

an essay:

ON THE FLAWS OF THE ETHICAL SYSTEMS OF PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

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I. INTRODUCTION

What is the purpose of human life? How do men obtain true and lasting happiness? What is human happiness? Is man to declare what these things are and their parameters? Or does GOD declare these things and their measure, and man obey? Plato and Aristotle, the two greatest ancient Greek philosophers, sought answers to these questions in their systems of ethics. And though they asked many right questions, and made many accurate observations, still they lacked The Ultimate Answer, The First Cause, The One Who is Perfect in Form and Virtue. And as we shall see, That One is The Almighty, GOD The Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost. In Him alone is man's true purpose and lasting happiness.

II. THE ETHICAL SYSTEM OF PLATO

What is the purpose of human life? According to Plato, "...the goal of [human] life is to actualize our true nature, together with our many innate potentialities."¹ Is not the purpose of human life to attain to the greatest good? Plato answers, "Yes!" And that greatest good for man is "...the highest [human] good, whether within the individual or the corporate life, ...a well-ordered whole to which each part tributes according to its own capacity."² To attain that greatest human good in the life of both the individual and for society, Plato held that we must seek certain natural virtues, and live them in the proper balance. Only then can man attain "...the one integrated virtuous life."³

What are those natural virtues, of which men must live out in the proper balance, to attain the greatest good and virtue? Plato answers that man's mind or spirit as composed of a "rational part" and a "passionate part." The "power" that animated the rational part he saw as "reason." The power that animated the "spirited part" of the passions he saw as the "will." And the power that animated the "sensuous part" of the passions he saw as the "appetite." From these, Plato identified four necessary virtues: "wisdom, courage, temperance and justice."⁴

Grenz summarizes Plato's ethical system in this table:⁵

<i>Part</i>	<i>Power</i>	<i>Corresponding Virtue</i>
Rational	reason	wisdom
Passionate		
spirited	will	courage
sensuous	appetite	temperance
		Justice [integrative link]

¹ 1, Grenz, paragraph 4, page 61.

² 1, Grenz, paragraph 4, page 61-62.

³ 1, Grenz, paragraph 3, page 62.

⁴ 1, Grenz, paragraph 2, page 62.

⁵ 1, Grenz, "Table 1. Plato's Delineation of the Virtues of the Human Soul," page 63.

Plato further saw man, not as an isolated creature in his virtue, but as part of an ideal society which itself must be in harmony between its different classes of men. His ideal society was modeled upon the same ethical system which he proposed as necessary for the ideal man. First, the legislators are the “rational” part of society who, by their power of “reason,” serve to “...manage public matters.” Second, the soldiers and educators are the “spirited” part of society who, by their power of “will,” serve to “...protect the society against external and internal enemies.” Third, the merchants and business people are the “sensuous” part of society who, by their power of “appetite,” serve to “...provide the [economic and] material needs of the society.”⁶ The just society is the one where these different parts are in their full harmony.

III. THE ETHICAL SYSTEM OF ARISTOTLE

If the teacher Plato was a remarkable man, his student Aristotle was even more so. Aristotle studied under Plato at his Academy for nearly twenty years and became the personal tutor to the young man whom history would know as Alexander The Great.⁷ Aristotle agreed with his teacher Plato on many things, but went further in his quest for ethical goodness and justice, developing a more complex system of virtues.

First, Aristotle held that “...[ideal] forms do [not] exist outside of specific objects.”⁸ Second, that all forms of existence depend upon causes, of which he offered four: “...the material, the formal, the efficient and the final.” The material cause is simply the material of which a thing is made in its essence. The formal cause is “...the form or pattern that shapes the material into the object.” The efficient cause is “the actual agent ...whose activity produces the object” as it is. The final cause is the reason for existence, “...which determines its purpose or telos...”⁹

Third, Aristotle distinguished between an object’s substance versus its accidents, the first being what an object is made of, the second being its external physical characteristics which men perceive through their senses.¹⁰ Fourth, existence of an object is caused by its form, which he saw as “the purposive element that shapes an object and brings it into actual existence. Every object, therefore, consists of form plus matter.”¹¹ Fifth, Aristotle saw the existence of all forms in terms of its potentiality versus its actuality. For Aristotle, “Matter’ is the potentiality that can become an actuality when it takes on its appropriate form.”¹²

As a result, Aristotle discarded Plato’s idea that there are preexisting absolute Forms of idealized Good, to which men must aspire to conform to in order to find ethical fulfillment and justice. Aristotle’s chief end of man was instead to be found in the study

⁶ 1, Grenz, paragraph 5, page 63.

⁷ 1, Grenz, paragraph 1, page 68.

⁸ 1, Grenz, paragraph 4, page 68-69.

⁹ 1, Grenz, paragraph 2, page 69.

¹⁰ 1, Grenz, paragraph 3, page 69.

¹¹ 1, Grenz, paragraph 3, page 69-70.

¹² 1, Grenz, paragraph 1, page 70.

of man himself. As Grenz observes, for Aristotle, "...good ...[is inherent] in the activities of daily living. Therefore, ...[good] can be discovered only through diligent study of human life."¹³ In this quest, Aristotle expanded Plato's philosophical list of moral virtues by dividing the human soul into rational and nonrational "parts," which by their "function," produce their corresponding "virtues."

Grenz offers this table of "Aristotle's Delineation of the Virtues of the [human] Soul:"¹⁴

<i>Part</i>	<i>Function</i>	<i>Corresponding Virtue</i>
Rational		Intellectual virtues
scientific	calculation	theoretical wisdom
calculative	deliberation	practical wisdom
Nonrational		Moral virtues
appetitive	emotion	character dispositions
vegetative	physical growth	(none)

What is evident from the above table is that Aristotle held that the ideal moral life in men requires not only intellectual knowledge, but also the character necessary to live out those virtues in daily living.¹⁵ How to live out those virtues, some of which he considered innate and others learnable by men through knowledge and training, is the question of Aristotle's system of moderation of those virtues in daily living. This consists in "...voluntarily doing what is good for, and avoiding what is harmful to, others. The truly just society is one, by this system, where all men live virtuous lives of moderation in all things."¹⁶

To do so, derived from his studies of man and his behaviours, Aristotle calls us to "habitual moderation, ...that is, the 'golden mean'" of the virtues. By man's own wisdom, we are to determine what the middle ground of human virtues are, and avoid the extremes of either their relative lack or excessive presence in our lives. The happy man is the one, according to Aristotle, who lives in the reasonable middle ground of these natural and learned virtues; he actualizes the full potential of happiness and goodness by avoiding the vices of extremism of those virtues.¹⁷ Likewise the happy society is the one in which men live collectively in the reasonable "golden mean" of these natural and learned virtues; the just society actualizes its full potential of happiness and goodness by avoiding the vices of extremism of those same virtues.

¹³ 1, Grenz, paragraph 3, page 70.

¹⁴ 1, Grenz, "Table 2. Aristotle's Delineation of the Virtues of the Soul," page 72.

¹⁵ 1, Grenz, paragraph 1, page 73.

¹⁶ 1, Grenz, paragraph 3, page 74.

¹⁷ 1, Grenz, paragraph 2, page 74.

Grenz offers this table of “Aristotle’s Golden Mean:”¹⁸

<u>Vice of Deficiency</u>	<u>Virtue [Moderation]</u>	<u>Vice of Excess</u>
cowardice	courage	foolhardiness
insensibility	temperance	licentiousness
stinginess	generosity	prodigality
meanness	magnificence	vulgarity ¹⁹
humility	highmindedness	vanity
lack of ambition	wholesome ambition	overambitiousness
impassivity	gentleness	irascibility
self-deprecation	truthfulness	boastfulness
boorishness	wittiness	buffoonery
contentiousness	friendliness	flattery
shamelessness	modesty	bashfulness
maliciousness	righteous indignation	enviousness
injustice	justice	injustice

IV. MAJOR FLAWS IN THE ETHICS OF PLATO

Saint Paul declares in I CORINTHIANS 1:22-25, “For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach CHRIST crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, CHRIST the power of GOD, and the wisdom of GOD. Because the foolishness of GOD is wiser than men; and the weakness of GOD is stronger than men.”²⁰ While Plato and Aristotle opened the door wide for men to formally seek with their minds and hearts perfect goodness and true justice in their lives and in their societies, their definitions relied upon the wisdom of men – which is arbitrary and ever changing – rather than upon The Wisdom of GOD – which is absolute and never changing.

If the human mind is the ultimate arbitrator of what is good and what is just, how do we know these are the correct ethical systems? If man himself is the arbitrator of what is ethical, how do we define what the needed virtues are? If there is no absolute objective standard of ethics outside of man, how do we know when we have arrived at the fulfillment of these virtues? How virtuous do we need to be in order to be virtuous? And who in a society gets to decide all these things? And by what right?

Take Plato’s system of human virtues. His ideas beg many questions, which can not be answered by his own ethical system. How do we know that Plato’s idea on the purpose of human life is correct? If Plato is right that man’s purpose for existence is to attain the greatest good both individually and corporately, how do we know that Plato correctly defines for us what is the greatest good? How do we know that Plato identifies

¹⁸ 1, Grenz, “Table 3. Aristotle’s Golden Mean,” page 75.

¹⁹ 1, Grenz, “Table 3. Aristotle’s Golden Mean,” vulgarity = the ostentatious display of wealth,” page 75.

²⁰ 2, KJV, I CORINTHIANS 1:22-25.

the correct virtues in man to attain that greatest good? How do we know that Plato correctly defines what these necessary virtues are, and how one attains them?

What in fact is human wisdom, courage, justice and temperance? Is it the same for all men in all times and places, in that there is one idealized standard outside of mankind? Or is it different for each man and in each time and place? And are we each to be our own judge of these standards of virtue? Or if determined by one man or a group of men on behalf of everyone, by what right do they take on this calling? In fact, because in Plato's system man is the king, lawgiver and judge of what is the purpose of life, what is good and what is virtuous from the imaginations of his own mind, Plato can answer none of these questions for us without leading us in never ending circle!

Further, who is to decide in Plato's perfect Republic what classes men are to belong to? And on what standards? What is to be done with those who refuse their assigned roles, or if some fit into none of the decreed categories? What happens when wicked men hold the power of government to declare what those standards are and where men belong? History has seen the horrific results of some "perfect societies" born out of the dark hearts of wicked men like Hitler, Stalin, Mao, Idi Amin and Pol Pot. But if man himself is the judge of all these things, who is to say that such men were in error? Plato ignores the innate evil in the hearts of men. As PROVERBS 19:3 warns, "The foolishness of man perverteth his way: and his heart fretteth against the LORD!"²¹

V. MAJOR FLAWS IN THE ETHICS OF ARISTOTLE

First, Aristotle was certain that, with enough study, work and contemplation, men could "...develop into virtuous persons ...possible in part because of the power of will."²² But this ignores the innately wicked nature of man, which is plainly evident in the evil found in every society, in the bloody and twisted flow of human history and as revealed in Holy Scriptures! Man's intellect is clouded by his rebellion against GOD, and his will by his inherent sinfulness. We are not capable apart from GOD of either discerning what is truly good, nor can we apart from His Grace truly do good.

The Catechism of The Catholic Church reminds us that unredeemed man outside of salvation in JESUS CHRIST is just such a creature. By the sins of our First Parents Adam and Eve, and by every man's individual sinfulness, the world and man himself have become distorted. By man's sinfulness, "...the control of the soul's spiritual faculties over the body is shattered; the union of man and woman becomes subject to tensions, ...lust and domination. Harmony with creation is broken... [And] death makes its entrance into human history."²³ Man is not a creature capable on his own of doing what Aristotle calls him to do!

²¹ 2, KJV, PROVERBS 19:3.

²² 1, Grenz, paragraph 2, page 73.

²³ 3, Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 400, page 112.

Saint Paul declares this truth of the completely sinful and darkened nature of unredeemed men in EPHESIANS 4:17-19. Outside of the salvation of JESUS CHRIST, men wallow "...in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of GOD through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness!"²⁴

Second, Aristotle's rejection of Plato's concept of the existence of Perfect Forms and Absolute Good closes the door to the search for GOD, The First Cause Who - by Aristotle's own logic - must exist in order to have brought the physical world and man into being! The Westminster Longer Catechism declares the nature of GOD, Who is "...a Spirit, in and of Himself infinite in being, glory, blessedness, and perfection; all-sufficient, eternal, unchangeable, incomprehensible, every where present, almighty, knowing all things, most wise, most holy, most just, most merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth."²⁵ We read of GOD, The One Who is Perfect Form and Absolute Goodness, in I TIMOTHY 1:17, "Now unto The King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise GOD, be honour and glory for ever and ever!"²⁶

By making man supreme judge of all things, Aristotle denies the existence and sovereignty of The Creator! Recall when JESUS The MESSIAH was asked of the high priest in LUKE 14:61, "...Art Thou The CHRIST, The Son of The Blessed?"²⁷ The Lord answered, "...I am: and ye shall see The Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven!"²⁸ Of all the errors of the Greek philosophers, this is perhaps the most pernicious! For by denying the existence and nature of GOD The Father, Aristotle sets the stage in the hearts of many hardhearted sinners to attempt to justify their denial of their need for GOD The Son!

Third, Aristotle's "Golden Mean" system of virtues, upon which he bases the attainment of human happiness and social justice, can not stand the test of reality because it leaves man to determine what virtue is. Though Aristotle could not see it, his own system requires GOD as The First Cause of the existence of the world and of man. And if GOD is, then He must be all Perfect in Form and Being. He Who Must Be is thus the only One to decree what is virtuous and what is not. David confessed this as he prayed in PSALM 86:10 and 15, "[O LORD,] ...Thou art great, and doest wondrous things: Thou art GOD alone. But Thou, O Lord, art a GOD full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth!"²⁹

It is not man, but GOD Who alone bestows virtue into the lives of those that are His saints. Saint Peter declares this in II PETER 1:2-3, that GOD The Son, "According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness,

²⁴ 2, KJV, EPHESIANS 4:17-19.

²⁵ 4, WLC 7, Answer to Question, "What is GOD?"

²⁶ 2, KJV, I TIMOTHY 1:17.

²⁷ 2, KJV, LUKE 14:61.

²⁸ 2, KJV, LUKE 14:62.

²⁹ 2, KJV, PSALM 86:10 and 15.

through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue.”³⁰ And while Aristotle’s list of “Golden Mean” of virtues reads well, in practice man requires the renewal of his heart by The HOLY SPIRIT to truly live them out. This is possible only by GOD’s amazing Grace, and is not attainable by fallen man apart from the mercy and renewal working in his soul!

Saint Peter lists for us what GOD does in His saints, but what man outside of the salvation of The Cross of our Lord JESUS CHRIST can not do, in II PETER 1:5-7, “...add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.”³¹ Only by The LORD’s intervention in the lives of the redeemed, working through The HOLY SPIRIT in His saints to regenerate and sanctify souls back into The Image of GOD, can man live out true goodness and real virtues. Man can not do so on his own.

VI. THE IMPACT OF PLATO’S SEARCH FOR ETHICS UPON THE CHURCH

Plato’s quest for the ethical and just man and society has contributed much to the foundations upon which arose Christianity and The Church: First, individual morality functions best within a matrix of a moral society.³² The Law of GOD provide man and society with that perfect moral matrix that is unchanging and absolute. PSALM 33:4 declares, “For The Word of The LORD is right...”³³ And in ZECHARIAH 7:9, “Thus speaketh The LORD of Hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother!”³⁴ Whose judgment, mercy and compassion? GOD’s! And where are these Absolutes to be found? In The Word of The LORD.

Second, the just man and society are based upon “...the quest for the good.”³⁵ Christianity answers the question, “But what is good?” for both the individual and the society in which he lives. GOD defines what is good and what is required of men. So it is declared in MICAHAH 6:8, “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth The LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy GOD!”³⁶ And indeed, Saint Gregory of Nyssa declared, “The goal of a virtuous life is to become like GOD.”³⁷

Third, Plato saw that human happiness required “...a strenuous morality of strict virtue.”³⁸ So we see the moral virtues of Christianity arising as a restraint upon man’s hedonism, within which the just man may serve both CHRIST and his fellow man in

³⁰ 2, KJV, I PETER 1:2-3.

³¹ 2, KJV, II PETER 1:5-7.

³² 1, Grenz, paragraph 2, page 64.

³³ 2, KJV, PSALM 33:4a.

³⁴ 2, KJV, ZECHARIAH 7:9.

³⁵ 1, Grenz, paragraph 3, page 64.

³⁶ 2, KJV, MICAHAH 6:8.

³⁷ 3, Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 1803, page 495.

³⁸ 1, Grenz, paragraph 4, page 64-65.

relative peace and security. The Church has taught that, by the work of salvation and renewal in us at The Cross of CHRIST, GOD gives men the Grace required to strive towards certain Christian virtues. Only then can human reason, purified by faith, show forth the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance.³⁹ And as we come to love GOD more each day, He grows in us the theological virtues of faith, hope and love.⁴⁰

Fourth, Plato held that the "...higher good is immortality, ...[by] which the activities of this life are to be judged."⁴¹ Plato thus opens the door to the search for Absolute Standards by which men's lives are to be weighed. This search for The Highest Good must inevitably lead to a search for GOD The Creator, and His purposes for man. What is the ultimate good and chief end of man? As The Westminster Longer Confession says, "Man's chief and highest end is to glorify GOD, and fully to enjoy Him forever!"⁴² Christianity answers Plato that all men will stand before GOD, Who is The Eternal Judge of men's souls. So says Saint Paul in ROMANS 14:10-12, "...for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of CHRIST. For it is written, As I live, saith The Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to GOD. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to GOD!"⁴³

Christianity answers Plato's search for the "eternal forms" of "absolute, universal and objective" perfection and good by pointing men to The Creator, Who is The One and The Same Perfect Good.⁴⁴ Saint Paul says in I TIMOTHY 2:5, "For there is one GOD, and one Mediator between GOD and men, The Man CHRIST JESUS."⁴⁵ Christianity declares that GOD's Word is The Guide to attaining that perfect goodness of which Plato speaks. The Westminster Longer Catechism declares, "The Scriptures principally teach, what man is to believe concerning GOD, and what duty GOD requires of man."⁴⁶ So PSALM 119:105 declares of The Holy Scriptures, "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path!"⁴⁷

VII. THE IMPACT OF ARISTOTLE'S SEARCH FOR ETHCIS UPON THE CHURCH

As Plato has formalized ethical questions which Christianity and The Church alone give full and complete answers, so also Aristotle. First, Aristotle's system of causes raises the question, "What or Who is The First Cause of all things and especially of man?" The Westminster Longer Confession answers this question, "The very light of nature in man, and the works of GOD, declare plainly that there is a GOD..."⁴⁸ From

³⁹ 3, Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 1834, page 503.

⁴⁰ 3, Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 1840, page 504.

⁴¹ 1, Grenz, paragraph 2, page 65.

⁴² 4, WLC, 1, Answer to the Question, "What is the chief and highest end of man?"

⁴³ 2, KJV, ROMANS 14:10-12.

⁴⁴ 1, Grenz, paragraph 5, page 65.

⁴⁵ 2, KJV, I TIMOTHY 2:5.

⁴⁶ 4, WLC 5, Answer to the Question, "What do the Scriptures principally teach?"

⁴⁷ 2, KJV, PSALM 119:105.

⁴⁸ 4, WLC 2, Answer to the Question, "How doth it appear that there is a GOD?"

the undeniable order of Natural Revelation in all things organic and inorganic on every level, it is apparent that there is A First Cause, Who is GOD. GENESIS 1:1 declares, "In the beginning GOD created the heaven and the earth."⁴⁹

Second, again we see the question of the purpose of man's existence, and how he may obtain true and lasting happiness. Aristotle said, "Happiness then is the best, noblest, and most pleasant thing in the world." If man's chief duty and purpose is to know, serve and love The Creator, then it follows that man may only find true and lasting happiness in knowing, serving and loving The One Who Made us! So The Catechism of The Catholic Church states, "GOD created everything for man, but man in turn was created to serve and love GOD and to offer all creation back to Him."⁵⁰

Of the purpose of man's creation by The Almighty Saint John Chrysostom says, "...man ...[is] more precious in the eyes of GOD than all other creatures! For him the heavens and the earth, the sea and all the rest of creation exist. GOD attached so much importance to his salvation that He did not spare His own Son for the sake of man. Nor does He ever cease to work, trying every possible means, until He has raised man up to Himself and made him sit at His right hand!"⁵¹

Third, for Aristotle, "Happiness is not a static state of being [or knowing], but an activity [of daily living]."⁵² Both The Old and New Testaments declare that mere knowledge of GOD's Law and intellectual ascent to Them and to GOD's existence are not enough. The Creator requires that we live out our knowledge of His Word in our daily lives in faith. The Westminster Confession declares that "...good works, done in obedience to GOD's Commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith."⁵³ Saint Augustine says, "How is it, then, that I seek You, Lord? Since in seeking You, My GOD, I seek a happy life, let me seek You so that my soul may live, for my body draws life from my soul and my soul draws life from You!"⁵⁴

Moses wrote that, if we truly love GOD in our hearts, our daily lives will show forth the keeping of His Word. So The Almighty declares in DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our GOD is one LORD: And thou shalt love The LORD thy GOD with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And These Words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates!"⁵⁵

This applies equally under The Grace of CHRIST, as under The Law of Moses. Saint James warns in JAMES 2:17-18, that "...faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being

⁴⁹ 2, KJV, GENESIS 1:1.

⁵⁰ 3, Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 358, page 102.

⁵¹ 3, Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 358, page 102.

⁵² 1, Grenz, paragraph 5, page 70-71.

⁵³ 5, WCF 16.2, "...good works ...are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith."

⁵⁴ 3, Catechism of The Catholic Church, #1718, page 478.

⁵⁵ 2, KJV, DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9.

alone. ...I will shew thee my faith by my works!”⁵⁶ Saint Paul declares the same to us, that if a man is saved in The Lord JESUS CHRIST, his faith will produce the good works of The HOLY SPIRIT dwelling and working in him. So we read in GALATIANS 5:22-25, “But the fruit of The Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance... And they that are CHRIST's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in The Spirit, let us also walk in The Spirit!”⁵⁷

Fourth, Aristotle observes that the proper living out of a virtuous life will bring man to true happiness, “...that virtue is central to our attainment of the goal of our existence and hence to our well-being [and happiness].”⁵⁸ The Church answers in The Westminster Confession, that a true and living faith in GOD is The Only Way to real and lasting human happiness! In such a life of living faith and good works, Christian men “...manifest their thankfulness, strengthen their assurance, edify their brethren, adorn the profession of The Gospel, stop the mouths of the adversaries, and glorify GOD, Whose workmanship they are, created in CHRIST JESUS thereunto; that, having their fruit unto holiness, they may have the end eternal life!”⁵⁹ There is no more perfect and happy life for man, but that in The Saviour JESUS The MESSIAH!

Of true happiness, our Redeemer CHRIST teaches us in The Beatitudes in MATTHEW 5:3-12, “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see GOD. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of GOD.”⁶⁰

The Beatitudes continue, “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you!”⁶¹ There is no greater happiness for man that to be blessed in The LORD, to walk in His Presence daily and to at last dwell with Him forever in Paradise Above!

⁵⁶ 2, KJV, JAMES 2:17-18.

⁵⁷ 2, KJV, GALATIANS 5:22-25.

⁵⁸ 1, Grenz, paragraph 3, page 72.

⁵⁹ 5, WCF 16.2, “...good works ...are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith.”

⁶⁰ 2, KJV, MATTHEW 5:3-9.

⁶¹ 2, KJV, MATTHEW 5:10-12.

III. IN CONCLUSION

We began with these questions: What is the purpose of human life? How do men obtain true and lasting happiness? What is human happiness? Is man to declare what these things are and their parameters? Or does GOD declare these things and their measure, and man obey?

Plato and Aristotle, the two greatest ancient Greek philosophers, sought answers to these questions in their systems of ethics, but failed to offer objective and lasting answers because they failed to seek the face of The Creator Himself. For though they asked many of the right questions, and made many accurate observations, still they lacked The Ultimate Answer, The First Cause, The One Who is The Perfect Form and Virtue. That One we call GOD.

So we conclude that the purpose of human life is to serve, love and obey GOD. Only then may we be capable of also truly loving our neighbour. True and lasting human goodness and joy are found only in constant fellowship with The LORD in both this life and in the next. It is not man, but The Almighty Who declares all things and their measure. It is rather for man to reverently, joyfully and thankfully obey That One Who is The Almighty GOD The Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost. In Him alone is man's true purpose and lasting happiness. In The Name of our Blessed Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST, AMEN!

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