

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS AND MAN'S GREATEST  
GOOD IN AUGUSTINE'S THEOLOGY OF LOVE AND  
JOHN PIPER'S CHRISTIAN HEDONISM: AN ANALYSIS

by

James M. Rosenquist  
B.A., Gonzaga University

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Faculty  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of  
Master of Arts in Theological Studies  
At Reformed Theological Seminary

Charlotte, North Carolina  
August 2017

Accepted:

---

---

## ABSTRACT

### THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS AND MAN'S GREATEST GOOD IN AUGUSTINE'S THEOLOGY OF LOVE AND JOHN PIPER'S CHRISTIAN HEDONISM: AN ANALYSIS

James M. Rosenquist

The universal interest in human happiness in Western Civilization is a foundational influence in such diverse fields as politics, psychology, economics, philosophy, and religion. The desire for happiness is a primary concern for all people, including Christians. Today, evangelicals have a modern paradigm for the attainment of happiness in John Piper's "Christian Hedonism" and an ancient model in Augustine's "Theology of Love." This paper answers the question of which model best represents the Bible's own emphasis regarding how Christians should pursue and obtain happiness. The research contained herein includes representative works from both Augustine and Piper that represent the central tenets of their views including their conception of man's greatest good (*summum bonum*), how man pursues his greatest good, and how much happiness he can attain in the process. Important critics of both theologians' paradigms are consulted to help understand the strengths and weaknesses of each view. Also included is a brief history of eudaemonism in Christian theology and Western Civilization to show how each theologian's contribution is both important and unique and where it fits within historical thought. Finally, biblical data in the form of

important representative passages, as well as a study of key terms used by each author, are used as evaluative tools to help understand both the distinctions of each model and which paradigm best matches Scripture's own ethical emphasis. After analyzing each paradigm's central tenets and comparing them to Scripture, this work will argue that Augustine's eudaemonism is to be preferred over Piper's due to a more biblical emphasis on loving God as man's highest ethical pursuit and a more realistic understanding of the possibility of happiness in this present life. The paper concludes with thoughts on how the modern American evangelical church can rediscover, build upon, and implement Augustine's principles to achieve greater happiness, focus on loving God above all else, and demonstrate a more effective Christian witness and message to the world.

*To Sara*  
*My love AND joy!*

## CONTENTS

### Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
Literature Review . . . . .	2
2. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW . . . . .	8
An Historical Overview of Eudaemonism . . . . .	8
3. JOHN PIPER’S CHRISTIAN HEDONISM . . . . .	13
Man’s Greatest Good and Primary Ethical Imperative . . . . .	14
Piper’s Conception of Happiness . . . . .	16
Love and Joy in Christian Hedonism . . . . .	18
Critics of Christian Hedonism . . . . .	26
4. AUGUSTINE’S THEOLOGY OF LOVE . . . . .	29
Man’s Greatest Good and Primary Ethical Imperative . . . . .	29
Augustine’s Conception of Happiness . . . . .	32
Love and Joy in Augustine’s Thought . . . . .	35
Criticism of Augustine’s Theology of Love . . . . .	40
5. CHRISTIAN HEDONISM AND THEOLOGY OF LOVE: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES . . . . .	44
Similarities in Augustine’s and Piper’s Central Tenets . . . . .	44
Differences in Augustine’s and Piper’s Central Tenets . . . . .	45
6. BIBLICAL ANALYSIS . . . . .	49
Love or Joy: Which is Central? . . . . .	49

Defining Love . . . . .	55
How Much Happiness Now? . . . . .	64
7. EVALUATION AND APPLICATION . . . . .	69
Christian Hedonism: Strengths and Weaknesses . . . . .	69
Augustine’s Theology of Love: Strengths and Weaknesses . . . . .	71
Application for Modern Christians . . . . .	72
8. CONCLUSION . . . . .	81
9. BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	85

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The universal interest in human happiness in Western Civilization spans the centuries from ancient Greek philosophy of the fifth century B.C. to the modern era and is a bedrock concern in such diverse fields as politics, psychology, economics, philosophy, and religion. The desire for happiness is a primary interest for all people, including Christians. Yet many Christians remain confused about happiness. Is it a legitimate pursuit? If so, how does one go about getting it? For the purpose of this paper, it is assumed that the Holy Bible, the foundational document of the Christian religion, affirms the pursuit of happiness even though it may disagree with other philosophies and religions on how that pursuit should unfold.

In our present era, evangelicals have a modern paradigm for the attainment of happiness in John Piper's "Christian Hedonism" and an ancient model in Augustine's "Theology of Love."<sup>1</sup> This paper answers the question of which system best represents the Bible's own emphasis regarding how Christians should pursue and obtain happiness. The research covers essential representative works from both Augustine and Piper in order to best synthesize and represent the central tenets of their views including their conception of man's greatest good (*summum bonum*), how man pursues his greatest good, and how much happiness he can attain in the process. Important critics of both theologians' paradigms will be consulted to help understand the strengths and weaknesses of each view. Also included

---

<sup>1</sup> From this point forward, quotes will be omitted when referring to these two ethical systems.



is a brief history of eudaemonism in Christian theology and Western Civilization to show how each theologian's contribution is both important and unique and where it fits within historical thought. Finally, biblical data in the form of important representative passages, as well as a study of key terms used by each author, will be used as evaluative tools to help understand both the distinctions of each model and which paradigm best matches Scripture's own ethical emphasis. It is assumed that for evangelical Christians, to whom this paper is primarily addressed, the Bible itself is the final authority for evaluating the legitimacy of these ethical systems.

After analyzing each paradigm's central tenets and comparing with Scripture, this work will argue that Augustine's eudaemonism is to be preferred over Piper's due to a more biblical emphasis on loving God as man's highest ethical pursuit in contrast with Piper's emphasis on enjoying God. Additionally, Augustine's paradigm features a more realistic understanding of the possibility of happiness in this present life which will have ramifications both for how Christianity is communicated to outsiders and in presenting proper expectations for happiness by practicing Christians. This work will conclude with thoughts on how the modern American evangelical church can rediscover, build upon, and implement Augustine's principles to achieve greater happiness, a greater priority on loving God above all else, and to demonstrate a more effective Christian witness and message to the world.

### Literature Review

To establish a proper understanding of Augustine's Theology of Love, eight primary texts spanning the length of the theologian's writing career were selected. In *The Happy Life* (A.D. 386-387), written near the beginning of his career, Augustine begins to develop the

idea that only God is the proper object of man's happiness.<sup>1</sup> Next, Augustine argues that true happiness comes through seeing God face to face in the life to come in *Soliloquies* (386-387).<sup>2</sup> *Of the Morals of the Catholic Church* (387-388) is an important work where Augustine goes into great detail concerning God as man's chief good and how to pursue him with love.<sup>3</sup> *On Christian Teaching* (396-427) contains Augustine's detailed development of how only God should be ultimately enjoyed and all other things are to be used in pursuit of that enjoyment.<sup>4</sup> In "Sermon 368" (exact date unknown), Augustine distinguishes between positive and destructive self-love to clarify and defend the idea that love of self can be legitimate if pursued according to God's design.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps his most well-known work, *The Confessions* (397-401) is a "spiritual autobiography" where Augustine declares that the soul's God-given desire for happiness can only be satisfied by God.<sup>6</sup> Augustine's deeply theological work, *The Trinity* (399-426), includes insights into how man clings to the Supreme Good through love.<sup>7</sup> Finally, Augustine's magnum opus, *The City of God* (413-427), presents detailed arguments with the philosophies of his day concerning the nature of man's *summum bonum*. At the end of the book, he also includes a vision of Christian

---

<sup>1</sup> Augustine, *The Happy Life*, in *Trilogy on Faith and Happiness*, ed. Boniface Ramsey, trans. Roland J. Teske, Michael G. Campbell, and Ray Kearney (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Augustine, *Soliloquies*, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christ Church*, vol. 7, *Homilies on the Gospel of John, Homilies on the First Epistle of John, Soliloquies* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991).

<sup>3</sup> Augustine, *Of the Morals of the Catholic Church* (New York, Magisterium Press, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, trans. R. P. H. Green (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>5</sup> Augustine, "Sermon 368," in *Essential Sermons*, ed. Boniface Ramsey, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Augustine, *The Confessions*, ed. David Vincent Meconi, trans. Maria Boulding (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012).

<sup>7</sup> Augustine, *The Trinity in Augustine: Later Works*, ed. and trans. John Burnaby (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1955).

happiness in the next life where believers experience bliss in God's presence for eternity.<sup>8</sup>

These texts were chosen based in part on scholar Ellen Charry's analysis of Augustine's eudaemonism, and from other sources that referenced the theologian's chief development of his Theology of Love.<sup>9</sup>

Turning now to the second ethical system under evaluation, John Piper's Christian Hedonism finds its origin in *Desiring God* (1986), which presents his major principles and biblical justification for his statement that man's chief end is to "glorify God by enjoying him forever."<sup>10</sup> Another important work of Piper's, *God's Passion for His Glory* (1998), includes his commentary and introductory thoughts to Jonathan Edwards' treatise, *The End for Which God Created the World* (1765), which is contained within the book.<sup>11</sup> In *Future Grace* (1995), Piper makes his case of how faith works in conjunction with God's promises of future reward.<sup>12</sup> Lastly, *When I Don't Desire God* (2004) explains how Christian Hedonism should practically function in light of obstacles such as sin, trials, temptations, and other hardships.<sup>13</sup>

A few secondary sources were relied on more heavily than others in the analysis of these two systems. First, John Burnaby's *Amor Dei* presents a comprehensive distillation of Augustine's Theology of Love, including interactions with major critics such as Anders

---

<sup>8</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson (New York: Penguin Putnam, 2003).

<sup>9</sup> Ellen Charry, *God and the Art of Happiness* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 25-26.

<sup>10</sup> John Piper, *Desiring God* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2011), 18.

<sup>11</sup> John Piper, *God's Passion for His Glory* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1998).

<sup>12</sup> John Piper, *Future Grace* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2016).

<sup>13</sup> John Piper, *When I Don't Desire God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004).

Nygren.<sup>14</sup> In *Agape and Eros*, Nygren argues that Augustine erroneously synthesizes the Greek concept of *eros* with the Christian concept of *agape*.<sup>15</sup> Oliver O'Donovan addresses Nygren's criticism of Augustine in his work, *The Problem of Self-Love in Augustine*, and argues that Nygren has missed some crucial factors in Augustine's system that would seem to result in different conclusions.<sup>16</sup> In *Augustine on Prayer*, Thomas Hand illuminates how Augustine conceived of how an individual reaches out to God through love and prayer.<sup>17</sup>

Scholarly critics of Christian Hedonism are difficult to find, possibly due to John Piper being a modern, living author who writes for a popular audience. However, in his book, *The God Who Commands*, Richard Mouw offers a few critiques including what he feels are problems with some of Piper's synonymous use of terms.<sup>18</sup> Informally published criticisms of Piper include one by C.W. Booth who believes Piper has erred in his choice of primary ethic, and another by Dr. Peter Masters who thinks reducing the Christian life to the pursuit of joy is a mistake.<sup>19</sup>

For the history of the eudaemonistic tradition, Darrin McMahon's book, *Happiness: A History*, provides a broad overview of the concept in Western philosophical and

---

<sup>14</sup> John Burnaby, *Amor Dei* (Norwich: The Canterbury Press, 1991).

<sup>15</sup> Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, trans. Philip S. Watson (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).

<sup>16</sup> Oliver O'Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love in Augustine* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006).

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Hand, *Augustine on Prayer* (New York: Catholic Publishing, 1986).

<sup>18</sup> Richard Mouw, *The God Who Commands* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990).

<sup>19</sup> C.W. Booth, "A Biblical Study of the Theological Foundations of 'Christian Hedonism,'" *The Faithful Word*; available from <http://thefaithfulword.org/studyhedonism.html>; Internet; accessed 31 January 2017.; Peter Masters, "Christian Hedonism—Is It Right?" *Pulpit & Pen*; available from <http://pulpitandpen.org/2017/01/10/christian-hedonism-is-it-right-by-dr-peter-masters/>; Internet; accessed 29 March 2017.

theological literature.<sup>20</sup> Complementing his work is that of Ellen Charry with her overview of Christian eudaemonism in *God and the Art of Happiness*.<sup>21</sup> Finally, in *Happiness*, Randy Alcorn explores the biblical legitimacy of happiness and traces the theme through the works of many historical Christian authors and theologians. At the end of the book, he also presents a vision of his understanding of happiness in the present life.<sup>22</sup>

One area of controversy and difficulty in this analysis is determining proper definitions of abstract concepts like “love” and “joy.” Since the understanding of these terms is an important distinction between the systems of Augustine and Piper, it was critical to try and clarify the differences as much as possible, as well as identify biblically valid definitions. This was difficult as theological dictionaries didn’t always agree. However, through the use of resources such as *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, *New Bible Dictionary*, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, as well as the insights of theologians and Bible commentators, fairly good approximations were attained.<sup>23</sup> Yet since the Bible doesn’t explicitly define these terms, disagreement over exact definitions could easily remain a point of contention.

Finally, eudaemonism itself has been challenged at various times in Christian history. Again, this work assumes the validity of Christian eudaemonism as expressed by Augustine and those in his tradition. Some of the critics of both Augustine and Piper mentioned above

---

<sup>20</sup> Darrin McMahon, *Happiness: A History* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2006).

<sup>21</sup> Charry, *God and the Art of Happiness*.

<sup>22</sup> Randy Alcorn, *Happiness* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015).

<sup>23</sup> Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, abr. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1985); J.D. Douglas, ed., *New Bible Dictionary*, 2d ed. (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1991); Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1986).

would not necessarily accept this assumption. On those points, this work did not generally engage with their arguments in order to remain within the scope already mentioned.

## CHAPTER 2

### HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

This chapter will present an historical overview that shows the development of Christian eudaemonism. Since this thesis compares the work of two authors separated by over 1,500 years of Christian church history, it will be helpful to see how their central principles fit within the flow of thought over that time period and how they may have been influenced by prior works on eudaemonism. Since Piper is the more modern writer, it will be of particular value to see the ways in which he retains, or doesn't incorporate, ideas from the Christian eudaemonistic tradition.

#### An Historical Overview of Eudaemonism

Eudaemonism in Western thought has its roots in the Greek philosophy of Herodotus, Hesiod, Socrates, and Plato. Socrates (470-399 B.C.) in particular shifted the discussion of happiness in Greek philosophy to ethics, not merely acknowledging that all men wanted to be happy but asked the question, "How *could* they be happy?" He concluded that the ascent to happiness would be a long process and the love of wisdom would guide the person on the journey.<sup>1</sup> His student, Plato (427-347 B.C.), identified happiness with valuing justice, wise and virtuous living, and a state that tried to make all its members as happy as possible, all

---

<sup>1</sup> Darrin McMahon, *Happiness: A History* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2006), 2; 35. See Plato's *Symposium* 211C.

patterned on the ideal, transcendent world.<sup>2</sup> Yet it would be Aristotle, student of Plato, that would declare in his *Nicomachean Ethics* (350 B.C.) that happiness “is the highest of all goods achievable by action,” making happiness man’s *summum bonum*. Aristotle believed that action consisted in the contemplative life, since he was convinced that contemplation of noble and divine things is the highest of all virtues.<sup>3</sup> McMahon observes that Aristotle shifts happiness, from looking upward to pattern life after the transcendent world in Plato’s thought, to the temporal realm.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, by Aristotle’s time, identifying man’s highest good as the attainment of happiness in this present life was a well-established concept.

Greek philosophers after Aristotle would build upon his foundation. Zeno, the father of Stoicism (third century B.C.), believed happiness could be obtained by bringing the self in harmony with the created order through virtuous living. Epicurus (341-270 B.C.), founder of the philosophy known as Hedonism, identified happiness with the attainment of pleasure. Though Hedonism is often associated with excessive pleasure-seeking, both Stoicism and Hedonism advocated decreasing one’s desires in order to match what one could reasonably attain to achieve satisfaction and therefore happiness.<sup>5</sup>

Some subsequent philosophies located happiness outside of man and returned to the idea of pursuing it in the transcendent world. Plotinus (A.D. 204-270), father of Neo-Platonism, asserted that happiness only pertains to the soul and not the body. Thus, the goal of all human life was to assimilate into the divine being (“the One”) through contemplation

---

<sup>2</sup> Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., trans. John Llewelyn Davies and David James Vaughn (Cambridge: Macmillan and Co., 1866), 40; 243; 118-19.

<sup>3</sup> Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. David Ross (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 5; 194.

<sup>4</sup> McMahon, *Happiness*, 41-44.

<sup>5</sup> McMahon, *Happiness*, 57-58.



and leave the material world, with all its inherent limitations, behind. Happiness, in Neo-Platonism, is thus the realization of oneness with divinity, making permanent well-being only attainable in another realm of existence altogether.<sup>6</sup>

The Christian conception of eudaemonism began to take shape as a system with Augustine (A.D. 254-430). Well educated in the philosophies of his predecessors, Augustine believed that the fullness of happiness could not be found on earth, but only in the next life in the presence of God.<sup>7</sup> Yet this happiness still involved the pursuit of virtue now since central to experiencing happiness in God required loving him with all one's being. David Jones observes that, "Sympathetic commentators argue that eudaimonism has undergone a transformation at the hands of Augustine, and is no longer egoistic as it was in the system of Aristotle."<sup>8</sup> In Augustine's system, man's happiness is centered on God and dependent on him and not achievable solely by the self.

Many other Christian theologians after Augustine accepted the pursuit of happiness in God as legitimate but varied in their understanding of how much happiness is possible in the present life. Thomas Aquinas (A.D. 1225-1274) believed that happiness is the highest good and ultimate end of man and attained ultimately by enjoying God and being united with him in the life to come.<sup>9</sup> Martin Luther (A.D. 1483-1546) taught that the Bible shows Christians

---

<sup>6</sup> Plotinus, *Plotinus*, vol. 1, *Porphyry on the Life of Plotinus and the Order of His Books*, *Enneads I.1-9*, trans. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 205; idem, *Plotinus*, vol. 7, *Enneads VI.6-9*, trans. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 345; John M. Frame, *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2015), 78-80.

<sup>7</sup> McMahon, *Happiness*, 95-101.

<sup>8</sup> David C. Jones, "The Supreme Good," *Presbyterion* 11 (1985): 126.

<sup>9</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* 3.2.117-118; 141; and 152, trans. Vernon J. Bourke (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975).

how to be both happy now, primarily through loving obedience, and in eternity.<sup>10</sup> John Calvin (A.D. 1509-1564), like Augustine, understood happiness to be found in God, man's greatest good, and experienced mainly in the next life when the resurrected believer sees God face to face.<sup>11</sup> Among the Puritans, William Ames (A.D. 1576-1633) taught that happiness was lost due to sin and could only be gained back through the future glorification of the body.<sup>12</sup> The Westminster Divines immortalized the legitimacy of eternal joy by connecting it to the glory of God in the Westminster Shorter Catechism (A.D. 1646-7) and its statement that man's chief end was to "glorify God and enjoy him forever."<sup>13</sup> Jonathan Edwards (A.D. 1703-1758), considered by many to be the last of the Puritans, inextricably linked the glory of God to human happiness in his treatise, *The End for Which God Created the World*.<sup>14</sup>

In the secular realm, the European Enlightenment (A.D. 1715-1789) spurred the development of a number of conceptions of human happiness. Philosopher John Locke (A.D. 1632-1704) believed the pursuit of happiness to be man's greatest good and the very foundation of all liberty.<sup>15</sup> Thomas Hobbes (A.D. 1588-1679) rejected the idea of a greatest good and believed happiness consists in continually fulfilling desires in this life.<sup>16</sup> Immanuel

---

<sup>10</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Large Catechism*, trans. John Nicholas Lenker (Minneapolis: The Luther Press, 1908), 74-75.

<sup>11</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 654, 663; idem, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*: trans. James Anderson. vol. 4, *Calvin's Commentaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2009), 392.

<sup>12</sup> Billy Kristanto, "William Ames and his Contribution to Evangelical Theology," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 39 (2015): 354.

<sup>13</sup> *The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms* (Lawrenceville, GA: Christian Education & Publications, 2007), 355.

<sup>14</sup> John Piper, *God's Passion for His Glory* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1998), 31-33.

<sup>15</sup> John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: William Tegg, 1879), 187.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Oxford: James Thornton, High Street, 1881), 71.

Kant separated the idea of happiness from virtue and emphasized man's moral duty above all other pursuits.<sup>17</sup> In America, human happiness was institutionalized in the United States' *Declaration of Independence* of 1776 which says that all people should be allowed to pursue happiness as a fundamental right given by God.<sup>18</sup> After analyzing the development of happiness in this era, McMahon believes that the Enlightenment conception differed from classic eudaemonia due to a greater emphasis on maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain, the belief that positive feelings are basically "good," and a pursuit of getting happiness for the greatest number of people.<sup>19</sup> Moving forward to the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, the rapidly growing science of positive psychology has made the attainment of happiness its object of research. Its primary concerns revolve around "people living thriving, meaningful, and fulfilling lives. . . . [which] is largely appropriated from Aristotle's notion of *eudaimonia*," though it has broadened its study to include the "'positive institutions' (families, organizations, communities, etc.) that permit and facilitate happiness."<sup>20</sup> Thus, man's understanding of happiness continues to evolve and remains a central concern in a variety of social, political, religious, and scientific spheres.

---

<sup>17</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. J.M.D. Meiklejohn (New York: The Colonial Press, 1899), 454-55.

<sup>18</sup> U.S. *Declaration of Independence*, 1776.

<sup>19</sup> McMahon, *Happiness*, 13; 180-85; 209ff.

<sup>20</sup> Brent A. Strawn, ed. *The Bible and the Pursuit of Happiness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 21.

## CHAPTER 3

### JOHN PIPER’S CHRISTIAN HEDONISM

The goal of this chapter is to present the central tenets of Christian Hedonism as they relate to man’s greatest good (*summum bonum*), man’s greatest ethical obligation in working toward that good, and how man obtains happiness in the process. Since John Piper has preached hundreds of sermons, written numerous articles, and authored many books, the works chosen to best understand his system will be confined to four primary books: *Desiring God*, *Future Grace*, *God’s Passion for His Glory*, and *When I Don’t Desire God*. *Desiring God* is Piper’s magnum opus and presents the central principles and arguments for Christian Hedonism. *Future Grace* is a presentation of how Piper believes faith in God’s future promises of reward should motivate Christian living. *God’s Passion for His Glory* contains a treatise by Jonathan Edwards called *The End for Which God Created the World*. In this work, Edwards argues for the supremacy of God’s glory as the overriding motive in all that God does. The book also contains a few introductory chapters by Piper where he explains how Edwards influenced the foundational principles of Christian Hedonism. Lastly, *When I Don’t Desire God* is an important book that discusses how Christian Hedonism should function in everyday Christian living and also seems to address some questions and concerns about Christian Hedonism that were raised since *Desiring God* was initially written. The most recent editions of these books were utilized in order to capture Piper’s most developed

thought since several of them have been revised since first written. Finally, a few critics of Christian Hedonism will be included along with their most valid points of concern.

### Man's Greatest Good & Primary Ethical Imperative

To understand Piper's conception of man's *summum bonum*, one must start with his understanding of God and his motivations for creating the world and redeeming his people. On this topic, *God's Passion for His Glory* presents the most thorough presentation of Piper's thought as he adopts Edwards' basic ideas in *The End for Which God Created the World*. To summarize the principle theme of this treatise, Piper offers a quote from Edwards' first biographer, Sereno Dwight, who said the work "demonstrates that the *chief* and *ultimate* end of the Supreme Being, in the works of creation and providence, was the manifestation of his own glory in the highest happiness of his creatures."<sup>1</sup> This statement sets forth several important principles that become foundational for Christian Hedonism. First, Piper believes that God primarily acts to display his own glory, which is the manifestation of his own good and holy character. Additionally, since there is no greater good than God himself, there is no greater good for man than to experience God. Edwards puts it this way:

God in seeking his glory seeks the good of his creatures, because the emanation of his glory . . . implies the . . . happiness of his creatures. And in communicating his fullness for them, he does it for himself, because their good, which he seeks, is so much in union and communion with himself. God is their good. Their excellency and happiness is nothing but the emanation and expression of God's glory.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, Edwards, and Piper following him, reasons that God's ultimate end, and man's greatest good, are one and the same. God seeks to glorify himself in the happiness of man. Man is to find his happiness in the glory of God. Piper is so convinced of this fact that he declares,

---

<sup>1</sup> John Piper, *God's Passion for His Glory* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1998), 31.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

“virtually everything I preach and write and do is shaped by this truth: that the exhibition of God’s glory and the deepest joy of human souls are one thing.”<sup>3</sup> This unity of God’s glory and human joy is the central principle of Christian Hedonism.

This understanding of the unity of God’s glory and man’s joy led Piper to slightly revise the chief end of man statement in the Westminster Shorter Catechism (WSC). The original answer to question one of the WSC says, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.”<sup>4</sup> In the introduction to *Desiring God*, Piper objects to the wording of the statement which he believes separates the concepts of enjoying and glorifying God, as if they were two different things. Instead, Piper revised the statement to read, “*The chief end of man is to glorify God by enjoying Him forever.*”<sup>5</sup> This revised statement expresses what Piper believes to be man’s greatest ethical imperative: to glorify God by enjoying him. Therefore, the pursuit of joy in the Christian life is an absolute must. God created man with an inherent desire to be happy and the only fulfillment for this desire is finding joy in God himself. Piper repeatedly points out in his writings that God commands man in Scripture to “delight yourself in the Lord” (Ps. 37:4) and “rejoice in the Lord always” (Phil. 4:4). The pursuit of joy is not optional but is found in the fabric of the Bible’s ethical imperatives. Thus, Piper says that, “Christian Hedonism attempts to take these divine commands with blood-earnestness.” But interestingly, these commands are not to be carried out with a kind of “disinterested duty” like that found in Kant’s deontological ethics. Duty without joy is hypocritical for Piper. Instead, God mandates man’s pursuit of happiness and therefore

---

<sup>3</sup> Piper, *God’s Passion for His Glory*, 32-33.

<sup>4</sup> *The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms* (Lawrenceville, GA: Christian Education & Publications, 2007), 355.

<sup>5</sup> John Piper, *Desiring God* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2011), 17-18.

legitimizes it. In this regard, Piper has much in common with the eudaemonistic tradition's central emphasis on happiness. As Piper states it, "the distinguishing feature of Christian Hedonism is not that pleasure seeking demands virtue, but that virtue consists essentially, though not only, in pleasure seeking."<sup>6</sup> In Piper's system, virtue and happiness are bound up with one another. It is man's duty to be happy in God.

### Piper's Conception of Happiness

So how does Piper understand human happiness? First, he believes it is based on God's own happiness in himself, his works, and the praise of his people. As the all-sufficient God, he was always happy before the world began and was not dependent on anything outside himself for happiness. The object of his delight was himself (the Father, Son and Holy Spirit finding joy in one another) since there was nothing else to take delight in. Once God created the universe, he took delight in his works since he sees himself reflected in them. Thus, creation becomes an object of God's happiness and joy but only as a means by which he delights in himself.<sup>7</sup> Lastly, God finds joy when his creatures find their joy in praising him. He delights in them experiencing his goodness in worship.<sup>8</sup> Taken together, we get a picture of a God who is fundamentally happy in himself and what he does and wants to share that happiness with his creatures.

From this reality of God's fundamental happiness flows the ethical imperative that drives man's proper pursuit of happiness. God commands man to find his happiness in God as his chief duty and greatest good. Thus, man's pursuit of happiness in God is his highest

---

<sup>6</sup> Piper, *Desiring God*, 25-26.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 50; 44.

<sup>8</sup> Piper, *God's Passion for His Glory*, 40-42.

obligation.<sup>9</sup> Man attains true happiness through a kind of “soul satisfaction” through experiencing God. Piper believes it is so essential for man to find ultimate happiness in God alone that to find it in any other object is the very essence of sin. For support, Piper frequently quotes Jeremiah 2:13 where God accuses Israel of two great evils: forsaking him and making cisterns for themselves that can’t hold water.<sup>10</sup> This image conveys the sense of man replacing God with other things that cannot possibly bring him happiness and satisfaction. This unholy exchange is the essence of man’s folly and rebellion. Therefore, man’s great challenge is to deny this natural tendency and instead choose to pursue God alone as his ultimate joy and happiness.

This pursuit of ultimate happiness in God does not negate the usefulness of God’s creation, however. In *When I Don’t Desire God*, Piper encourages the use of various means that function as tools by which man can find happiness in God. These means include “seeing God” through what is written about him in Scripture, communing with God in prayer, and experiencing the works of God in creation.<sup>11</sup> God’s words are also to be used as a means of joy. In *Future Grace*, Piper explains how a believer can find joy through God’s promises of future rewards. Even though the believer does not yet experience God’s future rewards in this life, there can be an element of joy even in the desire for something that has not yet been obtained. Piper uses this principle to encourage happiness in God’s certain promises of what is to come to help keep the believer from latching on to the pleasures of sin in the present.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Piper, *God’s Passion for His Glory*, 46-47.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>11</sup> John Piper, *When I Don’t Desire God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004).

<sup>12</sup> John Piper, *Future Grace* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2016), 204.



Finally, Piper extends his understanding of the pursuit of joy into the future eschaton. He believes that heaven will consist of a “*never-ending, ever-increasing discovery of more and more of God’s glory with greater and ever-greater joy in him.*” Piper reasons that since man is finite and God is infinite, man will never be able to fully experience all the joy that God has available. Thus, heaven will include a kind of happiness that is “increasing with intimacy and intensity forever and ever.”<sup>13</sup> The pursuit of pleasure in God, and the experience of it, will never end.

### Love and Joy in Christian Hedonism

Since the concepts of love and joy are central to the comparison of Christian Hedonism and Augustine’s Theology of Love, it is important to understand how Piper defines them in his work, how he believes they relate to one another, and how they differ. Getting as clear a picture as possible to the underlying meanings of these terms will help us understand where Augustine and Piper are essentially in agreement and where their concepts diverge from one another and from Scripture.

#### Love

A short survey of how Piper uses the term love in his selected works will help clarify how he understands the essence and function of love. At the beginning of his magnum opus, *Desiring God*, through a quote from C.S. Lewis, Piper emphasizes that love does not primarily consist of disinterested duty, void of self-concern, like in the Kantian and Stoic understanding of the idea. Instead, genuine love rightly finds enjoyment and pleasure in its object. This leads him to conclude that an essential part of love consists in pleasure seeking.

---

<sup>13</sup> Piper, *God’s Passion for His Glory*, 37.

He explains, “I do not say that the relationship between love and happiness is this: ‘True happiness requires love.’ This is an oversimplification that misses the crucial and defining point. The distinguishing feature of Christian Hedonism is not that pleasure seeking demands virtue, but that virtue consists essentially, though not only, in pleasure seeking.” Love must value its object enough that it actually enjoys doing it good. Piper is so convinced of this, he states that a Christian simply cannot love people or please God if one abandons the pursuit of pleasure. Put another way, love must include its own happiness as a goal through finding pleasure in its object. If it does not, Piper believes it dishonors God.<sup>14</sup> The heart must take joy, pleasure, and happiness in what it loves.

Additionally, Piper stresses that love should be motivated by the rewards that God promises. He points out that Scripture presents the desire for God’s rewards as legitimate reasons for ethical action. For example, Jesus motivated financial giving by telling his listeners to sell their possessions and give to the poor in order to receive heavenly treasure that will never disappoint them (Luke 12:33).<sup>15</sup> In another place, Jesus taught that this giving should be done in secret so that the disciple will receive rewards from the Father instead of praise from man (Matt. 6:3-4). Anticipating objections to the idea of being motivated by personal reward, in a key section on his chapter on love in *Desiring God*, Piper explains his understanding of the idea that love “does not seek its own” (1 Cor. 13:5). He believes this verse is essentially addressing selfish love, not the kind of love that seeks rewards, and happiness, in good things that God has given or promised.<sup>16</sup> Thus, when evaluating love’s

---

<sup>14</sup> Piper, *Desiring God*, 19-20; 25; 112.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 305-06.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 305; 113-14.

self-interested motives, it is crucial to distinguish between the desire for personal gain via good things from God verses those that are sinful and selfish.

But how do the motives of the heart relate to action? Because the affections of the heart must be present in love, Piper submits that love “cannot be equated with any action” in and of itself. Again and again, Piper wishes to make a distinction between religious acts that have an outward appearance of godliness but are not supported by a heart that truly loves. More than anything, Piper wants to avoid a type of Christianity that is similar to the hypocritical acts of the Pharisees that looked good externally but flowed from evil hearts. Instead, genuine love must include feelings as an essential aspect of it. Those feelings include “first a deeply satisfying experience of the fullness of God’s grace, and then a doubly satisfying experience of sharing that grace with another person.”<sup>17</sup> Notice that the feelings accompanying genuine love move the heart to action. They are not meant to remain for the satisfaction of the individual alone. In Piper’s system, love is an experience of joy in the heart of what God has done for the believer that seeks to share what it has with others. Love essentially includes the feeling of joy; both a joy in God and a joy in the happiness of others.<sup>18</sup>

Though Piper believes that love includes feelings of joy and satisfaction, he also thinks that love drives the person to want more of the goodness of God it experiences. He describes Christian Hedonism generally as a “profoundly *dissatisfied contentment*” that is “constantly hungry for more of the feast of God’s grace.” In fact, the experience of God’s grace is so strong that the Christian Hedonist “pursues love because he is addicted to the

---

<sup>17</sup> Piper, *Desiring God*, 120, 116-17.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 116, 123.

experience of that power.”<sup>19</sup> Yet, once again, love is not satisfied with keeping this experience for oneself. This experience of joy in God’s goodness does not remain static, but “starts to expand in love to fill [perceived human needs] and bring about the joy of faith in the heart of the other person.” In fact, the lover seeks his own joy in the joy of the beloved.<sup>20</sup> Thus, love is a force that is constantly in motion. The Christian Hedonist wants more of the goodness of God and then desires to share this goodness with others so they may experience joy which then causes the lover even more joy in return.

This understanding of the essence of love leads Piper to define it as “the overflow of joy in God that gladly meets the needs of others.”<sup>21</sup> Interestingly, love is defined in terms of joy and inseparably connected to it and, in fact, seems dependent on it. His primary biblical text that moves him to define love this way is 2 Corinthians 8:2, where Paul writes to the Corinthians about the generosity of the Macedonians in financial giving and says, “in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity” (ESV). Piper believes this a crucial text for understanding love in a variety of ways. First, the Macedonians’ situation was not one of financial prosperity or easy circumstances. Their circumstances were dire and yet the grace of God at work in the Macedonians caused them to give due to their abundant joy. Second, Piper believes the text shows not just the act of giving, but the heart affections behind it. Again, for Piper, an action in and of itself is not a true test of godliness; the heart motive matters a great deal. The Macedonians *wanted* to give and it was their joy to do so. In fact, it was joy that compelled

---

<sup>19</sup> Piper, *Desiring God*, 124; 140.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 206.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 118-19.

the action of giving. Finally, the passage demonstrates that love is not individualistic since it takes into account the needs of others even when one's own situation is far from ideal. Love desires to share the wealth that it has whether it be material or spiritual. It is a joy that overflows into benevolent action.

Additionally, Piper believes his definition of love is derived from God's own love for man. Again, for Piper, love is an overflow of joy. In Piper's understanding, God's interest in his own joy is a primary motivation for his work in creation and redemption. In an extensive footnote in his chapter on love in *Desiring God*, Piper gives a few Scripture references that refer to God's joy in doing good to his people (Jer. 32:41), his joy over sinners who repent (Luke 15:7), and Jesus' joy that strengthened him to endure the horrors of crucifixion (Heb. 12:2). From these texts, Piper concludes, "Should we not infer that in the painful work of redeeming love, God is *very* interested in the satisfaction that comes from His efforts and that He *does* demand the pleasure of a great return on His sacrifice?"<sup>22</sup> Piper understands from the doctrine of God's self-sufficiency, that God does not need creation to be joyful. However, he says, "yet there is in joy an urge to increase, by expanding itself to others who, if necessary, must first be created and redeemed. This divine urge is God's desire for the compounded joy that comes from having others share the very joy He has in Himself."<sup>23</sup> As Piper argues in *God's Passion for His Glory*, God delights in himself above all things and desires his creation to partake of this goodness. It is his joy to share himself with his creation and he gets joy from their joy in delighting in him. In fact, his creation delighting in him is

---

<sup>22</sup> Piper, *Desiring God*, 124.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

what glorifies him the most which, as we have seen, is the chief end of man.<sup>24</sup> Here we see, in God's own motivations, the fountain of Christian Hedonism and Piper's principle of expanding joy along with his definition of love as wanting others to experience the joy of delighting in God.

### Joy

So if Piper defines "love" in terms of "joy," what is "joy" and how does it differ from "love"? In this case, it may be more helpful to start with how Piper uses terms. In *When I Don't Desire God*, he explicitly states that, "In this book I will use many words for *joy* without precise distinctions: happiness, delight, pleasure, contentment, satisfaction, desire, longing, thirsting, passion, etc."<sup>25</sup> Piper understands that though people have specific notions of what these terms mean, he believes the Bible uses this "emotional language" in a general sense to describe what he calls "godly [experiences] of the heart" that may sometimes be used in a positive sense, sometimes in a negative sense, sometimes spiritually, and sometimes physically.<sup>26</sup> Thus, Piper may not use a word in the same way in every instance of his work and sometimes these various words are used synonymously in describing the emotional condition of the heart. This makes getting a precise definition for joy a challenge.

In looking at his list of terms, perhaps the most challenging part is differentiating between concepts that seem to suggest a desire for a feeling that is not present (i.e. "longing") and a feeling that is present (i.e. "delight"). Piper anticipates this objection in the second chapter of *When I Don't Desire God* titled "What is the Difference Between Desire

---

<sup>24</sup> Piper, *God's Passion for His Glory*, 33.

<sup>25</sup> Piper, *When I Don't Desire God*, 23.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

and Delight?” Here he takes the concepts of “desire” and “delight” and argues that an element of delight is contained in the desire itself. Without repeating the argument here, he concludes that, “I will not try to build a wall between desire and delight, or between longing and pleasure. Sometimes I will speak of desiring God and sometimes of delighting in God. Sometimes I will speak of the inconsolable longing for God and sometimes the pleasures at his right hand.”<sup>27</sup> This is important because it gives us insight into how Piper understands and uses language. He wants to communicate that there are interrelationships between terms and it isn’t always easy to say “this term means X” and “this term means Y.” This inexact use of language will be noted later when we look at how other theologians have defined love and joy (including Augustine and Jonathan Edwards) and how the Bible tends to use the terms.

Perhaps the best we can do is try to understand how Piper uses the term “joy” and what other words he believes are closely related. In the index to *Desiring God*, under the term “joy” is a note to see also “happiness” and “pleasure,” two words from the list above that he has already stated he believes are suitable substitutes.<sup>28</sup> In the index to *When I Don’t Desire God*, he lists “desire” and “delight” as other related terms to “joy.” “Hedonism,” “pleasure,” and “satisfaction” (in reference to the soul) are also words that Piper seems to use synonymously with “joy.”<sup>29</sup> Finally, in the appendix to *Desiring God*, Piper answers the question, “Why Call it Christian Hedonism?” For support, he gives a dictionary definition of hedonism as “the pursuit or devotion to pleasure” and states, “That is precisely what I mean

---

<sup>27</sup> Piper, *When I Don’t Desire God*, 27.

<sup>28</sup> Piper, *Desiring God*, 360.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 23-25.

by it.”<sup>30</sup> By calling his system “Christian Hedonism,” defining hedonism as “pleasure,” and stating that man’s greatest ethical obligation is to enjoy God, it seems likely that “joy” and “pleasure” are essentially synonymous for him. If this is the case, perhaps the best understanding of Piper’s conception of joy is a “feeling, emotion, or affection of the heart that brings pleasure.” If this definition is correct, then joy is the experience of the pleasurable feelings and love is the overflow of these feelings that moves the will to meet the needs of others. Once again, love is driven by joy in Piper’s system and seems to be the more basic heart affection of the two terms. This will be of vital importance in comparing how he differs from Augustine, and Scripture, in the use of these words.

Before moving on, it is worth noting how much emphasis Piper places on the experience of joy for success in the Christian life. In *Desiring God*, Piper says that “not only does the pursuit of joy in God give strength to endure; it is the key to breaking the power of sin on our way to heaven.” The way Piper understands this power to work is that the soul becomes so satisfied with the experience of joy in God that it overwhelms the counter-desires of sin.<sup>31</sup> Experiencing joy is also the foundation of world missions for Piper. In *When I Don’t Desire God*, Piper believes a fundamental question that he is addressing in the book is “How can I obtain or recover a joy in Christ that is so deep and so strong that it will free me from bondage to Western comforts and security, and will impel me into sacrifices of mercy and missions, and will sustain me in the face of martyrdom?”<sup>32</sup> If that is the case, it isn’t a stretch to say that the Great Commission is dependent on overwhelmingly strong experiences of joy

---

<sup>30</sup> Piper, *Desiring God*, 308.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 12-13.

<sup>32</sup> Piper, *When I Don’t Desire God*, 20.



in Christians. Finally, Piper argues that worship, in order to be pleasing to God, must essentially consist of seeking joy in God. In fact, Piper says that this pleasure-seeking process is “the only way to glorify the all-sufficiency of God in worship.”<sup>33</sup> So whether it is a believer’s sanctification, world missions, or worship, attaining joy in God is so fundamental that the success of all those important activities are entirely dependent on it.

### Critics of Christian Hedonism

Finally, in the last section of this chapter, we will look at a few chief critics of Christian Hedonism. Since John Piper writes for a popular level reading audience, scholarly sources of criticism are fairly sparse. The critics mentioned below are chosen primarily for the value of their arguments. Since not every one of their criticisms are justified, especially those that attack eudaemonistic principles that are biblically warranted, only the ones which illuminate the pitfalls within Christian Hedonism will be mentioned. These criticisms will be picked up in greater detail in the biblical analysis chapter later in this paper.

#### Richard Mouw

Theologian and philosopher Richard Mouw identifies Piper’s synonymous use of terms as one problem with his system. Mouw objects to Piper treating the terms “pleasure,” “happiness,” “joy,” and “glory” as to what he calls “virtual synonyms.”<sup>34</sup> Instead, he believes “happiness” should be construed in a broader manner than mere pleasure and involves a state of affairs that is most conducive to human flourishing. Therefore, happiness consists more in man fulfilling the nature that God designed for him rather than simply gaining pleasure

---

<sup>33</sup> Piper, *Desiring God*, 111.

<sup>34</sup> Richard Mouw, *The God Who Commands* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 38.

through various means.<sup>35</sup> Notably, this definition of happiness is more in line with the eudaemonistic tradition.

#### Peter Masters

Dr. Masters' chief complaint against Christian Hedonism is that Piper has erroneously reduced the Christian life to the pursuit of joy in a way that takes his supporting biblical texts out of context. For instance, Masters observes that key passages for Piper that list the pursuit of joy as an imperative, such as Psalm 37: ("delight yourself in the Lord"), often list other commands right alongside it that get ignored. Thus, joy gets unjustifiably prioritized as the chief ethical imperative of Christianity. Masters believes that this results in the Christian life becoming too narrowly focused on the subjective feeling of joy to the detriment of other imperatives that must also be prioritized and pursued. This can lead to a temptation to become too preoccupied with one's internal state and falsely inflate the subjective feelings of joy to justify spiritual maturity.<sup>36</sup>

#### C.W. Booth

In a page that is often cited on the Internet in critiques of Christian Hedonism, Mr. Booth argues that Piper has unjustifiably substituted "enjoying God" above the biblical priority to "love God." Booth demonstrates from the great commandment of Mt. 22:37-40 that Jesus taught that loving God was the chief duty required of man. Booth also believes that making the feeling of subjective joy the primary standard for evaluating the Christian life

---

<sup>35</sup> Mouw, 38-39.

<sup>36</sup> Peter Masters, "Christian Hedonism—Is It Right?" *Pulpit & Pen*; available from <http://pulpitandpen.org/2017/01/10/christian-hedonism-is-it-right-by-dr-peter-masters/>; Internet; accessed 29 March 2017.

focuses too much on achieving the “outcome” of obedience (i.e. the feeling of joy) rather than the “duty” of obedience (i.e. “loving God”). Finally, Booth argues that Piper’s definition of love as an “overflow of joy” is found nowhere in Scripture.<sup>37</sup>

### Summary

As discussed, John Piper’s Christian Hedonism centers on man enjoying God in greater and greater measure, in this life and in the one to come, as the primary means of bringing God glory and achieving man’s chief end. The commands of Scripture that direct man to take pleasure in God become the overriding force through which all of Christian Hedonism depends. Thus, the system stands and falls on the legitimacy of making the enjoyment of God the primary ethical obligation of humanity.

---

<sup>37</sup> C.W. Booth, “A Biblical Study of the Theological Foundations of ‘Christian Hedonism,’” *The Faithful Word*; available from <http://thefaithfulword.org/studyhedonism.html>; Internet; accessed 31 January 2017.

## CHAPTER 4

### AUGUSTINE’S THEOLOGY OF LOVE

This chapter will follow a similar format to the preceding in examining how Augustine’s Theology of Love presents man’s greatest good, his greatest ethical obligation, and how he finds happiness in the process. For comparison sake, we will look at how Augustine defines and understands the terms “love” and “joy” and examine an influential critic of his system. The following chapter will then compare and contrast Augustine’s Theology of Love with Piper’s Christian Hedonism, noting relevant points of agreement and disagreement before moving on to a biblical analysis of the fundamentals of the two systems. Since Augustine is one of the most prolific theologians in the history of Christianity, and not all of his works are translated into English, this chapter will rely on several representative English texts that represent a complete summation of his thought on happiness and man’s greatest good.

#### Man’s Greatest Good and Primary Ethical Imperative

In his masterpiece, *The City of God*, Augustine presents his view of what constitutes the greatest good for man (*summum bonum*). Augustine acknowledges that he is picking up the discussion from Greek philosophy and admits he shares some common ground in the formulation of the concept from what has come before him. Augustine explains his understanding of man’s greatest good with the following:

There remains the moral section of philosophy ('ethics' in Greek), which discusses the question of the *Summum Bonum*, to which we refer all our actions, which we seek for its own sake, not for any ulterior end, and the attainment of which leaves us nothing more to seek for our happiness. For this reason it is called the 'end'; everything else we desire for the sake of this, this we desire for itself alone.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, all human action should ultimately focus on attaining the greatest good. The *summum bonum* should be desired because it is the supreme good in and of itself and should not be used in order to gain another thing. It also must be the fountain of all happiness and must be able to satisfy man's desires. Additionally, Augustine believes the following aspects are also necessary for a thing to qualify as the greatest good: it cannot be inferior to man, it cannot be located within man, it must be able to be possessed, it cannot be lost once possessed, it must be of greatest virtue to the soul, and it must transcend man. After examining all these criteria, for Augustine, only God can possibly qualify as the greatest good.<sup>2</sup>

So how does man experience a good that is transcendent and external to him? Augustine believes it is through adhering to God in love. Several times in his writings, Augustine quotes or references Ps. 73:28 for support ("as for me, my true good is to cling to God").<sup>3</sup> He believes that love is the power that binds one person to another. This is man's greatest good: to cling to the Supreme Good through love, desire, and affection. But this bond of love is not something that man generates in himself. It is given to him by God through the work of the Holy Spirit pouring out his love into the heart (Rom. 5:5). Man then responds by choosing to love God in return. This is man's primary ethic, to fulfill the great commandment of Christ by loving God with heart, soul, and mind (Mt. 22:37). In return, man

---

<sup>1</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson (New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 2003), 309.

<sup>2</sup> Augustine, *Of the Morals of the Catholic Church* (New York, Magisterium Press, 2015), 3.4-5; 5.7-8; 6.10.

<sup>3</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, 380. This is Augustine's translation of the verse.

is assured that God will always work for good for those that love him (Rom. 8:28) and that no one can separate him from the love of Christ (Rom. 8:35). This great command to love God is not unique to the New Testament. It was the same great commandment given to Israel in Deut. 6:5 and, along with loving one's neighbor, is described by Christ as a summary of all the ethical demands of the law and prophets (Mt. 22:40).<sup>4</sup>

So important is this commandment that Augustine sees it as ultimate and encompassing all of man's ethical obligations. He justifies this belief by explaining when Scripture says, "all your heart, all your soul, all your mind", it leaves no part of our life free from this obligation, no part free as it were to back out and enjoy some other thing; any other object of love that enters the mind should be swept towards the same destination as that to which the whole flood of our love is directed."<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the love of God must be primary in the heart of man and all other loves must be subordinated to it. The one who does this has "rightly ordered his love." This priority of love is not unique to the present life but carries over into the life to come and is the characteristic virtue of the heavenly city where believers dwell in God's presence for eternity.<sup>6</sup>

Augustine's primary ethic of loving God is not individualistic, however. It involves loving others and letting others love us. Therefore, the commands to "love God" and to "love our neighbor as ourselves" share an important relationship. First, to "love oneself" means to

---

<sup>4</sup> Augustine, *Of the Morals of the Catholic Church*, 14.24; 13.23; 8.13; 29.59.

<sup>5</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, trans. R. P. H. Green (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 17.

<sup>6</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, 593.

direct one's soul to find its fulfillment in the greatest good.<sup>7</sup> When one does this, it is not selfishness, but simply acting in accordance with the purpose which God created for the soul. Second, to "love your neighbor as yourself" means to help your neighbor also direct his soul to find its fulfillment in the greatest good. Third, one must allow one's neighbor to love you in return and fulfill his command to love.<sup>8</sup> Thus, in a proper understanding of Augustine's primary ethic, three persons are involved: the self, the neighbor, and God. God is the ultimate object of love yet the self and the neighbor help one another pursue this object of love and fulfill their primary duty.

### Augustine's Conception of Happiness

On the subject of human happiness, Augustine agrees with Aristotle and the other Platonists before him that the pursuit of happiness is a desire common to all men. In *City of God*, Augustine explains, "That all men desire happiness is a truism for all who are in any degree able to use their reason."<sup>9</sup> Augustine firmly believes that the search for happiness is a fundamental and indisputable aspect of human nature. As for the general meaning of happiness, Bussanich believes Augustine operates from the same basic parameters as classic eudaemonism in understanding happiness as "an objectively desirable state of well-being which represents the fulfillment or self-realization of human nature."<sup>10</sup> For Augustine, the issue isn't whether men search for happiness. Instead, the important question is: "Where is happiness to be found?" This is where Augustine parts ways with the philosophers. Only in

---

<sup>7</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, 376.

<sup>8</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 17.

<sup>9</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, 371.

<sup>10</sup> John Bussanich, "Happiness, Eudaimonism," in *Augustine Through the Ages*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 413.

the Christian God can man find the happiness he seeks. In a passage in *The Confessions*, Augustine explicitly names what he believes happiness is: “this is the happy life, and this alone: to rejoice in you, about you and because of you.” Thus, joy in God is true happiness and it can be found nowhere else.<sup>11</sup>

But how does man get happiness from God? Augustine explains how happiness, man’s greatest good, and his primary ethical duty interconnect:

Following after God is the desire of happiness; to reach God is happiness itself. We follow after God by loving Him; we reach Him, not by becoming entirely what He is, but in nearness to Him, and in wonderful and immaterial contact with Him, and being inwardly illuminated and occupied by His truth and holiness. He is light itself; we get enlightenment from Him. The greatest commandment, therefore, which leads to [*sic*] happy life, and the first, is this: ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and soul, and mind.’ For to those who love the Lord all things issue in good.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, happiness includes both the desire for the object of happiness and the attainment of it. But attaining God involves “nearness,” “immaterial contact,” “inward illumination,” and being “occupied by His truth and holiness.” The soul must have these things before it can attain happiness in the fullest sense. In this life, the pursuit of these qualities involves an inward transformation that is best described as a journey of the soul moving toward God that never quite reaches its goal. Thomas Hand observes three elements in Augustine’s conception of the soul’s movement toward God, the object of his love: intellectual, sentimental/emotional, and the will. First, man must have some knowledge of the object of his love since he is unable to love what he does not know. Second, this knowledge produces emotions and affections in the heart that create desire. Last, the will is moved by these

---

<sup>11</sup> Augustine, *The Confessions*, ed. David Vincent Meconi, trans. Maria Boulding (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), 292.

<sup>12</sup> Augustine, *Of the Morals of the Catholic Church*, 11.18.



affections and the lover is driven to possess what he loves.<sup>13</sup> As the internal desires of man are directed toward God, his actions follow in kind. Man derives a kind of happiness as he strives to love God more and more with all of his being.

Yet in this life, the soul never attains the fullest possible experience of God he desires because he cannot fully possess what he loves. In Augustine's thought, happiness is having what we want; unhappiness is not having what we want.<sup>14</sup> This desire for the fullest possible experience of God will not happen in this life; thus unhappiness is to be expected.

Additionally, that possession also requires a certain depth of knowledge about the object of love.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, since man can only know and experience God in imperfection now, happiness remains elusive. Only in the next life will man see God face to face and possess an experience of the divine, and a knowledge of him, that is impossible in this present world.<sup>16</sup> Lastly, in the present, man's soul is weak and sick and liable to temptations that pull him away from his journey of love toward his greatest good. Only when man's soul is fully healed of the sicknesses that keep it from loving God wholeheartedly will he experience true happiness.

In this life there is a kind of happiness to be had on the soul's journey, but it is transitory and what Burnaby calls "no more than foreshadowings of beatitude."<sup>17</sup> It is a happiness that comes from the hope that God will one day bring the longing soul into his

---

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Hand, *Augustine on Prayer* (New York: Catholic Publishing Corp., 1986), 13-14.

<sup>14</sup> Augustine, *The Happy Life*, in *Trilogy on Faith and Happiness*, ed. Boniface Ramsey, trans. Roland J. Teske S.J., Michael G. Campbell, and Ray Kearney (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2010), 36-37.

<sup>15</sup> Ellen Charry, *God and the Art of Happiness* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 27.

<sup>16</sup> Augustine, *Soliloquies*, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christ Church*, vol. 7, *Homilies on the Gospel of John, Homilies on the First Epistle of John, Soliloquies* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 541-42.

<sup>17</sup> John Burnaby, *Amor Dei* (Norwich: The Canterbury Press, 1991), 246; 316.

presence and satisfy his desires with eternal bliss in a way that is lasting and uninterrupted by the corruption of the present world. Yet Augustine describes this happiness from hope as more of a “solace for our wretchedness rather than the joy of blessedness.”<sup>18</sup> In order for true happiness to be possible, there needs to be a change in the world condition external to the person. Only when there is, what Augustine calls, a final and total absence of “death, deception, and distress” can there be a chance at the fullness of happiness.<sup>19</sup> Even if man could muster enough desire for God and sustain a single-minded devotion for a time, the present condition of the fallen world continually threatens man’s happiness as he faces constant temptation that derails his pursuit. The fear of death, distresses of disease, and the sinfulness of other humans all dampen the prospect of lasting happiness in this life. The creation needs total redemption before man can truly flourish and obtain the happiness for which he longs.

### Love and Joy in Augustine’s Thought

So how does Augustine both define, and relate to one another, the concepts of love and joy? Because Augustine’s writing is so extensive, and his thought on these concepts interspersed throughout numerous works, it is helpful to draw on the expert synthesis of a few Augustinian scholars to bring clarity. Augustine’s thinking on these abstract principles is highly developed and complex since he spent a lot of time working out the relationship between the lover, the proper objects of his love, and the enjoyment gained in the process.

---

<sup>18</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, 892.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 881; 589.

Due to this complexity, this section will only be an overview of his thought in order to properly compare his system to Christian Hedonism.

### Love

In an introduction to a collection of Augustine's later works, scholar John Burnaby includes a discussion of Augustine's terms for love where he makes the following observations. Burnaby believes that the "primary connotation of 'love' in Augustine is 'desire.' It is the motive of all human action, the source of energy which compels a man to seek the satisfaction of his needs; and Augustine compares it to the force of gravity." This love seeks enjoyment in its object and is primarily an affection of the heart. But love does not remain only an internal affection. Burnaby includes a quote by Augustine from *The Trinity* whereby he explains the role of the will in love. Augustine writes, "[love is] nothing else but the will, seeking after *or holding in possession* an object of enjoyment."<sup>20</sup> Thus, love is a complex notion that involves affection and motive which moves the will toward the object which it desires to possess and enjoy. Conversely, the will also affects love since men can choose what they desire.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, Burnaby concludes that there are two main aspects of love in Augustine's thought: conation and feeling.<sup>22</sup> Love is a choice of the mind and an affection of the heart that moves the will toward its object.

---

<sup>20</sup> John Burnaby, introduction to *The Trinity in Augustine: Later Works*, ed. and trans. John Burnaby (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1955), xxxv-xxxvi.

<sup>21</sup> Hand, *Augustine on Prayer*, 14-15.

<sup>22</sup> Burnaby, introduction to *The Trinity in Augustine: Later Works*, xxxvi.

## Joy

“Love” and “joy” form an important relationship in Augustine’s thought. Love’s purpose is the enjoyment of its object; an enjoyment that is most often termed as “fruition” (*frui*) in Augustinian studies. This enjoyment involves the use of things (*uti*) to obtain that enjoyment. Augustine explains the relationship between love and enjoyment throughout his first section of *On Christian Teaching*: “To enjoy something is to hold fast to it in love for its own sake. To use something is to apply whatever it may be to the purpose of obtaining what you love—if indeed it is something that ought to be loved.”<sup>23</sup> For Augustine, only God should be loved and enjoyed for his own sake. All other things are to be used for the attainment of that goal. Here, Augustine isn’t promoting selfishness but simply applying his chief ethic of loving God first and foremost while making all other loves subordinate. However, this concept of love and enjoyment isn’t to be regarded in an individualistic sense since loving others is still a part of his system. To love someone is to help them love and enjoy God for his own sake. In return, we must allow others to love us and help us find enjoyment in God as well.

This is what brings man true happiness: loving and enjoying God. In fact, it is only the enjoyment of God that can make man truly happy as no other object of love is capable in its nature of fulfilling the conditions required for true happiness. Enjoying God is so important to Augustine that he calls it “the supreme reward.”<sup>24</sup> However, Burnaby warns that Augustine is no hedonist and is very careful in his work to repeatedly assert that God is to be

---

<sup>23</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 9.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

loved “for his own sake.”<sup>25</sup> In other words, God should never be loved for the motive of deriving pleasure from him. His goodness and perfection alone is reason enough to make him the object of love. Pleasure and enjoyment is a “reward” for choosing to fulfill one’s purpose in making the Supreme Good one’s object of ultimate love.

But even though Augustine sees the enjoyment of God as a reward for loving him, its fullest experience will come later. Everything said above about the earthly limits of happiness apply to joy as well. This is an aspect of Augustine’s thought that is missing in John Piper’s presentation of it in his book, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*. In his section on Augustine, Piper quotes from *On Christian Doctrine* where Augustine states, “I call charity [i.e., love for God] the motion of the soul toward the enjoyment of God for His own sake.” Piper concludes that Augustine believes “Loving God is always conceived of essentially as delighting in God and in anything else for his sake.”<sup>26</sup> This statement obscures some important distinctions in Augustine’s thought. Piper fails to add that Augustine did not believe that one would attain a fullness of joy in this present life since, once again, enjoyment of God is dependent on possessing him to a much greater degree than is possible now. As Burnaby stated above, though it contains a strong aspect of enjoyment, love in Augustine’s thought is fundamentally “desire.” This is a desire for attaining an experience of God that will happen in the next life. As we have already seen in Christian Hedonism, Piper wants to break down the wall between the desire for something and the experience of delight in it since he believes there is such a strong interrelationship between the two.<sup>27</sup> However,

---

<sup>25</sup> Burnaby, *Amor Dei*, 225.

<sup>26</sup> John Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2000), 58, quoting St. Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. D.W. Roberston, Jr. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1958), 88.

<sup>27</sup> John Piper, *When I Don’t Desire God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 27.

eradicating this distinction is not possible in Augustine's thought. The difference between a desire for God, and the joy experienced from finally attaining him, is incredibly important. Therefore, it is very important to understand that for Augustine, there is only so much joy that can be had in the present life until man can see God face to face and enjoy him fully in eternity.

Next, it would be helpful to try to obtain an understanding of what joy is in Augustine's thought. Again, Augustine says that "to enjoy something is to hold fast to it in love for its own sake." Therefore, some aspect of possession is required to experience joy. Augustine also says that the proper object of enjoyment brings happiness.<sup>28</sup> Once again, Augustine believed that the happy life consists in enjoying God.<sup>29</sup> Thus, joy in God is an indispensable aspect of happiness. Bussanich asserts that for Augustine, "desirability, goodness, and pleasure converge in the concept of happiness."<sup>30</sup> Happiness is essentially enjoyment and pleasure in the proper object of love of man's greatest good: God. Joy, then, involves possession of a desired object which brings happiness.

If joy is closely connected to happiness, how does it relate to "pleasure"? In *On Christian Teaching*, Augustine says that "when the object of love is present, it inevitably brings with it pleasure as well." In context, he is referring to enjoying God and enjoying others in God, both legitimate objects of enjoyment in his system. He goes on to say:

If you go beyond this pleasure and relate it to your permanent goal, you are using it, and are said to enjoy it not in the literal sense but in a transferred sense. But if you hold fast and go no further, making it the goal of your joy, then you should be

---

<sup>28</sup> Burnaby, *Amor Dei*, 9.

<sup>29</sup> Augustine, *The Confessions*, ed. David Vincent Meconi, trans. Maria Boulding (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), 292.

<sup>30</sup> Bussanich, "Happiness, Eudaimonism," in *Augustine Through the Ages*, 413.

described as enjoying it in the true and literal sense of the word. This is to be done only in the case of the Trinity, the supreme and unchangeable good.<sup>31</sup>

Linguistically, Augustine seems to infer a connection between the experience of pleasure and the ultimate goal of enjoying God. It is difficult within the limits of this present work to make exact distinctions between Augustine's conceptions of pleasure and enjoyment. However, it is not much of a stretch to reason that since God is the ultimate object of enjoyment, and that pleasure is derived when the object of love is possessed, that joy and pleasure are closely related. Perhaps what Augustine has in mind with the idea of joy is a pleasure that is essentially a delight in the object of love. Joy, in its fullest expression, is fundamentally a feeling that arises from the state of true happiness from possessing God. It is present in love but it is not synonymous with love. While love includes the notion of desire and a quest for possessing the object of its love, joy for Augustine seems more associated with the feeling derived from actually possessing the object rather than the pursuit of it.

### Criticism of Augustine's Theology of Love

Since Augustine's work spans millennia, and a survey of his critics is outside the scope of this work, criticism of his system will be constrained to the work of Anders Nygren, an influential modern theologian whose critique of Augustine has become a central focus in modern Augustinian scholarship. In his highly influential book, *Agape and Eros*, Nygren believed that Augustine made two primary mistakes in his conception of love. First, Nygren dismissed eudaemonism as individualistic and contrary to the Christian idea of love which is fundamentally social and involves proper relations between God and man and men with one

---

<sup>31</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 25-26.

another.<sup>32</sup> Second, Nygren felt that Augustine synthesized the Greek concept of “eros” (love that is fundamentally egocentric and acquires things for oneself) with the Christian concept of “agape” (love that is fundamentally theocentric and self-sacrificial).<sup>33</sup> This synthesis turned the Christian idea of self-sacrificing love into one which legitimized self-serving in the form of the pursuit of happiness. Thus, Nygren concludes that Augustine’s view is corrupted by a motif of selfishness as man uses God, and others, to acquire happiness for himself.<sup>34</sup> Since this work assumes the validity of eudaemonism, only Nygren’s second criticism will be addressed.

In a refutation of Nygren’s second point, Augustinian scholar Oliver O’Donovan believes that Nygren, and other critics that generally followed his same line of thought, essentially fail to recognize what Augustine is saying about proper motives in his system. O’Donovan asserts that there is a fundamental difference between a self-love that has the self “as its conscious object” and a self-love that has the greatest good as its conscious object. Augustine is not saying that achieving happiness for the self is man’s greatest good; only God holds that position. God is to be loved “for his own sake,” not for the ultimate end of attaining happiness. Instead, Augustine says that man gets happiness from loving his greatest good. Therefore, in Augustine’s thinking, happiness is not the primary object of pursuit; God

---

<sup>32</sup> Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, trans. Philip S. Watson (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 44-45.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 208-210. These descriptions of Nygren’s “agape” and “eros” motifs are simplified for the purpose of this paper. For a full description and comparison of the two motifs, see his list on p. 210.

<sup>34</sup> Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 555-58. Nygren traces Augustine’s synthesis of “love of self” (*amor sui*) and “love for God” (*amor dei*) in the preceding sections on p.532-55. Although Augustine believes these two concepts could ultimately be united, Nygren disagrees.



is. Thus, Augustine's conception of man's proper motives, and the ends which he desires to achieve, are different than what Nygren is attacking.<sup>35</sup>

Scholar John Burnaby follows a similar approach to O'Donovan in rebutting Nygren's criticism. Burnaby believes that one must not confuse the intent of the pursuit of loving God and the effects it produces (i.e. happiness). Nygren argues that Augustine's system centers on attaining one's happiness as his greatest good and is thus essentially egoist in nature. This is a misunderstanding, however. Nygren's claim that Augustine's system is inherently selfish fails to account for how Augustine incorporates helping others love God as a vital aspect of his theology. God's goodness is to be shared with others and not kept for the self. By addressing the issue of proper self-love, Augustine is merely acknowledging the role the subject plays in the process of loving God and helping others love him. By finding happiness in the process, man is merely doing what God created and commanded him to do for his own benefit. If man benefits by God's design, and God commands him to do so, recognizing this reality does not make the system inherently egotistical. Furthermore, using Augustine's own categories, Burnaby observes that the idea of self-love in Augustine's thought should not fall under the category of ultimate enjoyment (*frutio*), but use (*uti*).<sup>36</sup> Thus, the proper love of self is not an ultimate object to pursue and enjoy but merely a means by which one directs his soul to love God, his greatest good. Taking into account what Augustine is saying about proper motive and object, the system is clearly not egoist.

Finally, in "Sermon 368," Augustine distinguishes between a right way to love the soul and a wrong way. Loving iniquity, which is forbidden in Scripture (Ps. 11:5), is a selfish

---

<sup>35</sup> Oliver O'Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love in Augustine* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006), 144-45.

<sup>36</sup> Burnaby, *Amor Dei*, 122-23; 127.

and destructive kind of self-love. However, to love oneself rightly is to love God which is good for the soul. This is the kind of love that God intended for man to pursue and is not selfish. It is the kind of love that the Bible assumes the validity of when it commands, “you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev. 19:18, Matt. 22:39). If this type of love was inherently wrong, it could not be the basis of comparison on which to love one’s neighbor.<sup>37</sup> Proper self-love is affirmed by Scripture and thus not a legitimate object of criticism.

### Summary

For Augustine, man’s *summum bonum* is God himself. There is nothing in existence that can occupy this place but God alone. Man’s greatest good is to love God wholeheartedly. In doing so, man derives happiness as he enjoys the object of his love. Yet loving God is not done in isolation. It requires helping, and receiving help, from others who also should fulfill their created purpose by loving God. In this present life, happiness is elusive and will only reach its fulfillment in the age to come when God has redeemed creation, conquered death, cleansed the believer’s soul from all sin, and brought him into unending fellowship with his creator in the City of God. Man will then truly attain the object of his heart’s desire and experience eternal bliss.

---

<sup>37</sup> Augustine, “Sermon 368,” in *Essential Sermons*, ed. Boniface Ramsey, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2007), 412-15.

## CHAPTER 5

### CHRISTIAN HEDONISM AND THEOLOGY OF LOVE: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Before evaluating the validity of Augustine's and Piper's central tenets, it is helpful to separate their differences from the areas they have in common. Before doing so, it is useful to remember that even though these two men lived over 1,500 years apart, much of Augustine's work has filtered down through the development of Western theology and exerted a great influence on those who came after him. Since Piper has been highly influenced by Jonathan Edwards, who no doubt himself was influenced by Augustine, it is not surprising that many of Augustine's ideas show up in Piper's work. Additionally, since both men are favorable to the eudaemonist tradition, and both seek to build their theology on the foundations of Scripture, similarities are to be expected. To begin, points of agreement will be noted between Augustine and Piper. Generally speaking, these points will be considered undisputed and will not be subject to further analysis for the purpose of this particular work.

#### Similarities in Augustine's and Piper's Central Tenets

In both systems, the Christian conception of God derived from Scripture is the object of man's greatest good. This obviously sets each system apart from secular philosophy and places them firmly in the category of historical Christian orthodoxy. Each theologian builds his primary ethic around desire for God. Both believe that pursuing one's self interest in

desiring God is not fundamentally wrong but merely an expression of how God created man to function. Augustine and Piper both affirm the universal desire for happiness, that happiness is ultimately found in God alone, and that pursuing happiness in God is a good and proper endeavor. Each also believes that joy is a vital element of this happiness. Both seem to have a very similar idea of joy being closely related to, or synonymous with, the idea of pleasure or good feelings. Additionally, the concept of love in each system includes joy in some way. Finally, each believes that the fullest experience of joy is found not in the present life, but in the one to come.

Lastly, in each system, loving others plays a vital role. Though the personal pursuit of happiness is affirmed as a vital aspect of man's greatest good, it is not an individualistic pursuit. Whether it is enjoying God, or loving God, each paradigm requires the mutual assistance of one's fellow man as they seek to attain their greatest good together.

### Differences in Augustine's and Piper's Central Tenets

For the purpose of evaluating each system, it is vital to understand the primary areas of difference between Augustine and Piper in how they understand the chief end of man, man's highest ethical obligation, and their conception of happiness. Although they share much in common, important areas of difference surrounding how one attains the greatest good, along with the happiness derived from the pursuit, separate these systems in crucial ways.

#### Differences in Formulating The Chief End of Man and Highest Ethical Imperative

The first important difference lies in how each theologian expresses his understanding of the chief end of man. Piper's formulation is clear as he repeatedly states he believes "the

chief end of man is to glorify God by enjoying him forever.”<sup>1</sup> Again, enjoying God is the means by which God has ordained man to glorify him the most. Augustine’s formulation of man’s chief end isn’t always summarized in a concise statement as in Piper’s work, but from our prior analysis, it seems as if it is best stated in terms of “loving God for his own sake.” If this is accurate, a couple points of difference are worth mentioning. First, Piper explicitly names the glory of God as man’s chief end. The glory of God theme is not as explicit in Augustine’s system as he tends to focus more on the human agent’s responsibilities and attainment of happiness. Second, the ethical commands of the two systems clearly differ with Piper building his ethic around enjoying God whereas Augustine centers his on loving God. For each theologian, their ethical commands are a “must.” Piper demands the enjoyment of God as an absolute part of genuine Christianity with Augustine doing the same with love.

### Differing Scriptural Foundations

Additionally, the key Scripture texts that each ethical system is built from differ. Augustine builds his system on the great commandment verses found in Dt. 6:5 and Mt. 22:37-40 for support. Piper centers on the commands to rejoice in God (Phil. 4:4) and delight in him (Ps. 37:4). Other supporting verses concerning either love or joy are brought in to further work out the details of each system. This fundamental difference in biblical support will be an important focus in the next chapter.

### Differing Conceptions Surrounding the Attainment of Joy and Happiness in the Present Life

Though each of the primary ethical imperatives of each system include the experience of joy, the two men differ in their understanding of how much joy is possible in this present

---

<sup>1</sup> John Piper, *Desiring God* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2011), 17-18.

life. Piper emphasizes the experience of joy to such an extent that it is clear he believes a vast amount of it is available to the believer now. As already stated, experiencing joy in great quantities is absolutely essential for sanctification, world missions, and worship. Thus, joy is an essential component in both the element of desiring God, and in the pursuit of him.

Augustine, on the other hand, is more pessimistic regarding how much joy can be experienced in the present life. Again, the enjoyment of God primarily comes from obtaining the object of one's love. This only happens in its fullest sense when man is in the presence of the Lord face to face and experiences the redemption of body and soul that hinder the enjoyment of God in this present life. Thus, the experience of joy is more closely associated with attaining the object of love for Augustine where Piper puts great emphasis on the joy to be had in the pursuit.

These different understandings of how much joy is experienced, and when it will be experienced, have a crucial bearing on each man's understanding of attaining human happiness since joy is a fundamental element of happiness in each system. For Augustine, expectations of happiness now should be dampened. One Augustine statement in particular will suffice to demonstrate the point. In his comments on Psalm 91, Augustine discusses the need to patiently endure present trials and cling to hope while seeking to increase love for God. He writes, "We are not Christians, except on account of a future life: let no one hope for present blessings, let no one promise himself the happiness of the world, because he is a Christian."<sup>2</sup> Happiness is more of an eschatological concept for Augustine. In contrast, since Piper equates happiness with joy, there is much happiness to be had for the believer in the present life. Once again happiness is the key driver in the fight against sin, the progress of

---

<sup>2</sup> Augustine, *Expositions on the Book of Psalms*, vol. 4, *Psalms 76-101* (Oxford: John Henry Parker; London: F. and J. Rivington, 1850), 314.

world missions, and the glorification of God in worship. Happiness in God, like joy, is a vital component of authentic Christianity.

#### Different Definitions of Love

Finally, definitions of important terms like “love” and “joy” differ in Augustine and Piper. Piper defines “love” in terms of the “overflow of joy” whereas Augustine, while including “joy” as an element of love, has a broader understanding that includes desire, affection, motive, and the decision concerning what object to value and pursue. In Augustine’s system, love is more basic and fundamental with joy coming as the object of desire is attained. In Piper’s system, joy seems to occur first and then “overflow” and move the will to love others and meet their needs. This difference in the definition of love will have a significant impact on the biblical evaluation of the two systems.

## CHAPTER 6

### BIBLICAL ANALYSIS

Of the differences between John Piper's Christian Hedonism and Augustine's Theology of Love outlined in the previous chapter, this biblical analysis will focus on three primary issues: "loving God" vs "enjoying God" as man's highest ethical duty, the definition and conception of love, and how much happiness is attainable in this present life. Since both men build their systems around their primary ethic, the biblical validity of their central imperatives is of paramount importance. If their chosen ethic is not truly central to the Christian faith as seen in Scripture, the validity of their entire system is in serious question. The other two issues are related to the primary ethic but of more practical importance. For example, if a definition of love is incorrect, it affects an understanding of every verse that expresses love in some way. Since love is of great importance to the Christian faith, this is no small issue. Finally, since happiness is a universal desire of all people, and is so fundamental to why people do what they do, presenting a false conception of happiness is also detrimental.

#### Love or Joy: Which is Central?

The first issue that will be examined is perhaps the most important. The question that will be addressed is which ethical imperative is more central to Christianity: loving God or



enjoying him? Fortunately, the Bible gives clear answers to this question. Several passages that prioritize one imperative, or virtue, above the others will be examined to demonstrate where Scripture puts its emphasis.

Loving God As The Great Commandment:  
Mt. 22:34-40

In the 22<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Matthew, Jesus is engaged in a discussion with a Jewish legal expert who asks him, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” (Mt. 22:36 ESV).<sup>1</sup> The man is trying to get Jesus to state which law he thinks is preeminent to all others. The answer that Jesus puts forward will provide great insight into how God himself viewed the ethical imperatives of the law. If Jesus believes that one is greater than the others, his answer should direct the structure of any system that attempts to build itself on one single imperative. Jesus answers the question by explaining, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets” (Mt. 22:37-40). Leon Morris states that when Jesus refers to loving God as the “first commandment,” he is calling it “the first in importance.”<sup>2</sup> This command in particular holds a place of prominence above all other commands. For Jesus, the most important ethical obligation of man is to center his love upon God with all that he has. It was the same great commandment given to Israel in Deuteronomy

---

<sup>1</sup> The Holy Bible, *English Standard Version*, ESV Text Edition 2011 (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew, The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1992), 562.

6:5 and was so important that it was recited by pious Jews on a daily basis.<sup>3</sup> R.T. France observes that the command to love God and neighbor has “remained at the centre of Christian ethics” ever since the New Testament was written.<sup>4</sup> For the purpose of evaluating an ethical system, it is hard to downplay the importance of Jesus’ answer to the discussion. Augustine understands the importance of this passage and is the reason why he uses it as his primary biblical justification for centering his ethic on loving God.

### Love as a Preeminent Ethical Principle

In further evaluating whether loving God or enjoying him should be emphasized as man’s highest ethical obligation, it is helpful to look at how the Bible treats the concept of love generally. Beyond Jesus’ affirmation of loving God as the greatest commandment, does the Bible elsewhere elevate love? Fortunately, since the Bible, and the New Testament in particular, speak of love so often, there is abundant data to draw from for evaluation. In this section, several representative texts which seem to elevate love to “pride of place” amongst Christian virtues will be examined.

#### Romans 13:8-10: Love Fulfills the Law

In Romans 13:8-10, the apostle Paul makes some important comments about how love relates to the law. First, he says, “Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law” (Rom. 13:8). These words are similar to Jesus’ in Mt. 22:40 above. The principle of loving another person is the essence of what the entire law of God is requiring of man in his interpersonal relationships. Paul goes on to give

---

<sup>3</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 563.

<sup>4</sup> R.T. France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries 1 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 322.

four of the ten commandments forbidding various sins against people as examples in order to demonstrate that the law is essentially trying to tell us what loving one another looks like.

Paul says all these commands can be “summed up in this word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom. 13:9-10). The point is that the principle of love is at the very center of God’s law for man. At the word level, “fulfill” (Gr. πληρώω) can generally mean to “to fill up” or “complete.”<sup>5</sup> At the end of his analysis of this passage, Douglas Moo concludes “that the Christian who loves, and who therefore does what the law requires (vv. 9-10a), has brought the law to its culmination, its eschatological fulfillment.”<sup>6</sup> Thus, love completes the demands, and the purpose, of the law in a way that no other virtue does.

### 1 Corinthians 13: Love as the Cardinal Virtue

In dealing with the fractured community at Corinth, the apostle Paul interjects his discussion on spiritual gifts with a small treatise on the supremacy of love. He begins the passage with a list of Christian activities that were probably held in high esteem by the Corinthians including speaking in tongues, the gift of prophecy, supernatural faith, radical financial giving, and martyrdom. Paul says that if any of those activities are not done out of love, they are essentially worthless (1 Cor. 13:1-3). The apostle goes on in v.4-6 to list what love looks like in action and then concludes the passage with this somewhat surprising statement: “So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor. 13:13 ESV). Without getting into the debate over what Paul means in v.13, it is clear

---

<sup>5</sup> G. Delling, “plērēs,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, abr. ed., ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1985), 867-72.

<sup>6</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans, The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 817.

love is singled out for supremacy in some fashion. In the context of his larger teaching to the Corinthian church, Paul argues that love is a fundamental virtue for building up the church. Sign gifts and radical acts of self-sacrifice are nothing without it. The Corinthian church is being destroyed by infighting and toleration of heinous sexual sin. Their absence of love for one another is at the heart of the matter. Gordon Fee affirms this and writes, “In short, [the Corinthians] have a spirituality that has religious trappings (asceticism, knowledge, tongues) but has abandoned rather totally genuinely Christian ethics, with its supremacy of love.”<sup>7</sup> For Paul, like Jesus, love is supreme in Christian ethics. Out of all the virtues Paul could have named, only love is set forward as the cardinal, indispensable virtue that must be at the heart of all Christian action.

Love: The Distinguishing Mark of  
Authentic Christianity—1 John 4:7-12

In the Epistle of 1 John, the apostle John writes to a church that has recently faced a schism of some kind. This event may have left many of his readers wondering as to which group, the ones who left or those who remained, are the true Christian believers.<sup>8</sup> To address these concerns, John writes that one of the authentic marks of a genuine Christian is love. In 1 John 4:7-12, the apostle says that love is an aspect of the very nature of God (v.8) and that “whoever loves has been born of God and knows God” (1 John 4:7 ESV). Not having love is a sign of inauthentic faith (v.8). John goes on to say that the love of God is seen through the sending of Jesus Christ in order to grant believers life and become “the propitiation for our

---

<sup>7</sup> Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians, The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1987), 627.

<sup>8</sup> Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John, The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2000), 161.

sins” (v.11). Thus, love is a primary motive behind the incarnation and crucifixion of Christ. This love that God showed to his people then must exhibit itself in loving behavior between believers: “if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (v.11). John ends the passage by declaring, “if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us” (v.12). Authentic Christianity is seen in the presence of love amongst the people of God. It is evidence that God’s love has acted upon them and transformed them through the death of Christ and made them born again through the work of his Spirit.

### Summary

From these passages, it is clear that Scripture considers loving God the primary ethical imperative. Additionally, the Bible also elevates love to a place of prominence above other virtues. In looking at Piper’s Christian Hedonism and Augustine’s Theology of Love, it is clear that Augustine’s system best matches Scripture’s emphasis concerning man’s chief ethic. Interestingly, in his book, *Future Grace*, Piper acknowledges that Paul teaches that love fulfills the law in Romans 13:10, but he then reworks the meaning of the verse to fit the theme of his book and concludes that “the fulfillment of the law is by faith,” thus downplaying the importance that love plays in this verse.<sup>9</sup> Later in his book, Piper devotes a section on love fulfilling the law and states that love moves one to obey God’s commands, is the basis of forgiveness, and is “the essence of holiness and sanctification,” and “all the behavior that is required of a Christian may be summed up in love.”<sup>10</sup> If Piper believes all these things about love, how does he conclude that enjoying God is man’s primary ethical

---

<sup>9</sup> John Piper, *Future Grace* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2016), 164.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 254.

duty? The answer is once again how Piper defines love, which will be the next topic of analysis.

### Defining Love

Often in human communication, the same words can be used by two or more parties with differing meanings. When this happens, the result is often confusion and obfuscation of the intended meaning. Parties end up talking past each other and never come to a clear understanding. As seen above, loving God is how the Bible presents man's primary ethical imperative. Love is also a virtue elevated to primary importance in the Christian faith. Therefore, having a proper understanding of how love should be defined is of vital importance in analyzing ethical systems. Yet, as with all abstract concepts, precision can be difficult. Fortunately, in the case of Augustine and Piper, there is enough information available to get a fairly good understanding of what each means when they use the term "love" even if exact precision is not always possible. Sometimes words are not used consistently. Sometimes the underlying concept of a word is broad enough that levels of nuance must be allowed in order to properly cover the full breadth of meaning. With that in mind, this section will attempt to identify how each author defines love and how well their definitions match how the Bible tends to use the term. Since "love" is a word used extensively in Scripture and in the writings of both authors, representative texts were chosen to try and best reflect the meaning of the term.

### "Love" in Christian Hedonism

Fortunately, John Piper does his readers a favor and defines outright how he understands the term "love" in *Desiring God*. Once again, from his analysis of 2 Corinthians

8:1-4, Piper concludes, “Now we can give a definition of love that takes God into account and also includes the feelings that should accompany outward acts of love: *the overflow of joy in God that gladly meets the needs of others.*”<sup>11</sup> In this definition, love seems to be the feeling of joy that then moves outward to help others. Joy is thus the foundational component of love.

But is Piper’s definition of love biblically warranted? To start off, 2 Corinthians 8:1-4 seems like a strange text on which to base a definition of love. In fact, Paul does not even mention the word love in the four verses Piper cites for support. Paul is describing to the Corinthians how the Macedonians’ joy “has overflowed in a wealth of generosity” (v.2), but he doesn’t say anything about love at all. Now, it might be legitimate to build a systematic theology of love from all the relevant verse of Scripture and then relate how joy and generosity interconnect, but Piper doesn’t do this. He merely observes how joy influenced the Macedonian financial giving and comes up with a definition of love out of it. In contrast, Simon Kistemaker believes this passage is more of a comment on the relationship between affliction, joy, and generosity.<sup>12</sup> Calvin concurs with this connection between joy and affliction in the passage: “By the term *joy* he means that spiritual consolation by which believers are sustained under their afflictions.”<sup>13</sup> Therefore, because of the emphasis on joy and affliction, it is difficult to see where Piper has any exegetical justification for coming up with a definition of love from this particular passage.

---

<sup>11</sup> John Piper, *Desiring God* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2011), 119.

<sup>12</sup> Simon Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997), 272.

<sup>13</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, in Commentary on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians*, trans. John Pringle, vol. 20, *Calvin’s Commentaries*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009), 285.

If 2 Corinthians 8:1-4 is not a proper passage from which to justify Piper's definition of love as "an overflow of joy," are there others that might give him support? It is worth looking at a few passages where "joy" and "love" are mentioned together to see if these might offer any evidence to support Piper's definition. In Galatians 5:22-23, "love" and "joy" are listed as fruit of the Spirit along with "peace," "patience," "kindness," "goodness," "faithfulness," "gentleness," and "self-control." However, there is no indication that "love" and "joy" are connected in any special way apart from the other virtues listed. In 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22, the Thessalonians are commanded to esteem ministers "very highly in love" in v.13 and then commanded to "rejoice always" in v.16, but Paul makes no connection between the two concepts here. "Rejoice always" is surrounded by many other commands like not seeking revenge, praying without ceasing, giving thanks, not quenching the Spirit, and so on. No evidence can be found in these examples to support Piper's definition.

In 1 Peter 1:8-9, the apostle Peter mentions that his readers love God even though they have not seen him and also "rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls" (ESV). Grudem observe that both the love of Peter's readers, and their joy, is ongoing and in the present.<sup>14</sup> This suggests some kind of connection between the two actions but nothing indicating that the believers' love of God is defined in terms of the joy they have in God's salvation. Since both "love" and "joy" are fruit of the Spirit, it is not surprising to see them mentioned together in this verse, but no justification for defining one in terms of the other can be found.

---

<sup>14</sup> Wayne Grudem, *1 Peter. The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1988), 65-66.



In a passage that could lend some support to Piper's definition, the apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:6 that love "rejoices with the truth." Yet even here, this notion of rejoicing occurs within a list of a lot of other things love does including demonstrating patience and kindness, not being envious or boasting, not being arrogant or rude, and so on. There is no indication that "rejoicing with the truth" is any more fundamental to the essence of love than the other actions listed. Perhaps this is why Piper does not tend to lean on this passage for support as it also doesn't help justify his definition.

Finally, in John 15:10-11, Jesus makes an important connection between love and joy. After a brief discourse on the need for his disciples to abide in him and his love, Jesus says, "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." Jesus is obviously making a connection between obeying his commandments, abiding in his love, and experiencing joy. But exactly what connection is he making? Ridderbos believes the joy here is rooted in the Father's love for the Son, and the Son's obedience to the Father. Abiding in Christ is to experience the love the Father has for the Son. In return, the disciples should obey the Father, and find their joy in doing so, just as Jesus did. However, Ridderbos does not mention any sense of love being defined in terms of joy.<sup>15</sup> In his commentary on John, D.A. Carson believes that Jesus "insists that his own obedience to the Father is the ground of his joy; and he promises that those who obey him will share the same joy." Therefore, Carson understands "joy" here as dependent on obedience and not love dependent on joy. Like Ridderbos, Carson sees the love the disciples experience as rooted in God the Father's love for the Son. Obedience flows

---

<sup>15</sup> Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John*, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), 519.

from the love the disciples have for Jesus.<sup>16</sup> So to summarize the dependencies expressed in this chapter, the disciple's love is the foundational element (with God as the source), obedience flows from the love, and joy is a result of the obedience. This order of dependencies seems exactly opposite of what Piper describes in his definition of love.

### “Love” in Augustine’s Theology

If Piper doesn’t seem to have biblical support for his definition of love, we must ask: does Augustine do any better? Our analysis in chapter 4 identified Augustine’s love as consisting of an affection and motive of the heart that moves the will toward the object which it desires to possess and enjoy. What man chooses to love is influenced by the mind and will. So love is an affection, motive, and desire which seeks to possess and enjoy what the individual has chosen to value. This definition orients love toward God since ultimate enjoyment in Augustine’s system is only legitimate when it is in respect to him. When others are the object of love, there is an element of benevolence included since love helps others also pursue God and find their enjoyment in him. Admittedly, this is more of a “conception” of love in Augustine’s thought than a “definition” like we saw in Piper. However, since Augustine seems to have a broader understanding of the vital components of love than Piper, who focuses his definition almost exclusively on joy, this shouldn’t be held against him. To see whether Augustine’s view of love is biblically accurate, it is helpful to see if the components of his conception match the biblical data. Due to space constraints, representative examples will have to suffice.

---

<sup>16</sup> D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John, The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), 520-21.

To begin, does the Bible ever present love as an “affection” or “feeling”? In Romans 12:10, the apostle Paul tells his readers to “love one another with brotherly affection” (ESV). The term “affection” (Gr. φιλαδελφία) in v.10 is connected to the standard Greek term “agape” that Paul uses in the previous verse (“let love be genuine”). It is a term used of affection between family members and was used in Christian circles to denote the family relationships that came from adoption in Christ.<sup>17</sup> The idea certainly involves feeling. Though it is derived from a different word stem than “agape,” Moo states that the verse, along with the commands that surround it, functions as part of the description of what genuine love looks like. Thus, “brotherly affection” is simply one way “agape” should show itself in Christian relationships. Additionally, Moo believes that the term “affection” carries the sense of “heartfelt and consistent concern” which also expresses the idea of “feeling.”<sup>18</sup> In 2 Peter 1:5-7, the apostle Peter makes a similar connection when he tells his readers to “make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge. . . and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection (Gr. φιλαδελφία) with love (Gr. ἀγάπη).” Richard Bauckham believes that love is put at the end of this list because, “as the crowning virtue, [it] encompasses all the others.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, “brotherly affection” is an aspect of “love.” These two examples suffice for demonstrating that affection is an aspect of love.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, vol. 50, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 187.

<sup>18</sup> Moo, 777.

<sup>19</sup> Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 187.

<sup>20</sup> The emotive language of God’s love toward Israel in Hosea could also be used to demonstrate the idea of “feeling” as well as the image of God’s people being his “bride.”

The fact that biblical love involves motive is not difficult to demonstrate. God sent his Son into the world because he “loved” it (John 3:16). “In love” God predestined his elect for adoption (Eph. 1:4-5). God made his people alive in Christ “because of the great love with which he loved us” (Eph. 2:4-5 ESV). In 1 Cor. 13:1-3, Paul argues that if Christian action is not motivated by love it is worthless. In the broader context of 1 Corinthians, Paul is arguing that a desire for spiritual gifts must be motivated by love for the purpose of building up the church. These are a few examples that show that love is the proper motive for benevolent action.

Identifying “desire” and “possession” as a vital element of “love” in the Bible is a bit more difficult. In Jesus’ high priestly prayer of John 17, he tells his Father that, “I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me” (17:24 ESV). This expression of desire seems to be intimately connected with the language of his love for the disciples seen in the broader context of John’s Gospel (i.e. John 15:9 - “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.”). God’s people are called his “chosen and precious” and his “possession” in 1 Peter 2:4 and 2:9, but neither verse explicitly connects that language to love. However, the concept of “chosen” is connected to the idea of God predestining his children for adoption in love in Ephesians 1:4-5. It could be argued that, theologically speaking, God sent his Son out of love in order to redeem a people to be his treasured possession. From the perspective of God’s love for his people, it seems like the idea of a “desire to possess” is related to love in some important way.

Though God’s love for his children seems to contain an element of “desire” and “possession,” should man’s love for God be thought of in the same terms? Human desire for God is readily expressed in passages such as Psalm 42 and 63, where the psalmist repeatedly

wants God to satisfy his soul. Though neither of those psalms explicitly use the term “love” to describe the psalmists’ desires for God and to “possess” the satisfaction he offers, they do demonstrate that the authors believe only God can provide what they really need. Therefore, it seems as if the idea of “desire” here is intimately connected with what one “values.” To love God wholeheartedly essentially includes valuing him more than other things. As dependent creatures, valuing God above all other things, both for his goodness and to possess what only he can provide, brings him glory. In Psalm 18:1, the writer declares:

I love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies (ESV).

This psalm expresses love to the Lord based on him providing what one needs the most and results in praise to God. Thus, the psalmist clearly expresses a desire to “possess” the good things the Lord has for him. This kind of dependent love in Scripture is not looked down upon but always commended.

### Other Understandings of Love

Before moving on, it is helpful to briefly look at how a few other Christian theologians and scholars have defined love to see whether Piper’s or Augustine’s conception seems more in line with historical and modern Christian thought. These writers were chosen as they are all, like Piper, within the conservative evangelical tradition and seek to define love according to their understanding of Scripture. In the *New Bible Dictionary*, F.H. Palmer says that in the Old Testament, “Fundamentally, [love] is an inner force . . . which impels to performing the action which gives pleasure (Pr. 20:13), obtaining the object which awakens desire (Gn. 27:4), or in the case of persons to self-sacrifice for the good of the loved one (Lv.

19:18, 34), and unswerving loyalty (1 Sa. 20:17-42).” In the New Testament, he notes that love “sees something infinitely precious in its object.”<sup>21</sup> G.A. Turner thinks love is used in the New Testament in the sense of desire and also of attitude.<sup>22</sup> Puritan Thomas Watson describes love in terms of affection and delight in his comments on the Westminster Shorter Confession’s chief end of man statement regarding how God is to be glorified. In another work, he describes love as “a holy fire kindled in the affections whereby a Christian is carried out strongly after God as the supreme good. . . . The nature of love consists in delighting in an object.”<sup>23</sup> Jonathan Edwards describes love in terms of “that liking or inclination of the soul to a thing” and “the chief of the affections and fountain of all other affections.” Interestingly, Edwards thinks that love is an inclination and joy is the feeling of “pleasedness” when the desire of the soul is present, thus implying that joy follows love, the chief affection from which all others flow.<sup>24</sup> Piper, who is so admittedly influenced by Edwards, strangely does not follow his lead here and says that joy is the primary affection from which love flows. Next, B.B. Warfield explains that the Greek term “agape” has a special implication of “an awakened sense of value in the object which causes us to prize it.” He also states that other words for love can carry the idea of passion, pleasurable-ness, and preciousness.<sup>25</sup> Lastly, John Murray describes love as “emotive and motive; love is feeling

---

<sup>21</sup> F.H. Palmer, “Love, Beloved,” in *New Bible Dictionary*, 2d ed. (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1991), 710-11.

<sup>22</sup> G.A. Turner, “Love,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 3, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1986), 176.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2015), 8; idem, *The Ten Commandments* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2013), 6-7.

<sup>24</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *The Religious Affections* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2004), 25-26.

<sup>25</sup> Benjamin B. Warfield, “The Terminology of Love in the New Testament I,” *The Princeton Theological Review* 16 (Jan. 1918): 3.

and it impels to action. If it does not impel to the fulfilment of the law, it is not the love of which the Scripture here speaks.”<sup>26</sup> In these various understandings of love, many of the conceptions of Augustine’s thought appear. None defines or describes love in terms of joy in the manner found in Christian Hedonism.

### Summary

In this brief survey, it seems fairly clear that John Piper’s definition of love as “an overflow of joy that meets the needs of others” does not have sufficient biblical support to warrant acceptance. On the other hand, many of the elements of Augustine’s definition do seem present in Scripture, though a greater analysis of how all the parts interrelate goes beyond the current scope of this work.

### How Much Happiness Now?

The final section of this biblical analysis will focus on how each theologian understands the possibility of happiness in this present life. In short, Augustine is more pessimistic in regards to present experiences of happiness whereas Piper is highly optimistic and centers his ethic on experiencing a great deal of happiness in this life (which, again, he equates with “joy”). It is true that many passages in Scripture speak of an increase of joy in the Christian life. This point is not up for debate. The question is, how much joy is possible in this current life? A few passages that speak of joy being “complete” or “full” will be analyzed for greater understanding of what these terms mean in relation to the possibility of joy.

---

<sup>26</sup> John Murray, *Principles of Conduct* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1957), 22.

The reasoning behind Piper's optimistic conception of the experience of happiness now is the fact that God commands it. Piper often quotes Philippians 4:4 ("rejoice in the Lord always") as the basis of his support and asserts that Christian Hedonism wants to take these commands with the utmost seriousness. However, there are many commands in Scripture that seem practically out of reach for Christians. In 1 Peter 1:16, Peter says that the Lord commands his people to "be holy as I am holy." Yet practically, this seems impossible. No Christian will ever perform to the same standards of holiness as God. Only in Christ, who fulfills the law and imputes his righteousness to believers, can this command ever really have any kind of fulfillment in this life. When believers are finally sanctified and glorified in the next life, this command will be fulfilled in them. The same logic applies to "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Mt. 22:37). Even though Augustine bases his ethic upon this command, his conception of it in a believer's life is more in terms of a journey and process of directing the heart more and more toward this perfect standard rather than ever hoping to fully achieve its demands. When Piper says that sanctification depends on an overwhelming experience of joy that crowds out the desire for sin, and that world missions is based on the same idea, it seems he assumes too much. In contrast, the Bible does not seem to present sanctification or world missions as dependent on joy in this manner.

But what about verses that seem to suggest a "fullness" of joy in the Christian life? For instance, in John 15:11, Jesus says he gives the disciples his instructions so that their "joy may be full." D.A. Carson explains:

What is presupposed is that human joy in a fallen world will at best be ephemeral, shallow, incomplete, until human existence is overtaken by an experience of the love of God in Christ Jesus, the love for which we were created, a mutual love that issues in obedience without reserve. The Son does not give his disciples his joy as a discrete



package; he shares his joy insofar as they share his obedience, the obedience that willingly faces death to self-interest.<sup>27</sup>

Carson thus believes this joy is dependent on “death to self-interest” and a similar obedience to what Jesus exhibited in his life. But if this is the case, we are back at the same problem as above. If joy is contingent on obedience, and Christian obedience is never perfect, then completeness of joy will always be hindered until the disciple is fully sanctified and glorified. In this life, the Christian experiences defeat in the war between the flesh and the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-24) which diminishes joy. In Romans 7, the apostle Paul spoke of the great internal struggle between a love for God’s law and sinful desires. He concludes the chapter with a cry of “Who will rescue me from this body of death?” which is probably a cry for the final redemption and glorification of his body.<sup>28</sup> As long as the Christian experiences this difficult war throughout the present life, sustaining abundant joy for the long term will be nearly impossible.

Additionally, some passages seem to speak of a completeness of joy that is dependent on others. For instance, in 1 John 1:4, John says he writes the letter so that his “joy may be complete.” Colin Kruse believes that John “recognizes that his own joy in Christ cannot be complete if fellow believers for whom he feels some responsibility are in danger of departing from the truth by becoming involved in another [fellowship].”<sup>29</sup> If Kruse is correct, an aspect of John’s joy is thus dependent on the faithfulness of his readers to remain in Christ. This shouldn’t be surprising since the idea of the joy of one being contingent on another person occurs elsewhere in Scripture. In Philippians 2:2, the apostle Paul writes, “complete my joy

---

<sup>27</sup> D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 521.

<sup>28</sup> John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, ed. and trans. John Owen, vol. 19, *Calvin’s Commentaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009), 272-73.

<sup>29</sup> Kruse, *The Letters of John*, 59.

by being of the same mind, have the love, being in full accord and of one mind” (ESV).

Thus, the completeness of Paul’s joy is somehow contingent on his readers doing what he tells them to do. In 2 Corinthians 2:3, Paul’s rejoicing is dependent on the Corinthian’s repentance and not causing the apostle pain when he visits. Thus, in a sense, some experiences of joy in this world are contingent on the actions of others, and therefore are completely outside of one’s control.

Not only that, but the reality of a corrupted and dying world filled with disease, death, and the temptations of the devil all threaten joy. Though rejoicing in the midst of suffering is certainly possible (Rom. 5:1-5), the disciple must constantly remind himself of the hope that suffering is producing. However, this continual mental focus on the good outcomes in the midst of pain requires a fight and a process of maturity that will always have its successes and failures. Paul, the apostle who frequently writes about joy, also acknowledges that the “whole creation has been groaning” due to its “bondage to corruption” from God’s curse after Adam’s sin. Likewise, Christians also “groan inwardly as [they] wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies” (Rom. 8:20-24). Thus, the believer will always experience a feeling of disquiet in this life because he knows things aren’t right. Until the body, and the rest of creation, is redeemed, there will always be serious hindrances to sustaining happiness.

As Augustine wrote, the happiness experienced in the present is primarily a happiness provided by hope. Though the Christian has many things to rejoice about now, there still remains the tension of waiting for the things that are yet to be. The Christian who groans inwardly longs for the glorification of the body (Rom. 8:23), experiences a restless soul that wants to be satisfied in the presence of the Lord (Ps. 73), and waits to see God face to face (1

Cor. 13:12). Until the last enemy, death, is conquered and all things are finally made subject to Christ (1 Cor. 15:26-28), a battle for the soul rages. Piper is correct to write a book addressing why Christians don't desire God and provide strategies on how to fight for joy.<sup>30</sup> But making sanctification and missions depend on overwhelming experiences of joy seems like an unrealistic endeavor. Sanctification is a struggle that requires the full body of Christ working together to build itself up in love (Eph. 4:11-16). Sanctification in the believer progresses via a daily battle between the flesh and the Spirit warring against one another while the Christian imperfectly strives to keep in step with the Spirit and deny the desires of the flesh (Gal. 5:16-26). Missionaries go out on the mission field because they are gifted and called and act on faith, not because they have obtained a level of joy that drowns out all desires for Western comforts as Piper suggests. Joy comes and goes for the Christian. That is the reality of this present Christian life.

### Summary

After examining the biblical evidence, and drawing on the resources of other Bible scholars and theologians, I conclude that Augustine's paradigm has more biblical justification than Christian Hedonism. Augustine builds his system on loving God; an ethic which best matches the Bible's own emphasis. His definition of love is more in line with Scripture and evangelical thought than Piper. And finally, his understanding of happiness seems more realistic and takes into account not just the commands of God in Scripture, but a theology of creation and redemption that incorporates present threats to happiness.

---

<sup>30</sup> John Piper, *When I Don't Desire God*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004).

## CHAPTER 7

### EVALUATION AND APPLICATION

As both Christian Hedonism and Augustine's Theology of Love have both been presented and subjected to biblical analysis, this chapter will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each system as well as offer suggestions for application for the modern Christian church. This evaluation will attempt to fairly present which aspects of their central tenets should be retained and which should be abandoned. Application will primarily have in mind the modern American evangelical church as its audience.

#### Christian Hedonism: Strengths and Weaknesses

Even though this thesis believes that Piper's system errs in a number of ways, there is much to commend it. Piper has reintroduced Christian eudaemonistic principles into modern American evangelical thought and addressed the tendency in many Protestant circles to substitute duty for delight along the lines of Kantian deontological ethics. Christian Hedonism rightly focuses on matters of the heart and urges the Christian disciple to place the focus of his desires upon God above all else. Much of the language of love permeates Christian Hedonism and many principles overlap with Augustine's system. Piper successfully brings to the forefront the great importance of joy in the Christian life, even if he ends up unbalanced in the process. Perhaps most importantly, under the influence of Jonathan Edwards, Piper centers his system on pursuing the glory of God, which is helpful

since the charge of egoism has always plagued eudaemonism. By referring the pursuit of happiness to the overarching goal of glorifying God, Piper interjects strong theocentric themes into Christian eudaemonism. Even if there are questions about the way Christian Hedonism might be misrepresented as “using” God for the purpose of pleasure, it is clear Piper intentionally wants to avoid this pitfall by how much he speaks of God’s glory as man’s chief end.

Christian Hedonism also rightly directs readers to see the proper warrant for happiness and joy in Scripture. Many readers of Piper’s work have found spiritual refreshment in rediscovering God’s desire for his people to experience joy and happiness in their life of faith. Additionally, Christian Hedonism repeatedly demonstrates how God truly longs to satisfy the souls of his people through various means to keep them strengthened on their journey through the difficulties of life. Finally, Piper rightly argues that God’s glory and human happiness do not have to be at odds but can truly find their unity in the goodness of God.

As already addressed, the weaknesses of Christian Hedonism affect the very core of the system. Piper builds his paradigm on enjoying God as the ultimate ethical concern of the Christian life, a view that is biblically unwarranted. His definition of love is also without biblical support. Finally, he tends to “oversell” the amount of happiness that is attainable in this life and even demands the experience of it for genuine Christianity. This unfortunately presents a false standard that can only lead to frustration and disillusionment. If Piper were only trying to present the great importance of joy in the Christian life, there may not be much to argue against. But instead, he constructs an entire system upon an ethic and conception of happiness that is essentially flawed.

### Augustine's Theology of Love: Strengths and Weaknesses

There is a reason that much of Western theology has been called “a footnote on Augustine.” Augustine’s breadth and depth of thought have led many to believe he is the greatest Christian theologian since the apostle Paul. Augustine succeeds with his Theology of Love because it is rooted and grounded essentially in principles that match the emphasis of Scripture. Augustine rightly centers his entire ethical system on loving God, man’s greatest good. By doing so, Augustine builds a “theology of the heart,” even though so many of his works have great intellectual depth. Though the attainment of happiness is a primary concern for Augustine, he wisely incorporates the pitfalls of the fallen world to present a realistic picture of how much happiness a person can possibly attain in this life. Primarily, he focuses readers on the happiness to be gained in the glorious City of God where God will dwell with his people forever in eternal bliss in the future. Thus, Augustine’s system, though rooted in the here and now with an ethic centered on ever striving to love God more and more, is also a theology of hope. Man can find happiness through God’s sure promises that the obstacles to happiness in the present world will one day be removed.

There are two areas that Augustine’s system can possibly be improved upon. First, he does not tend to relate human happiness to the glory of God to the extent demonstrated by Jonathan Edwards. Perhaps this is why some have felt Augustine’s system is “egocentric” rather than “theocentric,” though this may be due more to misunderstanding him than a legitimate complaint. Still, developing this theme in greater depth in Augustine’s system would help preempt misunderstanding. Secondly, Augustine’s assertion that only God should ultimately be enjoyed (*fruition*), and all other things used (*uti*) in the pursuit of that

enjoyment, has met with criticism. At times, Augustine wants to say that some things (like Christian believers) can be both “used” and “enjoyed,” but at other times claims one is really enjoying God in them.<sup>1</sup> This creates confusion and one wonders if enjoying believers, not as instruments but as objects, is really all that wrong considering that Paul derived joy from those he ministered to on several occasions without respect to using them for any greater purpose (i.e. Phil. 4:1, 1 Thess. 2:20, 2 Tim. 1:4, etc.). Further exploration of this issue requires more research and is beyond the present scope of this work.

### Application for Modern Christians

So what should Christians do with the conclusions presented in this work? The following suggestions for the modern American evangelical church will center around three main categories: building on Augustinian foundations, ethics, and happiness. Each category will contain several suggestions that could radically shift the church in a direction that would improve spiritual vitality and also serve as a platform for evangelizing those on the outside.

#### Building on Augustinian Foundations

As has already been mentioned, John Piper has done a tremendous service to modern American evangelicalism by reintroducing Christian eudaemonistic principles to his readership. The church needs to continue to explore, and expand upon, this tradition, preferably upon the foundation laid by Augustine. The duty-driven, Kantian and Stoic conception of ethics that has polluted modern thinking needs to be replaced by an authentically Christian eudaemonism that seeks to find its happiness in loving God.

---

<sup>1</sup> William Riordan O'Connor, “The Uti/Frui Distinction in Augustine's Ethics,” *Augustinian Studies* 14 (1983): 53-57.

Christians need to understand that God cares about their happiness and doesn't merely require their service.

Augustine's system is not perfect, but there is a rich foundation on which to build. Many in church history have followed in his footsteps and the church would do well to contextualize, and continue to advance, Christian eudaemonism. Jonathan Edwards' important theme of God's glory is an important advancement that should be embraced in order to demonstrate that Christian eudaemonism is truly theocentric while remaining concerned with the happiness and well-being of the individual Christian disciple.

Additionally, the church is too illiterate when it comes to Augustine. This great theologian should be read and the spiritual riches in his writings rediscovered and used not just by those in academia, but those at the lay level as well. Seminaries could ground Christian leaders in Augustine's principles, especially his Theology of Love, and help ministers develop ways to incorporate those principles into their teaching ministries. Reading Augustine isn't always easy, or practical, especially for the lay person. Several secondary works are recommended to develop a foundation for Augustine's thought. For a lay audience, Chapter 1 of Thomas Hand's *Augustine on Prayer* provides a concise overview of Augustine's ideas on happiness, the greatest good, and love for God and would make an excellent starting point.<sup>2</sup> Next, Gerald Bray's *Augustine on the Christian Life* provides a spiritual autobiography that integrates events of the theologian's life with his Theology of Love, personal values, devotional life, important doctrinal contributions, pastoral ministry, and more.<sup>3</sup> For readers who are interested in a topical approach to Augustine's thought,

---

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Hand, *Augustine on Prayer* (New York: Catholic Publishing, 1986), 13-27.

<sup>3</sup> Gerald Bray, *Augustine on the Christian Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015).



*Augustine Through the Ages* is an encyclopedia that organizes the theologian's views into nearly 500 articles by over 150 scholars.<sup>4</sup> For more advanced readers looking for a scholarly analysis of Augustine's Theology of Love beyond the basics, John Burnaby's *Amor Dei* is recommended.<sup>5</sup> To begin reading Augustine's work directly, *Of the Morals of the Catholic Church* is a good starting point as its language is fairly accessible and it covers his arguments concerning happiness, man's greatest good, and love for God.<sup>6</sup> Next, a good modern translation of *The Confessions*, that includes explanatory footnotes like in Maria Boulding's version, would provide insight from Augustine himself concerning his own journey of faith.<sup>7</sup> This work also helpfully demonstrates how Augustine weaves devotion and theology together in a spiritually enriching way. Continuing on, Book One of *On Christian Teaching* would provide readers with an understanding of Augustine's arguments concerning the proper ordering of love for God above all other things.<sup>8</sup> Finally, though it is a difficult book full of references to ancient philosophy and literature, parts of *City of God* should be read to understand Augustine's conception of man's *summum bonum* along with his vision of happiness with God for eternity.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Allan D. Fitzgerald, ed., *Augustine Through the Ages* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> John Burnaby, *Amor Dei* (Norwich: The Canterbury Press, 1991).

<sup>6</sup> Augustine, *Of the Morals of the Catholic Church* (New York, Magisterium Press, 2015).

<sup>7</sup> Augustine, *The Confessions*, ed. David Vincent Meconi, trans. Maria Boulding (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012).

<sup>8</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, trans. R. P. H. Green (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 8-29.

<sup>9</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson (New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 2003).

## Refocusing on Augustinian Ethical Imperatives

If one were to survey modern American evangelicals as to what man's greatest ethical imperative is according to Christian teaching, one can only imagine what a wide variety of answers would result from such a study. The church needs to refocus upon loving God as the Christian disciple's highest ethical obligation and to find as much happiness as possible in doing so. All other works of service, such as ministering to the poor, running church programs, reaching youth, etc., are all secondary to this ultimate ethical imperative. Like the legal expert who asked Jesus, "which is the great commandment in the law?" (Mt. 22:36), the church must ask itself and evaluate, "What is our highest priority and how well are we really pursuing it?" God alone needs to become the object of ultimate affection within his church. All other loves, including a love for people, must be properly subordinated to this preeminent love. Otherwise, we replace our highest good with something inferior and surrender the opportunity for true happiness in the process which in turn diminishes our ability to love others.<sup>10</sup> Too often, Christians are dominated by "the loves of the world" (1 John 2:15-17) that manifest themselves in the "seven deadly sins" of pride, envy, anger, sloth, greed, gluttony and lust. Once entrenched, these sins can form into habits and addictions that reveal a love for God that has been replaced by idols.<sup>11</sup> Even worse, these sins sometimes spill over into public scandal that tarnishes the witness of the church and diminishes the morale of those within. Failing to love God naturally leads to selfishness which leaves little room for a pure love for others in the heart. Christians must be taught continually that the love of God

---

<sup>10</sup> Paul J. Wadell, *Happiness and the Christian Moral Life*, 3d ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 229-30.

<sup>11</sup> David K. Naugle, *Reordered Love, Reordered Lives* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), 63-80.

must always take first place in the heart and is the wellspring of love for man. Christian communities must support one another in the task to help fight the numerous temptations that are always trying to pull a Christian disciple of Christ away from a “love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (1 Tim. 1:5). Followers of Christ who strive to rightly order their love by placing God in his proper place atop their affections will experience a truly authentic Christianity, will avoid the pitfalls and snares so many fall into, and will experience a true desire to love people.

Lastly, reclaiming Augustine’s Theology of Love for the modern church could help shift the teaching of Christian truth from an attitude that is often described as a “theology of the head” toward a “theology of heart.” In his book *Knowing God*, J.I. Packer warned, “To be preoccupied with getting theological knowledge as an end in itself, to approach Bible study with no higher a motive than a desire to know all the answers, is the direct route to a state of self-satisfied self-deception.” The right model, says Packer, can be observed in Psalm 119 which shows us a man who “wanted to understand God’s truth in order that his heart might respond to it and his life be conformed to it.”<sup>12</sup> Often, lay Christians don’t understand the need for the teaching of theology and doctrine and view it as “impractical.” However, if the instruction of the knowledge of God and his truth is always put within the context of helping a listener love God more, the teaching becomes instantly relevant. The process of growing in the knowledge of God was never to be merely academic; it was always meant to be a relational endeavor. A growing knowledge of God should fill the heart with a greater love and appreciation for one’s Creator, Savior, and Providence that guides all of life for the good

---

<sup>12</sup> J.I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 22.

of those who love him (Rom. 8:28). Without placing the love of God at the core of Christianity, it is easy for Christians to forget the ultimate purpose behind what they do.

### Redirecting the Pursuit of Happiness

This discussion will end where it began: on the topic of human happiness. Augustine declared, “That all men desire happiness is a truism for all who are in any degree able to use their reason.”<sup>13</sup> The pursuit of happiness is a force that drives the actions of all people. Yet people are trying to find happiness in an astounding number of ways, often in means that are at odds with the desires of others. The Bible observes that this is often a source of great interpersonal conflict, even among Christians:

What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? (James 4:1-4 ESV).

This passage clearly states that evil desires and misplaced passions are the source of conflict. What do people so earnestly long for? The answer is “happiness.” But God does not want the pursuit of happiness to result in conflict. Only when people understand and truly believe that God is the only true source of ultimate happiness will they redirect their passions toward him. Doing so will lessen conflict among God’s people.

What would the church look like if every member decided to reorient their pursuit of happiness toward God through loving him? This could be an incredible source of unity as all believers would be brought together in helping one another find their happiness in loving God. Additionally, as the love of material things wanes it would free the hearts of people for

---

<sup>13</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, 371.

greater generosity as the pursuit of wealth would lessen in light of the pursuit of loving God and loving people. The practice of adultery would surely decline as people would no longer seek to find their happiness through breaking their marriage covenants. So many evils could be severely diminished if God's people only turned their hearts toward pursuing their happiness in him first and foremost.

Yet as we present this possible vision of happiness in loving God, we must be careful not to "oversell" the results as we have already criticized Piper of doing by promising too much joy. There will still be temptations, trials, disease, death, and affliction caused by the acts of those who do not share the Christian vision of happiness. As we have seen, the happiness that can be had on earth is limited. As Piper acknowledged, the fight for happiness will be a battle. There will be victories and losses. Christianity will not provide total bliss in this life, and the church must not present false expectations lest it face backlash from the disillusioned.

But there is still a measure of happiness to be gained in this life. Augustine himself experienced this happiness as God transformed his own soul from one racked by sexual desire to that of a celibate man devoted to the things of the Lord. He acknowledged that God made his soul to find its rest in God alone with the famous saying: "You stir us so that praising you may bring us joy, because you have made us and drawn us to yourself, and our heart is unquiet until it rests in you."<sup>14</sup> Happiness can increase through the ongoing process of shedding the heart's false loves and adding more and more love for God. A measure of happiness can also be found in the hope that one day God will transform all, removing all

---

<sup>14</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, 3.

obstacles to happiness and providing endless bliss in his presence. Randy Alcorn presents a balanced view of potential Christian happiness:

Until Christ completely cures us and this world, our happiness will be punctuated by times of great sorrow. But that doesn't mean we can't be predominantly happy in Christ. Being happy as the norm rather than the exception is not wishful thinking. It's based on solid facts: God secured our eternal happiness through a cross and an empty tomb. He is with us and in us right this moment. And he tells us to be happy in him. . . .

This book is about the surprising "settled happiness" that God makes possible despite life's difficulties. Rich and durable, this happiness is ours today because Christ is here; it's ours tomorrow because Christ will be there; and it's ours forever because he will never leave us.

What I'm writing of is *not* a superficial "don't worry, be happy" philosophy that ignores human suffering. The day hasn't yet come when God will "wipe away every tear from [his children's] eyes" (Revelation 21:4). But it *will* come. And this reality has breathtaking implications for our present happiness.<sup>15</sup>

The view of happiness that Alcorn strives to present is a realistic happiness. It comes from a conviction that Christians can be much happier than they presently are but does not promise the kind of bliss that is reserved for the life to come. The hope that God will one day remove all obstacles to happiness can provide a kind of happiness now. This is the happiness of hope that Augustine so astutely commends.

Finally, the prospect of Christian happiness can be a compelling evangelistic message. Since the desire for happiness is universal, and Christians have a relationship with God, the fountain of all happiness, there is a great opportunity to communicate this aspect of Christianity that is often overlooked. Christianity is a religion of happiness. The gospel message of redemption in Christ is about being delivered from the power and penalty of sin that has wrecked misery on the human race since the beginning. Christianity sets forward the real hope that the happiness that man seeks, the happiness he lost in the Garden of Eden, can one day be fully regained in the City of God. As Christians actually demonstrate the

---

<sup>15</sup> Randy Alcorn, *Happiness* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015), viii.

happiness that can be had now, this experience of happiness in their lives provides tangible evidence that the promise of joy in God is actually possible. Thus, both experiencing happiness through loving God, and communicating the happiness that can be found in a relationship with him, can be a powerful way to commend Christ to the world. And when happiness seems elusive, and the troubles of life overwhelm, the hope Christians have in God's happy future will also cause those on the outside to take notice and ask questions (1 Pet. 3:15). Thus, all humanity, Christian and non-Christian alike, can benefit from Augustine's view of happiness.

## CHAPTER 8

### CONCLUSION

The aim of this work was to demonstrate that Augustine's Theology of Love is the preferred Christian eudaemonistic paradigm for the modern church over John Piper's Christian Hedonism. This was demonstrated by showing that Augustine's system offers a central ethical imperative of loving God that properly matches the emphasis of Scripture. The research revealed that Piper has no adequate biblical justification for making enjoying God man's highest ethical obligation. Additionally, Augustine's theology presents a more realistic view of happiness by taking into account all the current impediments to happiness while presenting a vision of eternal bliss in the presence of God in the life to come. At the same time, Augustine encourages greater happiness in the present by making God the ultimate object of that pursuit instead of in things that cannot possibly satisfy the soul of man. The modern church would benefit a great deal from learning about, and applying, the principles of Augustine's system in order to reorient the spiritual focus of Christian disciples, bring about greater experiences of happiness, and present a more compelling Christian witness to unbelievers.

In reflecting on the research presented in this thesis, several lessons regarding methodology in constructing a theological and ethical paradigm are worth revisiting. The first is that the precise use of terms, and the concepts they represent, matters a great deal. In Piper's writing, his approach to blending various terms that convey heart affection into a



synonymous pool of meaning results in the eradication of important distinctions. Though there is often overlap in concept between various terms, there are often important shades of distinction that must be retained in order to preserve meaning and avoid confusion. This is especially important when utilizing terms that are in common use both in everyday life and throughout the history of theological literature. Reinterpreting the meaning of terms should not be done lightly or without an extraordinary body of evidence to support such a move. Thorough linguistic research into the original biblical languages, English language resources, and historical theological interpretation and understanding will help prevent novel ways of interpreting terms that are unjustified.

Second, a thorough historical understanding and engagement of the topic at hand also matters. Piper's eudaemonistic paradigm, while drawing on quotes from historical figures for support, doesn't properly interact with these same figures on points where he departs from their understanding. When one begins to delve into the eudaemonistic systems of the figures Piper quotes, such as Augustine and Edwards in this paper, and finds significant points of difference that were not addressed, it tends to weaken his argument and raises questions as to exactly how much of his system differs from the tradition in other areas outside the scope of this research. If Piper had addressed those points of disagreement, and provided ample evidence for why he chose to take a different path, perhaps his system would be more convincing. Instead, only utilizing brief quotes that tend to support his thesis without going any deeper gives the impression that many thinkers in the Christian eudaemonistic tradition were treated only superficially. The exceptions to this criticism are C.S. Lewis and Jonathan Edwards, two authors he quotes much more than others. In these cases, it is clear that Piper understands their thinking fairly well, though he doesn't tend to mention areas where he

disagrees with Edwards. However, in Piper's work, it seems as if Augustine is not well understood and only leaned on for positive support. Due to Augustine's position of influence in the Christian eudaemonistic tradition, more interaction with his thought could only have improved Piper's system and possibly kept him from making some of the errors brought forward in this thesis.

Last, it was noticed that a holistic approach, or an insufficient use of one, which must incorporate other biblical doctrines and themes, also played a significant role in the critique of these systems. Augustine's eudaemonistic paradigm seemed to incorporate the broader realities of the fallen nature of this present world, along with the promises of happiness in the next age where the fullness of redemption will be experienced, in a way that seemed more integrated than Piper. The result is a system that comes across as more "realistic" and less "idealistic." Building an entire system that drives the entirety of the Christian life, as both men have attempted, is no easy feat. Doing so requires a massive level of integration with the major themes of Scripture. Of course, an ethical paradigm, in order for it to be a believable construction, must do this. Otherwise, it is incomplete and neglects important questions and issues that might shape the paradigm in completely different ways than a theologian expected.

Perhaps this is why ethical paradigms and systems should be constructed over time by many gifted members of the church rather than one individual. Augustine has laid great foundations from which the church can build from and improve upon. Yet any further advancements to the Christian eudaemonistic tradition must be done with the preceding critiques in mind. Language, theological history, and proper integration with major doctrines and themes are important factors that if neglected, will only likely lead to error and

confusion. The task is enormous, but the Christian Church has been working out its doctrine for nearly two thousand years. Issues such as human happiness, and the primary imperative of loving God with all one's being, are worth the effort.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Books

### Primary Sources

Augustine. *Augustine: Later Works*. Edited and Translated by John Burnaby. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1955.

\_\_\_\_\_. *City of God*. Translated by Henry Bettenson. New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 2003.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Confessions*. Edited by David Vincent Meconi, S.J. Trans. Maria Boulding, O.S.B. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Expositions on the Book of Psalms*. Vol. 4, *Psalms 76-101*. Oxford: John Henry Parker; London: F. and J. Rivington, 1850.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Happy Life*, in *Trilogy on Faith and Happiness*. Edited by Boniface Ramsey. Translated by Roland J. Teske S.J., Michael G. Campbell, and Ray Kearney. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2010.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Instructing Beginners in Faith*. Edited by Boniface Ramsey. Translated by Raymond Canning. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2006.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Of the Morals of the Catholic Church*. New York: Magisterium Press, 2015

\_\_\_\_\_. *On Christian Teaching*. Translated by R.P.H. Green. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

\_\_\_\_\_. *On Grace and Free Will*. Lexington, KY: Beloved Publishing, 2014.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Sermon 368," in *Essential Sermons*. Edited by Boniface Ramsey. Translated by Edmund Hill. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2007.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Trinity*. Edited by John E. Rotelle. Translated by Edmund Hill. New York: New City Press, 1991.

Augustine, and Philip Schaff. *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christ Church*, Vol. 7, *Homilies on the Gospel of John, Homilies on the First Epistle of John, Soliloquies*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991.

Piper, John. *Desiring God*, Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2011.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Future Grace*, Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2016.

\_\_\_\_\_. *God's Passion for His Glory*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1998.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2000.

\_\_\_\_\_. *When I Don't Desire God*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004.

#### Secondary Sources

Alcorn, Randy. *Happiness*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015.

Ames, William. *The Marrow of Theology*. Edited by John D. Eusden. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997.

Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Contra Gentiles*. Book Three, *Providence Part II*. Translated by Vernon J. Bourke. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975.

Aristotle. *The Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by David Ross. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Attridge, Harold W. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. Edited by Helmut Koester. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989.

Bauckham, Richard J. *Jude, 2 Peter*. Vol. 50, *Word Biblical Commentary*. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983.

Booth, C.W. "A Biblical Study of the Theological Foundation of 'Christian Hedonism,'" *The Faithful Word*. <http://thefaithfulword.org/studyhedonism.html> (accessed January 31, 2017).

- Bray, Gerald. *Augustine on the Christian Life*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015.
- Bray, Gerald, ed. *1-2 Corinthians*. Vol. 7, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*. Edited by Tomas C. Oden. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Romans*. Vol. 6, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*. Edited by Tomas C. Oden. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998.
- Bruce, F.F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews. The New International Commentary on the New Testament*. 1964. Reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1981.
- Buchanan, George Wesley. *To the Hebrews*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1972.
- Burnaby, John. *Amor Dei*. Norwich: The Canterbury Press, 1991.
- Calvin, John. *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*. Edited and Translated by John Own. Vol. 19, *Calvin's Commentaries*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Commentary on the Book of Psalms: Volume First*. Trans. James Anderson. Vol. 4, *Calvin's Commentaries*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2009.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, in *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians*. Translated by John Pringle. Vol. 20, *Calvin's Commentaries*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Translated by Henry Beveridge. Peabody, MS: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2009.
- Carson, D.A. *The Gospel According to John. The Pillar New Testament Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1991.
- Charry, Ellen T. *God and the Art of Happiness*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2010.
- Cockerill, Gareth Lee. *The Epistle to the Hebrews. The New International Commentary on the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2012.

- Conzelmann, Hans. *1 Corinthians*. Edited by George W. MacRae. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975.
- Craigie, Peter C. *Psalms 1-50. Word Biblical Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Thomas Nelson, 1983.
- deClaissé, Nancy, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner. *The Book of Psalms. The New International Commentary of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2014.
- Delling, G. “plērēs,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Abr. ed. Edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1985.
- Edwards, Jonathan. *Charity and Its Fruits*. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2000.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Nature of True Virtue*. Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino Publishing, 2015.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Religious Affections*. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2004.
- Ellingworth, Paul. *The Epistle to the Hebrews. The New International Greek Testament Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1993.
- Fee, Gordon. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians. The New International Commentary on the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1987.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians. The New International Commentary on the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1995.
- Fitzgerald, Allan D., ed. *Augustine Through the Ages*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1999.
- Frame, John M. *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2015.
- France, R.T. *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries 1*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985.
- Friedrich, Gerhard and Gerhard Kittel, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Abr. ed. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964.

- Garland, David E. *1 Corinthians. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008.
- Grudem, Wayne. *1 Peter. The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1988.
- Hand, Thomas. *Augustine on Prayer*. New York: Catholic Publishing, 1986.
- Hawthorne, Gerald F. *Philippians*. Vol. 43, *Word Biblical Commentary*. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983.
- Hays, Richard B. *First Corinthians. Interpretation*. Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1997.
- Heen, Erik M., and Philip D.W. Krey, eds. *Hebrews*. Vol. 10, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*. Ed. Thomas C. Oden. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2007.
- Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. Oxford: James Thornton, High Street, 1881.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Translated by J.M.D. Meiklejohn. New York: The Colonial Press, 1899.
- Kistemaker, Simon. *Exposition of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. New Testament Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997.
- Kruse, Colin G. *The Letters of John. The Pillar New Testament Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2000.
- Lane, William T. *Hebrews 9-13. Word Biblical Commentary* 47. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991.
- Locke, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. London: William Tegg and Co., 1879.
- Luther, Martin. *Luther's Large Catechism*. Translated by John Nicholas Lenker. Minneapolis: The Luther Press, 1908.
- Masters, Peter. "Christian Hedonism—Is it Right?" *Pulpit & Pen*. available from <http://pulpitandpen.org/2017/01/10/christian-hedonism-is-it-right-by-dr-peter-masters/>; Internet; accessed 29 March 2017.



- Mays, James Luther. *Psalms*. Interpretation. Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1994.
- McMahon, Darrin M. *Happiness: A History*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2006.
- Moo, Douglas J. *The Epistle to the Romans. The New International Commentary on the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1996.
- Morris, Leon. *The Gospel According to Matthew. The Pillar New Testament Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1992.
- Mouw, Richard J. *The God Who Commands*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990.
- Murray, John. *Principles of Conduct*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1957.
- Naugle, David K. *Reordered Love, Reordered Lives*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2008.
- Nygren, Anders. *Agape and Eros*. Translated by Philip S. Watson. New York: Harper & Row, 1969.
- O'Brien, Peter T. *The Letter to the Hebrews. The Pillar New Testament Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2010.
- O'Donovan, Oliver. *The Problem of Self-Love in St. Augustine*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006.
- Packer, J.I. *Knowing God*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993.
- Palmer, F.H. "Love, Beloved," in *New Bible Dictionary*, 2d ed. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1991.
- Plato. *The Republic of Plato*, 3d ed. Translated by John Llewelyn Davies and David James Vaughn. Cambridge: Macmillan, 1866.
- Plotinus. *Plotinus. Porphyry on the Life of Plotinus and the Order of His Books, Enneads I.1-9*. Vol.1. Translated by A.H. Armstrong. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *Plotinus. Enneads VI.6-9. Vol.1.* Translated by A.H. Armstrong. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988.
- Ridderbos, Herman. *The Gospel According to John*. Translated by John Vriend. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1997.
- Simonetti, Manlio. *Matthew 14-28. Vol 1B, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*. Edited by Thomas C. Oden. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002.
- Smalley, S.S. “Joy,” in *New Bible Dictionary*, 2d ed. Edited by J. D. Douglas. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1982.
- Strawn, Brent A., ed. *The Bible and the Pursuit of Happiness*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Talbot, Mark. “When All Hope Had Died: Meditations on Profound Christian Suffering.” In *For the Fame of God’s Name*, Edited by Sam Storms and Justin Taylor. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010.
- Thiselton, Anthony C. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians. The New International Greek New Testament Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2000.
- Turner, G.A. “Love,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Vol. 3, Edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1986.
- Van Broekhoven Jr., H. “Joy,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Vol. 2, Edited by Geoffrey Bromiley. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1982.
- Van Gemeren, William A. *Psalms. Vol. 5, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*. Edited by David E. Garland and Tremper Longman III. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008.
- Wadell, Paul J. *Happiness and the Christian Moral Life*, 3rd ed. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016.
- Watson, Thomas. *A Body of Divinity*. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2015.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Ten Commandments*. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2013.
- Wesselschmidt, Quentin F., ed. *Psalms 51-150. Vol. 8, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*. Ed. Thomas C. Oden. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2007.

*The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms*. Lawrenceville, GA: Christian Education & Publications, 2007.

Williams, Daniel Day. *The Spirit and the Forms of Love*. New York: Harper & Row, 1968.

Williams, Rowan. *On Augustine*. London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2016.

#### Journal Articles

Baer, Helmut David. "The Fruit of Charity: Using the Neighbor in *De Doctrina Christiana*." *Journal of Religious Ethics* 24 (1996): 47-64.

Boers, Hendrikus. "Agapē and Charis in Paul's Thought." *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 59, no. 4 (Oct. 1997): 693-713.

Charry, Ellen T. "God and the Art of Happiness." *Theology Today* 68, no. 3 (Oct 2011): 238-52.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Happy pursuits: a Christian vision of the good life." *The Christian Century* 124, no.15 (Jul. 24, 2007): 31-33.

Dentsoras, Dimitrios, and Aleksandr Fatić. "Pleasure in Epicurean and Christian Orthodox Conceptions of Happiness." *South African Journal of Philosophy* 33 (2014): 523-536.

Grant, Colin. "For the Love of God: Agape," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 24 (1996): 3-21.

Jones, David C. "Love: The Impelling Motive of the Christian Life." *Presbyterion* 12 (1986): 65-92.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Supreme Good." *Presbyterion* 11 (1985): 124-41.

Kristanto, Billy. "William Ames and his Contribution to Evangelical Theology." *Evangelical Review of Theology* 39 (2015): 343-55.

Kuhs, Manuel. "A Critical Examination of John Piper's 'Christian Hedonism.'" *British Reformed Journal* 53 (2010): 20-34.

Langis, Dean. "Joy: A Scriptural and Patristic Understanding." *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 35 (1990): 47-57.

Metzger, Paul Louis. "The Halfway House of Hedonism: Potential and Problems in John Piper's *Desiring God*." *CRUX* 41, no.4 (Winter 2005): 21-27.

O'Connor, William Riordan. "The Uti/Frui Distinction in Augustine's Ethics." *Augustinian Studies* 14 (1983): 45-62.

O'Donovan, Oliver. "Usus and fruitio in Augustine, De doctrina Christiana I." *The Journal Of Theological Studies* 33 (1982): 361-397.

Warfield, Benjamin B. "The First Question of the Westminster 'Shorter Catechism.'" *The Princeton Theological Review* 6 (1908): 565-87.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Terminology of Love in the New Testament I." *The Princeton Theological Review* 16 (1918): 1-45.