymond E. *The Gospel According to John*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966.
- Bush, S. S. "Divine and Human Happiness in Nicomachean Ethics." *Philosophical Review* 117.1 (2008): 49-75.
- Calvin, Jean. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Translated by John Thomas McNeill and Ford Lewis Battles. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960.
- Carney, Frederick Smith. "Virtue-Obligation Controversy." *Journal Of Religious Ethics* 1 (1973): 5-19.
- Charry, Ellen T. *God and the Art of Happiness*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.

Charry, Ellen T. *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Clark, Stephen R.L. "The Aristotelian Ethics: A Study of The Relationship Between The Eudemian And Nicomachean Ethics Of Aristotle (Book)." *Philosophical Quarterly* 29.117 (1979): 356-358.

Cohen, Sheldon M. "Luck and Happiness in the 'Nicomachean Ethics.'" *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 73.1 (1990): 209-218.

Coogan, Michael David., Marc Zvi. Brettler, Carol A. Newsom, and PHEME PERKINS. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: With the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Cook, Brendan. *Pursuing Eudaimonia: Re-appropriating the Greek Philosophical Foundations of the Christian Apophatic Tradition*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2013.

Cooper, John. *Reason and Human Good in Aristotle*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975.

Davis, Stephen T., and John B. Cobb. *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy*. Atlanta: J. Knox, 1981.

de Heer, Cornelis. *A Study of the Semantic Field Denoting Happiness in Ancient Greek to the End of the 5th Century B.C.* Amsterdam: University of Western Australia in Association with A. M. Hakkert, 1968.

Eysenck, Michael W. *Happiness: Facts and Myths*. Hove, East Sussex, U.K.: L. Erlbaum, 1990.

France, R. T. *The Gospel of Matthew*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2007.

Frankena, William K. "Ethics of Love Conceived as an Ethics of Virtue." *Journal of Religious Ethics* 1 (1973): 21-36.

Fitzmyer, Joseph A. *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX)*. New York: Doubleday, 1981.

Greenman, Jeffrey P., Timothy Larsen, and Stephen R. Spencer, eds. *The Sermon on the Mount through the Centuries*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2007.

Hauerwas, Stanley. *Approaching the End: Eschatological Reflections on Church, Politics, and Life*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013.

Hauerwas, Stanley. *A Community of Character: Toward A Constructive Christian Social Ethic*. n.p.: University of Notre Dame Pr, 1981.

Hauerwas, Stanley. "Remembering How and What I Think: A Response to the JRE Articles On Hauerwas." *Journal Of Religious Ethics* 40 (2012): 296-306.

Hauerwas, Stanley. "Stanley Hauerwas: 1988 Ryan Lectures at Asbury Seminary" *The Asbury Theological Journal* 45.1 (1990): 5-74.

Hauerwas, Stanley. *Vision and Virtue: Essays in Christian Ethical Reflection*. Notre Dame: Fides, 1974.

Hauerwas, Stanley, John Berkman, and Michael G. Cartwright. *The Hauerwas Reader*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001.

Hauerwas, Stanley, and Charles Pinches. "Christian Virtues Exemplified: On Developing Hopeful Virtues." *Pro Ecclesia* 5.3 (1996): 334-348.

Hauerwas, Stanley, and Charles Pinches. *Christians among the Virtues: Theological Conversations with Ancient and Modern Ethics*. Notre Dame, IN: Univ of Notre Dame Press, 1997.

Hauerwas, Stanley, and William H. Willimon. *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989.

Herdt, Jennifer A. "Hauerwas among the Virtues." *Journal of Religious Ethics* 40 (2012): 202-227.

Herdt, Jennifer A. *Putting On Virtue: The Legacy of the Splendid Vices*. Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2009.

Jolly, Karen Louise. *Tradition & Diversity: Christianity in a World Context to 1500*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1997.

Kallenberg, Brad J. "The Master Argument of Macintyre's After Virtue." *Virtue*. 21-50. New York: Paulist Press, 2011.

Kraut, Richard. "Two Conceptions of Happiness." *The Philosophical Review* 88.2 (1979): 167.

Lancaster, Sarah Heaner. *The Pursuit of Happiness: Blessing and Fulfillment in Christian Faith*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011.

- Lewis, C. S. *Mere Christianity: A Revised and Amplified Edition, with a New Introduction, of the Three Books, Broadcast Talks, Christian Behaviour, and Beyond Personality*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001.
- MacIntyre, Alasdair C. *After Virtue*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007.
- Maslow, A. H. "A Theory of Human Motivation." *Psychological Review* 50.4 (1943): 370-96.
- Nussbaum, Martha Craven. *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Pinckaers, Servais. *The Sources of Christian Ethics*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1995.
- Quarles, Charles L. *Sermon on the Mount: Restoring Christ's Message to the Modern Church*. Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2011.
- Rorty, Amélie Oksenberg, ed. *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.
- Smith, Christian, and Melinda Lundquist Denton. *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Strawn, Brent A., ed. *The Bible and the Pursuit of Happiness: What the Old and New Testaments Teach Us about the Good Life*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Tillich, Paul. *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951.
- Tillich, Paul. *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957.
- Vanier, Jean. *Made for Happiness: Discovering the Meaning of Life with Aristotle*. Toronto: House of Anansi, 2001.
- Wells, Samuel. *Improvisation: The Drama of Christian Ethics*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.
- Western Michigan University. "Martin Luther King Jr. at Western." Dec 18, 1963. <http://wmich.edu/sites/default/files/attachments/MLK.pdf>. Accessed February 26, 2016.
- Willimon, William H. *Calling and Character: Virtues of the Ordained Life*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2000.

Yoder, John Howard. *The Politics of Jesus; Vicit Agnus Noster*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972.