A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF HUMAN FLOURISHING

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THE UNIVERSALITY OF HUMAN FLOURISHING

In the early 21st century there are few ideas that can be identified as universal. Few ideas span multiple disciplines of human knowledge, from philosophy to economics, from religion to world health policies, from ethics to psychoanalysis, from medical practice to jurisprudence, from trade policies to energy management to music performance, from water treatment to watercolor instruction. Human knowledge and culture has exploded so thoroughly in its diversity and specialization, especially in the Modern period, that few universals or unifying themes remain. There is certainly beauty and richness here, but nothing universal. Such massive diversity is seen not only in the contemporary state. When one moves from a synchronic analysis to a diachronic one, considering views and ideas *across* time, the hope of finding any consistent idea seems hopeless and naïve. Human experience, culture, and knowledge are too vast to expect one to find much consistency; diversity and change appear to be the only recognizable unified and steady ideas.

Yet, remarkably, there is one meta-theme or meta-concept that appears with remarkable tenacity and consistency across times and worldviews. This concept has staying power and universal voice because it addresses what is most basic and innate to all of humanity, despite the diversity of race, culture, and values. It is a concept that proves to be the motivating force and end goal of all that humans do and think. This idea or theme can be identified as *human flourishing*.

Human flourishing alone is the idea that encompasses all human activity and goals because there is nothing so natural and inescapable as the desire to live, and to live in peace, security, love, health, and

happiness. These are not merely cultural values or the desire of a certain people or time period. The desire for human flourishing motivates everything humans do—both belief in religion and the rejection of it; monogamous marriage and a promiscuous lifestyle; waging war and making peace; studying history and creating art; planting fields and building skyscrapers. All human behavior, when analyzed deeply enough, will be found to be motivated by the desire for life and flourishing, individually and corporately.

HUMAN FLOURISHING, PHILOSOPHY, AND RELIGION

The universal desire for human flourishing is easiest to discern in the realm of philosophy and religion, which, while greatly diverse in form and worldview, are by their nature fields of inquiry focused on providing some kind of prescription for how humans should live. Indeed, we make the bold but demonstrable claim that *human flourishing has been and is the driving force behind every philosophy and religion known to humanity*.[i] Whether it is Stoicism, Epicureanism, Islam, Platonism, new atheism, Christianity, the ancient worship of Baal and Asherah, Joel Osteen's *Your Best Life Now,* Buddhism, Positive Psychology, the Beachbody exercise company, or Judaism, the bedrock motivation and *telos* (end goal) for all humanity is for life, and life more abundant.[ii]

Of course philosophies and religions differ radically in how they describe human flourishing and especially how to attain it. The different answers to these questions provide core-level insight into differences in the beliefs and practices of the various religions of the world. Answers vary from the belief that human flourishing is found in being unaffected by the world, or being unaffected by false beliefs that there even is a god, to being your best person now by focusing on positive thinking, to embracing the suffering and difficulty God has for us, to *not* looking for human flourishing now but later, to living a life of serenity through achieving levels of greater consciousness, peace, and self-enlightenment, to becoming well-adjusted to our environment and relationships, to pursuing a life of practical wisdom and virtue. These different answers are both revealing and constitutive of what each religion or philosophy has to offer.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF HUMAN FLOURISHING IN WESTERN CIVILIZATION

Along these lines, it is interesting to consider how different human societies and cultures have changed in their views of what constitutes the good life, a sort of history of human flourishing. For this history from a Western and Judeo-Christian perspective, we can turn to two particularly helpful resources: as an entry point, a brief essay by Miroslav Volf, and for a book-length treatment, Ellen Charry's *God and the Art of Happiness*.[iii]

Volf offers a very helpful brief treatment of three stages of the vision for human flourishing that have occurred in the West in the Christian era.[iv] The foundations are earlier in Greek philosophy, especially Aristotle, whose focus on this issue is certainly the source of these ideas in Western civilization. Aristotle's

term *eudaimonia* becomes one of the most important concepts in all of Aristotelian philosophy; it was formerly translated into English as "happiness," but now is better glossed as "human flourishing."[v] Indeed, one can see the Western tradition's understanding of what constitutes flourishing as framed by and either re-appropriating or completely ignoring what Aristotle was saying. As Jeff Dryden observes, "In contrast to modern philosophy which focused its energies on the questions of knowledge (epistemology), ancient philosophy concerned itself chiefly with these basic questions of life and human flourishing."[vi]

Volf begins his survey with Augustine, the most influential Christian thinker and a massive influence on the development of Western thought,[vii] and explains how Augustine's thoroughly Trinitarian understanding of the world related intimately to the goal of human happiness/flourishing.[viii] According to Augustine, because God is the only source of any good to be found in the world, human beings can flourish and be truly happy only when they center their lives on God, the source of everything good, true, and beautiful. The only way to properly enjoy (and not pervert) good things in the world is to love them "in God" and in relation to him in the proper balance and shape. The supreme good for humans, Augustine argues on the basis of Scripture, is the double love of God and neighbor. Human happiness and flourishing come about through the harmonious fellowship of enjoying God and others. This tradition, *mutatis mutandis*, continues as foundational throughout the next 1400 years, finding its apex in Aquinas and the Thomistic tradition.[ix]

Fast forward to the Enlightenment, and we can find that as a function of the major anthropocentric turn that occurs around the 18th century[x] there is a gradual and ultimately radical re-orientation of human thought away from the transcendent and from God to human beings: humanism in full bloom. As Charles Taylor points out, one significant effect of this re-orientation is that human flourishing comes to be defined with no reference to something higher which humans should acknowledge, revere, or love.[xi] This is one of the pillars of the Modern turn in thought. Yet even while humanism rejects the necessity of God, "it retained the moral obligation to love neighbor."[xii] Universal beneficence for all the brotherhood of mankind was the ultimate, evolving goal. In other words, it was still understood and argued that our flourishing is tied to the flourishing of others. One strong (but ultimately unsuccessful) version of this was Marx's vision of a communist society, where the happiness and flourishing of all is the goal via the redistribution of wealth. On the other end of the spectrum is the famous economist Adam Smith, who also sees that an individual's flourishing is tied to enabling other individuals in society to freely pursue their own self-interest in flourishing, thereby raising the quality of life for all.

Even more familiar to most of us is the late 20th century version of human flourishing, where for many (especially those not religiously oriented), flourishing or happiness came to be understood as the individual's *experiential satisfaction*. "Flourishing *consists* in having an experientially satisfying life."[xiii] Ours is a culture of the managed pursuit of pleasure, and the ultimate test is one's own experience. Notice the progression that has occurred:

> Having lost earlier reference to "something higher which humans should reverence or love," it now lost reference to universal solidarity, as well. What remained was concern for the self and the desire for the experience of satisfaction. . . . [Other humans still matter but] they matter mainly in that they serve an individual's experience of satisfaction.[xiv]

One point of this survey is to note that even in its many different manifestations, what drives so much of human behavior is the innate desire for flourishing, for life abundant, even if it is defined and understood in different ways. Another point of this survey is to help us understand why many of us are ignorant of or squeamish about the fact that human flourishing is a biblical idea. The version most of us know about is obviously *not* godly and is a function of modern individualism.

On the question of how the concept of human flourishing has fared in Christian theology, one cannot do better than Princeton theologian Ellen Charry's treatment in her excellent book *God and the Art of Happiness*.[xv] Charry's aim is to trace the history of the loss of the idea of happiness and flourishing in the Church's practice and doctrine. She observes that while the Fathers, Augustine, and much of the Thomistic tradition understood God's redeeming work as closely related to full human flourishing through Christ, for much of the Church's history its theological understanding of happiness and flourishing has been put off to the eschaton, with the result that temporal happiness and flourishing become almost completely lost in our grammar and understanding.

After surveying the history of the Western discussion on this matter and how we got to where we are today, Charry turns to biblical and theological considerations to construct what she calls "asherism" (from the Hebrew word *ʾasher*, for happy or blessed). Charry offers a robust, constructive understanding of the Bible's teaching on what salvation is for us. To use Augustine's way of speaking, salvation is "the healing of love [so] that one may rest in God."[xvi] Salvation is a "realizing eschatology with salvation centered in sanctification."[xvii] "Salvation is growing into the wisdom of divine love and enjoying oneself in the process."[xviii] That is, God cares about our happiness and flourishing; indeed, his saving work in us entails properly pursuing life and flourishing and being instruments of the same to others, which is part of our own flourishing and healing.

HUMAN FLOURISHING AND THE BIBLE

In light of the strong and rich tradition of human flourishing in Western civilization, including the Church's understanding, it will be no surprise to learn that the Bible has much to say about human flourishing. Charry makes constructive arguments along these lines from both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament.[xix] Even more fully argued is a related volume, a beefy collection of essays that came out of a conference at Emory entitled *The Bible and the Pursuit of Happiness: What the Old and New Testaments Teach Us about the Good Life*.[xx] As the title and subtitle indicate, this book has a series of essays that walk through the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, asking how various parts of the Bible speak to the issue of human flourishing. A third section continues the conversation in dialogue with systematic theology (with Ellen Charry), practical theology, and psychology.

Many good points arise from this richly informative book, including the strong sense that the idea of human flourishing is not a specialized boutique interest, but is a significant part of the Bible's witness. Part of the way in which the book communicates the significance of this topic in Scripture is through an appendix titled "A Biblical Lexicon of Happiness," in which the compiler offers an extensive categorized list of all the references to the many different terms in the Bible related to happiness, joy, flourishing, well-being, and fulfillment. It is quite remarkable to see how many such terms there are and how frequently they appear across Holy Scripture. In other words, it quickly becomes apparent that the question of human flourishing is one to which the Bible is no stranger.

In light of this, the burden of this paper is to argue that human flourishing is a key biblical theme woven through the entire canon, one which explains and enhances some foundational aspects of the Bible's testimony, including the very nature and goal of God's redemption for us in Christ, who promises us eternal and abundant *life*. That is, the Bible, across its whole Christian canon of both Old and New Testaments, provides its own God-of-Israel-revealed-in-Jesus-Christ answer to the foundational human question of how to flourish and thrive.

We will see that several related ideas and concepts contribute to a robust biblical vision of human flourishing. We may think of these as a cluster of idea-planets that all orbit around the sun of human flourishing, reflecting its light.

A CLUSTER OF BIBLICAL IDEAS RELATED TO HUMAN FLOURISHING

1. *SHĀLÔM/EIRĒNĒ*

It is difficult to decide the best place to begin because of the inherently overlapping nature of the three main concepts under discussion. An appropriate and helpful point of entry is the concept of *shālôm* (with its Greek gloss *eirēnē*), usually translated into English as "peace."

In the Hebrew Bible the word-group relating to *shālôm* (noun and verb forms) is very frequent and is a broad-ranging, comprehensive concept. Relative to the many other important ideas in the Old Testament, the *shālôm* group "represents one of the most prominent theological concepts in the OT."[xxi] This is true not only because of the weightiness of the concept of *shālôm* but because of the broad semantic range in which this word can function. Scholars have long considered ways to summarize and taxonomize the varied senses of *shālôm*. An older (and linguistically deficient) approach sought to find the singular root meaning that would explain all the varied uses.[xxii] This proves to be problematic methodologically and practically; there is no singular idea that drives all of the contextualized uses of *shālôm*. However, we can identify three main ways in which *shālôm* functions:

> 1. In standardized greetings and partings, even as today we say "Peace" or "Peace to you" (about 10% of the uses).

2. To refer to a state or relationship that is peaceful, that is, free from conflict or tension (about 25% of the uses).

3. To refer to completeness, maturity, and especially overall well-being economically, relationally, healthwise (about 65% of the uses).[xxiii]

While it would be a mistake to try to force every one of the varied uses of *shālôm* into a one-size-fits-all shape, there is a consistent concept centered around *wholeness* with its natural consequence of *well-being* or *flourishing*. A *shālôm* greeting is a kind of well-wishing for another's prosperity; a state or relationship free from conflict is a necessary part of flourishing; and most generally, one can be described as flourishing when all the parts of one's life—health, economics, relations—are functioning together in harmony and completeness. This diversity of uses with a remaining central idea of human flourishing explains why the translators of the Hebrew Bible into the Greek Septuagint (LXX) use the variety of terms that they do. One of the important words used to translate *shālôm* is the Greek word *teleios*, meaning "unblemished, complete, undivided, whole." This is a natural and good gloss for the concept of *shālôm* and indicates the concept of human flourishing that both of these words communicate. This translation equivalent also helps us see the close interrelationship between *shālôm* and other related well-being terms such as *tāmîm* (wholeness), to which we will return shortly, as well as justice and righteousness.

But the main and most well-known Septuagint translation equivalent for *shālôm* is the Greek word *eirēnē*, typically translated into English as "peace." This is a good and natural translation from Hebrew to Greek. The problem comes with the transfer to English. In current English the word "peace" has two distinct senses, both of which fall short of the broader and deeper idea of human flourishing and well-being that the Hebrew and Greek words indicate. In English "peace" is used to refer either to absence of conflict, especially in a military sense, or to one's inner serenity or tranquility. These concepts are certainly not absent from *shālôm* and *eirēnē* but are too limited and distinct; absence of conflict and personal tranquility are natural benefits of *shālôm/eirēnē* well-being but not coextensive with it.

This insight helps us understand the New Testament's use of *eirēnē*. Even though the Christian tradition has tended to use "peace" in this twofold way of removal of conflict with God and one's personal, spiritual serenity, the New Testament's use of *eirēnē* has a richer and broader sense that flows out of the Old Testament's *shālôm* tradition via the LXX. The use of peace to describe our reconciled, non-conflictual relationship with God is certainly found in the New Testament (for example, Romans 5:1), as is the sense of personal tranquility from our gracious relationship with God through Christ (for example, Luke 24:36; John 14:27; 16:33; 20:19, 21, 26). The *shālôm*-based sense of peace in the New Testament is not less than these, but it is more; even in these uses, there is something deeper than mere absence of conflict and mere personal happiness. As in the Old Testament, New Testament "peace" has in view a broader vision of human flourishing and well-being because in both the Old and New Testaments, human flourishing and well-being are ultimately a function of God's saving work. God's redeeming of Israel and then the Church is rightly described as *shālôm/eirēnē* because the result is human flourishing. For example, the coming of the king of peace of Zechariah 9:9-17 "is portrayed as the beginning of a comprehensive state of peace and universal dominion."[xxiv] Thus to speak of salvation as the New Testament does is a vision of God bringing true *shālôm* or human flourishing. This includes a removal of enmity between humanity and God and a sense of personal tranquility, but it is more than both those states. Reconciliation and personal tranquility are a function of God bringing salvation-*shālôm*.

The nexus where we can see this Old and New Testament vision explicated most fully and clearly is in the book of Isaiah, which in many ways is the centering point between the testaments; it is

both an apex of Old Testament theology and the main fount or source of self-understanding for the New Testament to describe what God has done and still promises to do in Christ. In Isaiah *shālôm/eirēnē* is one of the key ways in which God's redemptive work is described. For example, in the famous Isaiah 9:5-6 passage looking forward to a coming Son-King, great emphasis is put on the *shālôm* that he will bring. Another good example is Isaiah 32:15-20, which describes the time when the Spirit will be poured out, making all the land fruitful, resulting in justice, righteousness, and peace (cf. Isaiah 48:18; 60:1-22). The prophet envisions security, wellness, and blessedness during a time in which God effects his salvation. This is *shālôm* or true human flourishing. Finally, we may note Isaiah 52:7—"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns'" (ESV). Here is one of the single most important passages for a whole-Bible theology because in it we see the interconnectedness of multiple lines of overlapping truth: good news/gospel, salvation, God's reign or kingdom, and peace/*shālôm*.

We may conclude this brief examination of *shālôm* by reiterating that it is one of a cluster of key biblical ideas that together paint a robust picture of human flourishing and well-being. *Shālôm* is probably the most comprehensive umbrella term for human health and wholeness, resulting in strength, fertility, and longevity.[xxv] "Shalom-ness" or "shalom-ity" (to coin some terms) is the general state of well-being or security that results in living wisely and/or receiving God's blessing.[xxvi] Moreover, this vision of human flourishing is not a secondary matter but is at the core of God's redeeming work. *Shālôm/eirēnē* is related to several other key biblical concepts and is a main way in which God's redemptive work is described throughout the Old and New Testaments. Because this idea is one of human flourishing, we begin to get a glimpse of the reality that God's saving work from the Fall to the New Creation can be accurately described as God restoring the creational state of human flourishing.

2. ʾASHRÊ/MAKARIOS

Moving beyond *shālôm*, we may examine another key and influential biblical idea, that of Hebrew *ʾashrê* and its close Greek equivalent *makarios*. We may begin by noting that the translation of these terms into English is particularly vexing. Translation is always treasonous to some degree, as all linguists and translators know.[xxvii] Some words and concepts are simply easier than others to translate between languages due to differences in how cultures develop and historical accident. The most common gloss for *ʾashrê/makarios* in English is the word "blessed." There are some good reasons for this, as we will see; but we will also suggest that this translation equivalent probably does more harm than good.

THE MEANING OF ʾASHRÊ/MAKARIOS: HUMAN FLOURISHING

Keeping with the overall theme and argument of this paper, we can begin by suggesting straightforwardly that the ubiquitous concept of *ʾashrê/makarios* offers another way in which the Bible regularly speaks about human flourishing and well-being.

In the Hebrew Bible *ʾashrê* is an abstract noun that always occurs as a construct intensive plural. This means that it is always followed by and connected with the *who* being described as *ʾashrê*: "*ʾashrê* is the

one who…" Of the 44 uses of *ʾashrê* in the Hebrew Bible, 26 are found in the Psalter, 8 in Proverbs, and the other 11 scattered throughout the rest of the canonical books.[xxviii] The etymological roots of this idea have been debated, but they very likely stem from Proto-Semitic and Egyptian roots meaning prosperity, good luck, and happiness.[xxix] *ʾashrê* typically occurs in rather formulaic statements, following a pattern of *ʾashrê* + Descriptive Statement + Occasional Reinforcement or Expansion of Descriptive Statement.[xxx] Notably, this same form will later appear in the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount.

ʾashrê is found especially in the Psalms and Proverbs. It is particularly appropriate there because it is a poetic and wisdom-related word. *ʾashrê* describes the happy state of the one who lives wisely. In this sense it relates closely to *shālôm* discussed above.

There is a twofold usage of *ʾashrê* in Psalms 1 and 2 that sets the tone for its frequent usage throughout the Psalter: "Blessed/Happy/Flourishing is the man" (Psalm 1:1); Blessed/Happy/Flourishing are all who take refuge in him" (Psalm 2:12b) (author's translation). "These statements serve as a paradigm for the usage of *ʾashrê* throughout the book (23x), combining the wisdom and devotional sides of the word, namely obedience to Torah (1:1-3) and reverent worship of the Lord alone (2:10-12)."[xxxi] In the Psalms, the truly happy one is the one whose God is Yahweh (Psalm 33:12), the one who receives from him and honors him.[xxxii] Charry surveys several Psalms to ask how they depict the asheristic life and rightly concludes that in the Psalms the specificity of the pentateuchal legislation is nowhere in sight. Rather, it is simply summed up as Torah, and the divine commands and ordinances are now described as a "salutary way of life that is summarized as reverence, keeping the commandments, taking refuge in the Lord, being humble, walking in his way, and so on."[xxxiii]

Thus *ʾashrê* makes an appeal to true happiness and flourishing within the gracious covenant God has given. Like the prophetic literature, the Psalms offer the promise of flourishing and happiness (fertility, prosperity, security) through faithfulness to the Lord, the very things that the wicked promise apart from the Lord. There is a struggle in Israel about which way to live, and the Psalms play an important part in casting the vision of the only way to true flourishing. "Covenantal obedience is the rudder, the compass, the map, and the provision for one's voyage through life."[xxxiv]

The other place in which *ʾashrê* regularly occurs is in the Proverbs, which also make an appeal to full human flourishing through wise living. In the Proverbs, the *ʾashrê* one is primarily the person who finds wisdom and lives wisely (cf. Proverbs 3:13a; 8:32, 34; 14:21; 29:18). This person is naturally extolled as "happy" or "flourishing." Included in this concept is the wisdom of the one who fears the Lord and is therefore blessed (Proverbs 16:20; 28:14). Indeed, reverence for the Lord is central to the Proverbs' understanding of what it means to be wise and therefore *ʾashrê*. The sages explain and interpret reverence "in terms of practical wisdom that cultivates behavior and character traits that build healthy communities."[xxxv] In this sense it is clearly asheristic; that is, Proverbs promotes a way of being in the world that will result in personal and corporate flourishing.

Rarely is *ʾashrê* used in the Pentateuch or prophetic literature, where *bārûk/bārak* is more frequent (see below). But notably, in light of our discussion of *shālôm* above, the prophetic usage of *ʾashrê* is almost entirely limited to Isaiah,[xxxvi] which uses the word twice in a way similar to the Psalms: first, in Isaiah 30:18 proclaiming the happy state of the person who even in the midst of suffering waits upon and

trusts in the Lord, and second, in Isaiah 32:20 as the summary word to describe the happy state of those who will live and flourish under the coming king who will reign in righteousness (Isaiah 32:1ff.), the very context where *shālôm* also occurs with great import.

Continuing in the tradition beyond the Hebrew Bible, we can note that in rabbinic usage *ʾashrê* follows the pattern of the Psalms and Proverbs, "in particular the wisdom emphasis on the truly happy state of the Torah-keeping life."[xxxvii] The idea continues to be an appeal to human flourishing through orientation to God's revelation.

When we turn to the New Testament, we see that this same idea continues with the Greek equivalent to *ʾashrê*, the word *makarios*. As with any Greek word in the New Testament, there is a dual context: the Greco-Roman usage of the first century and the longstanding and extremely influential Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint (LXX). To understand the New Testament's usage of a Greek term and concept, one must recognize that not only the normal daily usage of the speaker is at play, but also the deep and prominent influence of the Jewish heritage as manifested in the Septuagint.[xxxviii]

When one considers this dual context for the New Testament's frequent use of *makarios,* we see how the *ʾashrê* (and *shālôm*) tradition of human flourishing continues. The continuation is striking in two ways. First, the translational relationship between *ʾashrê* and *makarios* is quite exceptional. That is, very rarely in the LXX translation of the Hebrew Bible does one find a close one-to-one correspondence of terms and ideas with little overlap. Typically a gloss is found that works, but quite a bit of variation naturally occurs. That is, a Hebrew word is rendered with a variety of Greek words across the vast expanse of time and genres that the Hebrew Bible represents; a consistent, one-to-one translation equivalent is unexpected and uncommon. Notably, however, the translation of *ʾashrê* in the LXX is always rendered with *makarios*.[xxxix] Apparently this is because the two terms and concepts overlap with little remainder; the normal translational "treason" is more on the level of a white lie. This striking correspondence gives us great reason to believe that the Greek Bible's *makarios* communicates the same *ʾashrê* idea of human flourishing and well-being.

The other striking thing about this relationship and the other part of the dual context of the Greek word *makarios* is the first-century Greco-Roman context. In Classical Greek, *makar* is a common word referring first to the state of the gods and secondarily to men who live a life of happiness like that of the gods, beyond care, labor, and death. Very importantly for our understanding, *makarios* is often used as synonymous with the essential Greek philosophical term *eudaimonia* (especially important for Aristotle, as mentioned earlier), which connotes inner happiness and satisfaction, the state of the truly good life or human flourishing.[xl] This corresponds precisely with what we have already seen as the usage of *ʾashrê* in the Hebrew Bible. It also finds confirmation in the Second Temple Jewish literature composed in Greek (including parts of the LXX that do not have corresponding Hebrew writings), where *makarios* clearly refers to human flourishing or fullness of earthly life. One is *makarios* who has a wife (Sirach 25:8; 26:1), children (Genesis 30:13; 4 Maccabees 16:9; 18:9; 126:5; Sirach 25:7), beauty (Canticles 6:9 [8]), earthly well-being, riches, honor, wisdom (Job 29:10, 11; cf. Isaiah 32:20).[xli]

All of this provides the essential background to understanding the New Testament's usage of *makarios* and makes sense of the occurrences there. The most important uses of *makarios* in the New Testament occur

at the beginning in the prominent place of the Beatitudes, in the first message in the first Gospel in the first book of the new covenant witness (Matthew 5:3-12). In this famous inventory of "blessed be" statements. we have a memorable list of nine *makarios* statements. In light of the previous discussion of the meaning of *ʾashrê* and its direct translation into *makarios,* it becomes clear that something other than a pronouncement of divine blessing is at hand. Rather, continuing in the *ʾashrê* wisdom tradition, Jesus begins his public ministry by painting a picture of what the state of true God-centered human flourishing looks like. He is making an appeal and casting an inspiring vision, even as the Psalms, Proverbs, and Isaiah do, for what true well-being looks like through God's coming kingdom. At the same time this is understood in the context of the Greek philosophical tradition with its appeal to flourishing and happiness. As Scot McKnight notes in his discussion of the Beatitudes:

> Furthermore, the entire history of the philosophy of the "good life" and the late modern theory of "happiness" is at work when one says, "Blessed are. . . ." Thus, this swarm of connections leads us to consider Aristotle's great Greek term *eudaimonia*, which means something like happiness or human flourishing, but it also prompts us to consider modern studies of what makes people happy.[xlii]

When we move beyond the starting blocks of the Sermon on the Mount into the rest of the New Testament, we see that *makarios* continues to appear in the same way, offering to its hearers an inspiring appeal to true human flourishing found only in Christ.[xliii] In a variety of ways and contexts, declarations are made about those who are in the state of human flourishing and well-being: those who understand who Christ truly is and do not stumble over him (Matthew 11:6; 13:16; 16:17; Luke 1:45; 7:23; 10:23; John 20:29) nor fail in following him faithfully (Matthew 24:46; Luke 12:37; John 13:17; Revelation 16:15) and who endure in the midst of suffering, even as Jesus himself did (James 1:12, 25; 1 Peter 3:14; 4:14; Revelation 1:3; 14:13).

HUMAN FLOURISHING AS ʾASHRÊ/MAKARIOS THROUGH BARAK

There is a specific reason I have continued to use the transliterated *ʾashrê* and *makarios* rather than translate them into English. Even though both words are regularly translated with the English gloss "bless," this is problematic because it perpetuates the confusion between *ʾashrê* and *bārak* and thereby obscures the sense of human flourishing that *ʾashrê* and *makarios* communicate.

We may return to the discussion of how *ʾashrê* is consistently translated into Greek with *makarios*. Typically this well-fitted pair of words both get into English as "blessed." The problem is that there is another, distinct Hebrew and Greek word pair that *also* gets regularly translated into English as "blessed" or "bless." This is the frequently-occurring Hebrew word *bārak/bārûk* and its regular LXX Greek gloss, *eulogeō/eulogētos*. The result is rampant confusion between these two distinct word groups.

The Hebrew root *brk* occurs some 327 times verbally and another 71 times nominally in the Hebrew Bible. It is spread throughout most of the Old Testament but highly concentrated in the Pentateuch (especially Genesis and Deuteronomy, which account for 25% of the Old Testament occurrences)[xliv] and

Psalms in passages which deal with the patriarchs, the divine blessings and cursings on nations, the covenants, and worship of the Lord.[xlv] The meaning of *brk* is God actively giving and enabling his word to go forth, resulting in benefits such as fertility, authority, peace, and rest.[xlvi] Blessings and their counterpart, curses, are formal pronouncements by someone in authority, either from God directly or from an authorized mediator: usually a king, priest, or clan patriarch.[xlvii] Such blessings from God are bestowed and received in the context of relationships, the most significant of which in the Hebrew Bible is God's relationship to Abraham (wherein "bless" is frequently used). Blessing and its corresponding negative, cursing, are also connected with two symbolic mountains (Deuteronomy 11:26-32): Mt. Ebal (curses) and Mt. Gerizim (blessings).[xlviii] What makes a blessing a blessing is the relationship and God's favorable attitude toward a person or group of people; the benefit (or the "blessing") is secondary to the relationship.[xlix]

For our purposes we can make a crucial observation in comparing *bārak* and *ʾashrê*. Like *bārak*, *ʾashrê* is often used with the same recipients as the *bārak* word: to describe descendants, fields and flocks, and security from enemies. This helps us see the organic relationship between *bārak* and ashre, namely that "receipt of that which blessing [*bārak*] has to bestow qualifies a person or group to be called *ăshrê*."[l] But, *very importantly*, this does not mean the two words are synonymous *nor should they be glossed the same way*. That is, there is a basic and significant distinction maintained between the blessing, which is an active word and whose subject is typically God, and the state of those who receive this blessing or flourishing, described as the *ʾashrê* person. The one who pronounces an ashre-ism (or *makarism*), such as in Psalm 1 ("How happy is the one. . .") is not "blessing" others in the *bārak* sense of initiating, effecting, or inaugurating favor. Rather, *ʾashrê* is an exclamatory description of the state of happiness, privilege, or fortune that is upon someone as observed by someone else, a bystander, *not* the one providing or initiating the blessing. Ashre-isms/Makarisms are not "words of power" or statements about God actively favoring someone; they do not occur in ritual settings, and one never prays for a makarism/ashre-ism nor refers to oneself as *ʾashrê*. [li] Again, *ʾashrê* and *brk* are not synonymous. "*ʾashrê* stresses a state of happiness, while *bārûk*, though not excluding such a state, in keeping with its passive participial form speaks more of being empowered or favored as the recipient of blessing from the Lord, and thus 'blessed.'"[lii] God is spoken of as being *bārûk* but never as *ʾashrê* (even as he alone is *eulogētos* in the New Testament).[liii] Proclaiming an ashre-ism or makarism is to make a *value judgment* upon another member of the community's behavior and commitments. Ashre-isms "articulate the values of the community, sage, or teacher and pronounce the subject(s) 'honorable.'"[liv] They have an implied hortatory function; the implication is that "if one wishes to join the ranks of the happy, one should emulate their virtuous conduct or attitudes."[lv] To restate the important point, *ʾashrê/makarios* is the key biblical term for human flourishing, and this should not be confused with the divine action of blessing.

Confusion over the distinction between *ʾashrê/makarios* and *bāruk/eulogētos* contributes to the failure to see that the former terms communicate the idea of human flourishing and well-being. Herein lies the great problem of translating all of these terms with "blessed." The English "blessed" is so heavily loaded with the narrower sense of "divine favor" that the human flourishing sense is almost always lost.

But this is not the whole story. Once we have made the proper and helpful distinction between *ʾashrê/makarios* and *bārak/eulogētos,* we can step back and see the way in which these two discrete ideas do indeed overlap and inform each other. Specifically, as was already noted in describing the biblical sense of

ʾashrê/makarios, true human flourishing and well-being can be found only in relationship with God and through alignment with his coming kingdom. That is, while it is important to realize that *ʾashrê/makarios* cast a vision of human flourishing, it is equally important to see that this flourishing can never fully occur apart from a proper relationship with the creator God. All of the Bible's vision of human flourishing both now and in the age to come either assumes or explicitly states this fact.

Thus we may summarize this discussion by stating that along with *shālôm*, *ʾashrê/makarios* is a key biblical idea that casts a vision for human flourishing. This is not the same as the Bible's discussions about God's favor or effecting blessings on individuals and nations, but a full understanding is that human flourishing comes about only through connection with the true God of the universe revealed in Israel and ultimately in his Son, Jesus the Christ. The New Testament's witness is that as the arbiter of God's revelation and indeed as the final Word of God himself, Jesus is able to finally explain, model, and effect the true state of human flourishing both now and in the future in God's coming kingdom.

3. *TĀMÎM/TELEIOS*

A third and final concept and set of terms fill out our biblical understanding of human flourishing. It is found in the Hebrew word *tāmîm* and especially its sometime Greek gloss *teleios*. This broad and deep set of words communicates wholeness, maturity, completeness, and perfection and is intimately related to *shālôm* discussed above, as well as several other key biblical concepts. Although "wholeness" and "completeness" may not immediately appear to be related to human flourishing, a closer examination reveals that this is in fact the case.

TĀMÎM AND TELEIOS IN THE HEBREW BIBLE, SEPTUAGINT, AND NEW TESTAMENT

The Hebrew *tōm/tāmîm* and its related forms occur more 200 times in the Old Testament, communicating the idea of wholeness, integrity, and singleness. Because this is such a broad and important idea, the "boots on the ground" usage can vary quite a bit, conveying the ideas of complete, blameless, just, honest, perfect, and peaceful. A core idea related to each of these is genuineness and reliability. The adjectival form *tāmîm* denotes whole, perfect, or blameless, used mostly in connection with cultic regulations pertaining to sacrificial offerings. Often used synonymously with *yāshar* (upright) and *ṣaddîq* (righteous), *tāmîm* also epitomizes the correct ethos among the righteous and wise (cf. Proverbs 2:21). To be *tāmîm* also means to be pious and upright before the Lord. The nominal *tōm* (perfection) characterizes the nature and manner of an action or the attitude of the one who is performing it, thus meaning "in full measure" on the one hand, and "integrity of heart" (1 Kings 9:4) on the other.[lvi] Often *tom* is used of the state of the heart that is pure and has sinless conscience (e.g., Genesis 20:5, 6; Psalm 78:72; 1 Kings 9:4).[lvii] In Deuteronomy 18:13, to be "blameless" before the Lord means to belong to him wholeheartedly without practicing idolatry (Deuteronomy 18:9-12). This total surrender must be constant (Joshua 24:14). "To give one's whole heart in its purity, unblemished by alien thoughts and inclinations: this is what the substantive *tom* expresses, and we might translate with 'innocence, simplicity.'"[lviii]

Tōm/tāmîm, understood as "completeness" and "wholeness," is a macro concept that sums up the Old Testament's moral commands. This same understanding can be found in the subsequent Second Temple Jewish literature, where the idea of "wholeness of heart" (*tōm,* equivalent to the Greek word for "undivided" or "whole," *haplotēs*) is found, such as in the *Testament of the 12 Patriarchs*.[lix] The Qumran community sees itself as the "perfect ones of the way," "those who walk perfectly," and "a house of perfection and truth in Israel." These "perfect ones" (the word is regularly collocated with "way" and "walk") see themselves as the holy remnant, the saints of the final age.[lx]

As one can see, the *tmm* root proves to be a very important one; but of course it does not stand alone in a vacuum-sealed bag. Rather it overlaps, colors, and is colored by several other related and important concepts including righteousness, well-being (*shālôm*), and holiness. Particularly interesting and important is the connection between wholeness, singleness, and *holiness*. One scholar who has thought carefully about this is Peter Gentry. He argues convincingly that despite the common assumption that "holiness" denotes separateness, otherness, and moral purity, this view does not accord with the sense of *holy* in Hebrew or Greek (Hebrew *qāḏash*; Greek *hagios*). Based on close readings of Exodus 3 and 19 and Isaiah 6, Gentry argues that the basic idea of "holy"—for us and for God—is *devotedness*. "The basic meaning of the word is 'consecrated' or 'devoted.' In scripture it operates within the context of covenant relationships and expresses commitment." Gentry carefully notes that this does not mean that "holy" is unrelated to moral purity, but instead "holiness should not be defined as moral purity, but rather purity is the result of being completely devoted to God as defined by the covenant."[lxi] Another scholar has discussed it as the difference between "separation from" and "separation to," with the latter, rather than the former, being the idea of holiness.[lxii]

We may follow the logical consequence one step beyond Gentry and note that his arguments get us very far in seeing that the idea of holiness (as devotedness) has great overlap and a mutually informing relationship with that of wholeness or completeness. All of this is predicated on God as one and the central place of the Shema in Israel's understanding. Indeed, one scholar who has made these connections very explicit is Mary Douglas. In her insightful work on purity in the Old Testament, she argues that "to be holy is to be whole, to be one; holiness is unity, integrity, perfection of the individual and of the kind."[lxiii]

Continuing in our trajectory of moving from the Hebrew Bible into Greek (the Septuagint, flowing into the New Testament), we see confirmation of this core idea of holiness/righteousness/godliness as wholeness. Unlike the situation with *ʾashrê-makarios,* we do not find a simple translation equivalency between *tāmîm* and *teleios;* but the conceptual connection is very strong nevertheless. Although the Greek *teleios* is not the usual gloss for Hebrew *tāmîm,* this is because the latter is most frequently used with the narrower contextual meaning of an "unblemished" sacrificial animal.[lxiv] For this contextualized usage of the "wholeness" idea, there is a better Greek equivalent (usually *amomphos*), but the core idea behind both *tāmîm* and *teleios* is the same. As is often the case, we must look not only to individual words and their relationship, but to the range of meaning and conceptual understanding that overlap.

This overlap can be seen by examining the wide range of biblical meanings associated with *teleios* which prove to be the same as those discussed above for *tāmîm, yāshar, ṣaddîq,* and *qāḏash*—the idea of wholeness, completeness, and perfection in the sense of wholehearted dedication to God. As du Plessis observes, *teleios* "assumes the innate meaning of *tāmîm*."[lxv] Indeed, we may go so far as to say that the moral and religious

call of the Old Testament is "a closely-knitted network revolving around a recurrent principle," that of the *tāmîm/teleios* idea.[lxvi] The *teleios* person in the Old Testament—which is the ideal—is the one in total submission to God, who has an unimpeded relationship with Yahweh. Such a person is described as *tāmîm* or *shālēm*, like Noah, Abraham, David, and others.[lxvii]

When we turn to the New Testament, we find this same concept operative in the Christian understanding of what it means to be godly, holy, and righteous. For example, one of the key ideas—if not *the* key idea—in the Sermon on the Mount is "wholeness," "completeness," or "singular devotion." For Matthew "the disciple is he whose dedication to God is *total, single*."[lxviii] This emphasis on singleness or wholehearted dedicatedness is seen in nearly every part of the Sermon, but it finds its clearest principled version in the paradigmatic statement in Matthew 5:48: "Be *teleios* as your heavenly Father is *teleios*." To say that we must be *teleios* as God is to say that we must be whole. We must be singular in who we are, not one thing on the outside but another on the inside. The call to *telios*-ness in Matthew 5:48 and throughout the Sermon is the same call to "holiness" that we see throughout the Old Testament (and the rest of the New Testament)—not moral perfection, but wholehearted orientation toward God. Indeed, Matthew 5:48 is clearly a reappropriation of (or intertextual twist on) the great holiness command from Leviticus 19:2 and 20:26, "Be holy as I am holy."[lxix] As in Matthew 5:17-47 just preceding, Jesus is giving a reappropriated, clear exposition of the true intent of the Law. The call to "holiness" in Leviticus 19:2 and 20:26 is now properly explicated, as was its true intent always, as a call to "wholeness," or in short God-ward virtue.

The rest of the New Testament also witnesses to this same understanding, with forms of the *teleios/teleō/telos* word group occurring over 70 times. The book of James is one very clear example, probably in a direct relationship from the Sermon (cf. James 1:4, 17, 25; 2:8, 22; 3:2).[lxx] Likewise, the idea of completion, maturity, and wholeness can be found repeatedly in Hebrews (Hebrews 2:10; 5:9, 14; 6:1; 7:28; 9:9; 10:1, 14; 12:23). It is also found in the writings of Paul, where the goal for every Christian is to reach maturity in Christ, which is a place of completeness and totality that accords precisely with the ideas already established in the Old Testament (e.g., 1 Corinthians 2:6; 14:20; Ephesians 4:13; Philippians 3:12, 15; Colossians 1:28; 4:12).

TĀMÎM, TELEIOS, AND HUMAN FLOURISHING

The point of the summary of *tāmîm/teleios* above is not only to highlight this as a key biblical idea, but to flesh out our understanding of the Bible's depiction of human flourishing and well-being. The pieces of the puzzle are all in place now. It remains only to point out that with *tāmîm/teleios* we have another essential piece of the human flourishing picture. When we step back and look at it as a whole, we can see as with *shālôm/eirēnē* and *ʾashrê/makarios* we have a set of overlapping ideas that paint a picture of what is the greatest good for humanity: to be in a right wholeness relationship with God. Inherent in this idea is that one's true flourishing and well-being will come only through this right relationship with God. This can be seen conceptually, as we have just noted, but also in the way in which the various terms discussed here overlap. The foundational call on humanity is to be *tāmîm/teleios* or whole. This *wholeness* of character

describes both the means and the state of God-blessed flourishing. It is not an accident that the people described as ʾashrê /makarios and shālôm are the ones whose lives are marked by tāmîm/teleios. All of this together is the vision of what it means to be godly, which is the same as what it means to truly flourish.

God's redemptive work should be conceived not merely in terms of strict legal and purity categories. Rather it is God's activity that invites us back to full humanity and well-being through the Second Adam, Jesus the Christ. He is the complete, blessed, and peaceful man in whose image Christians are being remade.

A WHOLE-BIBLE VISION OF HUMAN FLOURISHING

This survey of three key ideas that relate to human flourishing is certainly not a comprehensive treatment of these ideas nor all that could be said about the Bible and well-being. Nevertheless, the discussion above is designed to broaden our understanding of these weighty biblical ideas and to help us understand that human flourishing is indeed a very important theme in Holy Scripture. In light of the great interest in human happiness and well-being throughout philosophy, economics, health care, and many other fields, it would disappointing and even shocking if this theme were absent from God's revelation. It remains for us in this concluding section to summarize what we have seen and to suggest some implications.

SUMMARY

Human flourishing and the question of what it means to be truly happy and how to pursue this state have been the focus of much of human society and thinking since ancient times. The Bible is no exception. While there are many words and ideas in Scripture that relate to happiness, joy, flourishing, and well-being, there are three concepts in particular that together paint a picture of what human flourishing is from God's perspective and how to obtain it. These three ideas appear in two related forms—both Hebrew and Greek—because of the dual Hebrew and Greek culture and languages of the Bible. Together these three concepts paint a robust picture of a biblical theology of human flourishing.

The first of these ideas is shālôm/eirēnē/peace. Shalom has many and varied uses throughout the Bible, but its consistent idea is one of wholeness that results in well-being. While the English connotation of "peace" communicates this in part—and shālôm includes the English sense of peace—more broadly and deeply biblical shālôm/eirēnē paints for us a picture of what a flourishing life can look like through relationship with God. When God reigns over his people in joy and righteousness, and his children relate to him and others rightly in love, this is shālôm, both individually and corporately. This is why shālôm is a catchword to describe the promised time when God will finally and completely establish his heavenly reign on earth (cf. especially Isaiah 40–66).

The second in our cluster of flourishing ideas is ʾashrê /makarios/blessedness/happiness. Closely related and overlapping significantly with shalom is the frequent biblical idea of blessedness or

happiness, communicated by the Hebrew *ʾashrê* and the Greek *makarios*. Like *shālôm*, the vision behind the Bible's claims about *ʾashrê* are not peripheral but come from the core of God's revelation. When the Bible makes claims about who is *ʾashrê /makarios/truly happy and blessed,* it is casting a vision for a way of being in the world that will result in true human flourishing. There is another, distinct word for "bless" (*bārak/bārûk*) which describes the activity of God effecting goodness and favor. This word should not be confused with the more general vision and invitation being offered in the *ʾashrê* passages. The *ʾashrê* texts, like the *shālôm* ones, are not statements about what one might do to try to earn God's favor, nor are they descriptions of what God did with some individual (such as God's choosing to "bless" Abraham). Rather, they are statements that inform us how to orient ourselves and reframe our understanding of what it means to really live the good life, to have genuine well-being individually and in society. The crucial truth to see is that *shālôm* and *ʾashrê* , while not the same as God's blessings, can be found fully only by those who are in a proper relationship with God. Human flourishing, which the Bible can describe as *ʾashrê /makarios,* comes to us only through God. This is the unique claim of Holy Scripture and how it stands apart and weighs in on the ancient discussion of human happiness.

The third and final idea discussed is that of *tāmîm/teleios/wholeness*. One can immediately see by the English translation that there is important overlap with *shalom*, also defined as wholeness. But whereas *shālôm* and *ʾashrê* largely function as descriptors of human flourishing from an overview perspective, *tāmîm* describes the means by which and that state wherein a human can experience God-directed and God-blessed flourishing, through *wholeness*. It is not an overstatement to suggest that the essence of God's call upon his creatures morally and spiritually is a call to wholeness. Close examination reveals that this single-hearted devotedness to God is what holiness, righteousness, and godliness look like. When in full flower, this wholeness looks like moral purity; but external purity is no guarantee of true *tāmîm/teleios*. The latter is what God truly cares about, a consistency—not of perfect behavior always—but of integrity and singleness of heart and dedication (cf. the moral life and heart of David). As one pursues this wholeness of heart, one experiences human flourishing and well-being, not only because this is natural as God has ordered the world, but also because this way of being in the world accords with God's reign and thereby brings *shālôm* and *ʾashrê* .

SOME SUGGESTED IMPLICATIONS

In this summary and in the fuller discussion above, we have seen that the Bible certainly speaks to the issue of human flourishing in very significant ways. But this is not unique among other ancient or current philosophies, religions, or worldviews. What is unique and what is revelational and authoritative for the Christian is that Holy Scripture understands human flourishing to be a function of God's redemptive work in the world, the very core of his relation toward his creatures. Throughout both the Old and New Testaments, God is at work redeeming his broken, sinful, and rebellious creatures. From the promise of redemption in Genesis 3:15 through the climactic vision at the end of the book of Revelation, God reveals himself to be actively and graciously redeeming his people, saving them from oppression, forgiving their disobedience and dishonoring acts, and leading them into a time and place of his full presence. The biggest metaphor or image to describe this work is God's kingdom or reign. From beginning to end of Holy Scripture, God is a king who is establishing his perfect heavenly reign on the earth through his chosen people, now those who are in Christ. His kingdom is a time and place of

righteousness, that is, the time and place where the world is set to right, both individually and corporately.

This beautiful understanding of the message of the Bible is not novel or unknown. But what has often been missed in our biblical and theological thinking is that all of this truth is intimately and organically woven together with the theme of human flourishing and well-being. As we saw above, to be aligned with God's kingdom is to be a wholehearted person, and as we grow in this reality we increasingly experience *shālôm* and *ʾashrê*. Moreover, the very way that God's kingdom and reign are described is with these same concepts. All this means that at its core and in its very essence, God's saving work, his redemptive activity, his goal for humanity and all creation is precisely this: that we flourish fully even as he himself flourishes perfectly, completely, and with overflowing abundance.

So the most significant implication of our study is to state that human flourishing must be rediscovered as a central part of the Bible's teaching on salvation and redemption. God is not unconcerned about our well-being and happiness; peace, happiness, blessedness, health, joy, and abundance of life are the consistent message of Scripture and the goal of God's work. We should cease thinking of spirituality and godliness as something that has nothing to do with human well-being and flourishing, including in a physical, economic, psychological, and relational sense.

A related implication is that this understanding helps us make the most sense of many portions of the Bible, including very well-known sections that have not been perceived as related to human flourishing. One of the biggest and most important examples of this is the most famous section of Scripture, the Sermon on the Mount. When we go back and reread the Sermon in light of the whole Bible's emphasis on flourishing, it makes much more sense and takes on a far deeper meaning. From its opening concatenation of *ʾashrê /makarios* statements through its emphasis on the blessings of *teleios/wholeness* to its final image of being like a strong house which can weather storms and stand with dignity, the Sermon offers us a vision of what true human flourishing can look like. It is found through God's gracious and revelatory coming in the Son, Jesus, whose accomplished mission is to establish God's heavenly reign on earth.

Finally, with this vision filling our eyes and hearts, we may turn our gaze outward to the world and the work of Christ's Church. If God's goal in redemption is the restoration of our full humanity[lxxi] and our God-centered human flourishing, then there is no doubt that the mission of the Church—God's people on earth—should be the same. Our theological reflections and their practical outworking must be to bring true human flourishing to individuals and society as a whole. This must be motivated, informed, and colored by the reality of God's coming kingdom, centered on Jesus the Son, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Without this anchoring, the pursuit of human flourishing is not biblical. But this spiritual understanding does not make it less physical and practical. Seeking social justice, racial equality, economic flourishing, and peace ("Makarios are the peacemakers," Matthew 5:9) is not an optional part of the Church's mission nor a minor alleyway. These are practices that testify to the reality of God's coming reign and are in alignment with what God himself is doing. How precisely to go about promoting this human flourishing in society will always be a matter of debate among theologians, pastors, economists, psychologists, and politicians.[lxxii] But *whether* this is the mission of the Church should never be a question.

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[i] A representative statement of the role of happiness or flourishing in philosophy can be found in the comments of Jörn Müller: "Without doubt happiness (εὐδαιμονία) is the central concept on which ancient moral philosophy was founded. It would even be justifiable not only to describe the ethics of antiquity as 'eudaimonistic'—as Immanuel Kant did in a rather derogatory fashion—but to apply this label to the whole of ancient philosophy. As Augustine remarks (*De civitate Dei* 19.1), the main reason for doing philosophy is that it strives for and ultimately promises the achievement of the highest good, i.e., happiness. Thus, the concept of *eudaimonia* lies at the heart of philosophy itself, when it is understood not as a purely theoretical inquiry but as a certain form of life" (Jörn Müller, "Duplex Beatitudo: Aristotle's Legacy and Aquinas's Conception of Human Happiness," in *Aquinas and the Nichomachean Ethics*, ed. Tobias Haffmann, Jörn Müller, & Matthias Perkams [NY: Cambridge University Press, 2013], 52).

[ii] Cf. the excellent article on *makarios* in *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament,* which states, "All the thinkers of antiquity expressed their opinions on happiness" (Ceslas Spicq & James D. Ernest, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994], 36).

[iii] Miroslav Volf, "Human Flourishing," in *Renewing the Evangelical Mission,* ed. Richard Lints (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 13-30; Ellen Charry, *God and the Art of Happiness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010). Charry's book is a follow-up and extension of related ideas in her also excellent work, *By the Renewing of Your Minds* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[iv] The following summary paraphrases Volf, "Human Flourishing," 14-17.

[v] In popular culture "happiness" can connote a superficial, temporary euphoria, whereas "human flourishing" better communicates the "true, full happiness," the wholeness of being, associated with *eudaimonia* (cf. Henry George Liddell et al., "εὐδαιμονία" in *A Greek-English Lexicon* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996], 708).

[vi] Jeff Dryden, "Knowing and Reading," unpublished paper, 2012.

[vii] For an authoritative, detailed treatment, see Part 1 of *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine*, ed. Karla Pollmann and Willemien Otten (NY: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[viii] For an overview of Augustine's view of human happiness, see chapter 1 of Paul J. Wadell, *Happiness and the Christian Moral Life,* 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012).

[ix] In chapter 2 of *Happiness and the Christian Moral Life*, Wadell fleshes out Aquinas' view of the relationship between a life of love, happiness, and our relationship with God.

[x] This anthropological turn is itself based on the earlier Renaissance rise of Humanism, the difference being that within the development of Humanism, the foundational worldview was still primarily and functionally theistic. It is the Enlightenment's epistemological turn toward Rationalism that takes Humanism from a theistic frame and makes society and worldview completely human-centered.

[xi] Volf, "Human Flourishing," 16, noting and quoting from Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

[xii] Ibid.

[xiii] Volf, "Human Flourishing," 15. As one bit of testimonial evidence for t h e current understanding of happiness, cf. the definition in Henry S. Miller's popular contemporary book *The Serious Pursuit of Happiness: Everything You Need to Know to Flourish and Thrive*. Miller explicitly defines happiness (based on the latest psychological research and apparently completely ignorant of the history of the issue) as "self-reported subjective well-being" (Los Gatos, CA: Wisdom House Media, 2013), 12.

[xiv] Volf, "Human Flourishing," 17.

[xv] See footnote 3.

[xvi] Charry, *God and the Art of Happiness*, x-xi.

[xvii] Ibid.

[xviii] Ibid.

[xix] Part II of Charry, *God and the Art of Happiness*. She made similar arguments in her earlier work, *By the Renewing of Your Minds* (see footnote 3). Especially insightful is her treatment of the Sermon on the Mount along these lines (chapter 3 in *By the Renewing of Your Minds*).

[xx] Brent A. Strawn, ed., *The Bible and the Pursuit of Happiness* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2012). One may also consult Norman Whybray's posthumously published *The Good Life in the Old Testament* (London: T&T Clark, 2002).

[xxi] Philip J. Nel, "שׁלֹם," *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis,* ed. Willem A. VanGederen (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 4:130.

xxii In the modern period this was the approach of two of the most influential writers on the topic, Gerhardus von Rad and Claus Westermann. See the helpful overview in Perry Yoder, "Shalom Revisited," in Perry B. Yoder and Willard M. Swartley, eds., *The Meaning of Peace: Biblical Studies, Studies in Peace and Scripture,* vol. 2, 2nd ed., (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2001), 2-6.

xxiii This particular breakdown, including the estimates of percentage of usage, comes from John Durham, as
summarized in Yoder.

xxiv Philip J. Nel, "שׁלֹם," *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 132.

xxv John Wilkinson, *The Bible and Healing: A Medical and Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 11, as summarized in James K. Bruckner, "A Theological Description of Human Wholeness in Deuteronomy 6," in *Ex Audita,* 21 (2005), 3.

xxvi William B. Urbrock particularly ties *shâlôm* to the state of receiving blessing, by which I suppose the author means blessing by God ("Blessings and Curses," *Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary,* ed. David Noel Freedman [New Haven: CT: Yale University Press, 1992], 1:756).

xxvii For a great introduction to the complexity of translation issues and the tongue-in-cheek idea of translation as "treason," see Moisés Silva, "Are Translators Traitors? Some Personal Reflections" in *The Challenge of Bible Translation*, ed. Glen G. Scorgie, Mark L. Strauss, & Steven M. Voth (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 37-50.

xxviii There is also a related denominative verb *ʾāshar* that occurs 9 times, meaning "to pronounce happy, call blessed." See Waldemar Janzen, " ʾAŠRÊ in the Old Testament," *Harvard Theological Review* 58.2 (1965): 215.

xxix Id., 216.

xxx Id., 218.

xxxi Michael L. Brown, "אַשְׁרֵי,," *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 571.

xxxii Ibid.

xxxiii Charry, *God and the Art of Happiness*, 214.

xxxiv Id., 215.

xxxv Id., 218.

xxxvi The only other occurrence of *ʾashrê* in the Hebrew Bible prophetic literature is in the later eschatological passage of Daniel 12:12.

xxxvii Michael L. Brown, 572.

xxxviii For more on the influence of the Septuagint, see Tessa Rajak, *Translation and Survival: The Greek Bible of the Ancient Jewish Diaspora* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 1-23. For concise discussion of the various ways the Septuagint has influenced the New Testament, see Karen H. Jobes and Moisés Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000), 19-26. For a more detailed treatment, see Natalio Fernández Marcos, *The Septuagint in Context: Introduction to the Greek Versions of the Bible* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2000), 303-62.

xxxix Janzen, 216. K. C. Hanson agrees: "That *ʾashrê* and μακάριος are equivalents is established by their one-to-one correspondence in the LXX's translation of the MT" ("How Honorable! How Shameful! A Cultural Analysis of Matthew's Makarisms and Reproach," *Semeia* 68 [1995]: 88). In two instances the translator of Proverbs (14:21; 16:20) uses the related adjective μακαριστός instead of μακάριος, but this in no way undermines the significance of the unusually strong correspondence between *ʾashrê* and *makarios*. The conceptual overlap between these word groups is further strengthened by the way the LXX handles the verb forms. Only twice does the LXX not use μακαρίζειν for *ʾashrê*. In Proverbs 3:18 the translator uses ἀσφαλής, "firm, steadfast," and in Proverbs 31:28 πλουτίζειν, "to flourish financially."

xl Friedrich Hauck, "μακάριος, μακαρίζω, μακαρισμός," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,* ed. Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1967), 4: 362-63.

xli Georg Bertram, "μακάριος, μακαρίζω, μακαρισμός," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 4: 364-67.

xlii Scot McKnight, *The Sermon on the Mount, The Story of God Bible Commentary* Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 32. For an expansion of this view, see R.T. France, *Matthew, New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 160-161, where he titles his discussion of the Beatitudes "The Good Life." See also my forthcoming book on the Sermon on the Mount, tentatively entitled *Human Flourishing and the Sermon on the Mount: A Vision of God's Redeeming Work* (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2015).

xliii Beyond the uses in the Beatitudes, there are another 40 occurrences of *makarios* in the New Testament.

xliv James McKeown, "Blessings and Cursings," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 83.

xlv The preceding data all come from Robert Gordon, "ברך," *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 1:757-58.

xlvi McKeown, "Blessings and Cursings," 83-87.

xlvii Hanson, "How Honorable! How Shameful!", 85-86. The clearest example of a priestly blessing is the Aaronic blessing of Numbers 6:22-27. Cf. IQS 2:1-10 where this blessing is coupled with the Levitical curse on the wicked.

xlviii McKeown, "Blessings and Cursings," 85.

xlix Christopher Wright Mitchell, *The Meaning of BRK "To Bless" in the Old Testament,* SBL Dissertation Series 95 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1987), 165-67.

l Janzen, " ʾAŠRÊ in the Old Testament," 223. Mitchell describes it this way: possession of blessing [*bārûk*] is the

prerequisite for being ʾashrê (Mitchell, *The Meaning of BRK*, 103). Psalm 144:12-15 provides a good example of the two ideas overlapping.

li Hanson, "How Honorable! How Shameful!", 89.

lii Gordon, "ברך," 1:763.

liii Only in 1 Timothy (2x) is the Greek equivalent (see below) *makarios* used for God, but this is clearly the exception not the rule and likely reflects later usage. *Pace* Carson, this does not suggest that there is no distinction between ʾashrê/makarios – bārûk/eulogētos (D.A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, rev. edition, ed. Tremper Longman III & David E. Garland [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010], 161).

liv Hansen, "How Honorable! How Shameful!", 92.

lv David E. Garland, "Blessing and Woe," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 78.

lvi "תֹּם," *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. VanGederen (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 4:306-08.

lvii Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament,* reprinted with correction (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), s.v. תֹּם.

lviii Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Christian Existence in the New Testament,* vol. 1 (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968),162.

lix In their commentary on *T. 12 Patr.*, Hollander and de Jonge note the central virtue in Issachar is his character of being *haplotēs* (ἁπλότης) or "undivided." Repeatedly the phrase "to walk ἐν ἁπλότητι καρδίας/ψυχῆς (T.R. 4,1; T.S. 4,5; cf. T.I. 3,8; 4,1) means clearly: '…fear our Lord with your whole heart; and walk in simplicity according to all his law' (T.L. 13,1)." *Haplotēs* (ἁπλότης) means integrity, wholeness, whole-hearted obedience to God's commandments, the opposite of "doubleness." M. de Jonge and H. W. Hollander, *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Critical Edition of the Greek Text* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1997), 44.

lx *Bauer Encyclopedia of Biblical Theology,* vol. 2: Humility-Righteousness (London: Sheed and Ward, 1970), 663, s.v. "Perfection."

lxi Peter J. Gentry, "The Meaning of 'Holy' in the Old Testament," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 170 (2013).

lxii P. J. du Plessis, *Teleios: The Idea of Perfection in the New Testament* (Kampen, Netherlands: J. H. Kok, 1959), 100.

lxiii Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1966), 55, quoted in Jason Hood, *Imitating God in Christ: Recapturing a Biblical Pattern* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 46. See also Gordon Wenham, *Story as Torah: Reading Old Testament Narrative Ethically* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2004).

lxiv *Teleios* is the translation equivalent for *tāmîm* only 7 times, and for *shalem* another 5 times.

lxv du Plessis, *Teleios*, 97.

lxvi Id., 101.

lxvii Id., 241.

lxviii Margaret Pamment, "Singleness and Matthew's Attitude to the Torah," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 17 (1983): 73-86, here, 74. Emphasis mine.

lxix In my opinion, Matthew/Jesus has likely chosen to restate Leviticus 20:26 in terms of *teleios*-ness because

"holiness" in the Pharisees' world had come to mean primarily external matters of purity and behavior. The word "holy" was too loaded with connotations to quote Leviticus 20:26 directly. Cf. Ellen Charry's insightful comments about the tendency for Tannaitic Judaism, which at least in part reflects Second

Temple Judaism, to view purity as more an external than an internal matter, almost like a "germ theory." Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds*, 62.

lxx The use of *teleios* and its cognates is a well-recognized characteristic of James; and as Bauckham shows, wholeness/completeness is the central driving theme in the book. Richard Bauckham, *James, New Testament Readings* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

lxxi A great exploration of this idea is Al Wolters, *Creation Regained* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005).

lxxii A series of books from Christian's Library Press thoughtfully explores approaches to flourishing from different strands within the Christian tradition: Charlie Self, *Flourishing Churches and Communities: A Pentecostal Primer on Faith, Work, and Economics for Spirit-Empowered Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian's Library Press, 2013); Chad Brand, *Flourishing Faith: A Baptist Primer on Work, Economics, and Civic Stewardship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian's Library Press, 2012); David Wright, *How God Makes the World a Better Place: A Wesleyan Primer on Faith, Work, and Economic Transformation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian's Library Press, 2012); and most helpful, John Bolt, *Economic Shalom: A Reformed Primer on Faith, Work, and Human Flourishing* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian's Library Press, 2013).