

Editorial: Beatific Vision

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'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God' (Matthew 5.8; NRSV), so says Christ at the beginning of his greatest sermon, the Sermon on the Mount. But just what it is to be pure in heart and what it is to see God, he never explains. Following this beatitude, Christian writers in Scripture, and in the subsequent Christian tradition, have developed the doctrine of the beatific vision, according to which a person who is completely sanctified (is pure in heart) has immediate knowledge of God (sees him). While this doctrine has exerted considerable influence on the Christian tradition, it has received scant philosophical attention. In this issue, we begin to sketch what a philosophy of the beatific vision would look like.

The issue begins with Jonathan Hill's reflection on the nature of the life to come. He argues for a static conception of heaven, addressing in particular the boredom problem made famous by Bernard Williams. Hill maintains that, instead of being bored, the saints in heaven are serene, that is, desire to continue only as they are, beholding the beatific vision. Joshua Cockayne then examines the nature of this vision. While it can seem very individualistic, Cockayne argues that our communion with the saints can enhance our knowledge of God, whereby the vision of God in the life to come becomes a shared vision. But what does it take for a person to behold this vision of God? According to A.G. Holdier, they have to have faith; otherwise, seeing God's face is akin to experiencing hell.

Having outlined the life to come and some central elements of the beatific vision, the issue then turns to a trio of articles on the interaction between the beatific vision and human freedom. Kevin Timpe, whose previous investigations on the nature of the freedom of the saints has been highly influential, extends these investigations to the beatific vision. He argues that the saints are not only free, but more free than they were in their earthly lives, despite their inability to perform certain actions. Inspired by Timpe's previous work, done with Tim Pawl, Justin Noia argues for a version of incompatibilist freedom on which, anyone, regardless of character, is necessitated to love God in the beatific vision. Finally, Simon Kittle, who also has done much on the

nature of freedom in analytic theology, some of which is in conversation with Timpe's work, gives a taxonomy of problems of heaven poses for human freedom. He argues that there is no single solution to all of these problems, which nicely sets the stage for further work on this fundamental and perplexing topic.

The issue concludes with a discussion between Simon Francis Gaine and Hans Boersma on the relation of the beatific vision to Christology. Gaine begins by arguing that, for Thomas Aquinas, the beatific vision of the saints, and not just of those who are being brought to the vision by grace, is causally dependent on the glorified humanity of Christ. Thus, there is no 'Christological deficit' in Aquinas's account of the beatific vision. Having previously argued for this deficit, Hans Boersma responds to Gaine's article, maintaining that even if Christ's own beatific vision is the cause of the saints' vision, Christ would still not be the means and the object of the saints' vision, and so there remains a Christological deficit in Aquinas's account. Finally, Gaine replies to Boersma, concluding their conversation, at least for the moment.

This issue makes a start on exploring the philosophy of the beatific vision, of some of the philosophical problems it raises and how those problems might be solved. There is, of course, much more work to be done. But we hope that this issue gives the reader some indication of what that work might look like, and how it might proceed. The implications of such work for analytic theology are significant: the beatific vision is the end of the Christian life and faith, 'end' not in a temporal sense but rather in a teleological sense, and as such it is also the beginning.

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