

Compendium or Syntagma of Christian Theology, Book 2, Chapter 17

On the Blessedness of God

By Amandus Polanus von Polansdorf

The blessedness of God is His essential property by which He is, in His own nature, always free from all evils, abounding in all goods, knowing them most perfectly, self-sufficient, content with Himself, and does not need or desire our goods.

This property is attributed to God in 1 Timothy 1:11, where Paul says, “the sound doctrine according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God;” and in chapter 6, verse 15, the description of God is that “He is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords.” 1 John 1:[5], “we declare to you that God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all.” Psalm 16:2, my soul says to Jehovah, “You are my Lord; my good does not depend on you,” that is, my good does not benefit you, nor do you need my resources and benefits. Psalm 50, from verse 7 to 14: “Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against you: I am God, your God. I will not reprove you for your sacrifices; nor will your burnt offerings be always before me. I will not take a bull from your house, nor goats from your folds; for every wild beast is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the mountains, and the wild animals of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that fills it. Do I eat the flesh of strong bulls, or drink the blood of goats?” Haggai 2:8 states, “The silver is mine and the gold is mine, says the Lord of hosts.”

Axioms.

I. God alone is truly blessed.

Whom we call blessed in Latin, and “Seelig” in German, the Hebrews use a certain periphrasis and say his blessings, as in Psalm 1, verse 1, אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה, that is, the blessings of that man are: for no one is blessed from one or another good alone, but if someone abounds in many goods. Therefore, the more someone abounds in many goods, the more blessed he is. In Greek, blessed is called μακαρ, also μακάρι and by syncope μάκαρς, which name is either derived from the privative particle μά (for this adverb of

swearing sometimes simply means to deny, as Greek lexicons advise and examples teach) and the noun κηρ, which signifies death, that is, a heap of miseries, inconveniences, and all evils, as Phavorinus explains; or it is derived from χαιρειν, whence χαρά, joy, which etymology was proposed by some, as Aristotle relates in the seventh book of the Nicomachean Ethics, chapter eleven.

However, it is clear that only God is truly blessed: for He, by Himself and His own nature, is always free from all evils, always abounding in all goods, always perfectly aware of His own happiness, always self-sufficient and adequate, always content with Himself, needing none of our goods, and thus desires nothing beyond Himself.

II. Blessedness belongs only to intelligent nature. For one who does not know the goods he possesses is not blessed.

III. Blessedness consists in action, not in habit. Therefore, Aristotle defines blessedness as action in the first book of the Nicomachean Ethics, chapter twelve: he says that blessedness is the activity of the soul in accordance with perfect virtue; that is, an action completely and absolutely consistent with virtue.

IV. God is His own blessedness.

## USE.

Teaching 1: Since our God alone is truly blessed, it follows that He is the true God. Aristotle, in the tenth book of the Nicomachean Ethics, chapter eight, states that the gods are most fortunate and most blessed: that the gods have an entirely blessed life. But we Christians more truly affirm about Jehovah our God, that He is blessed, and indeed the only one who is truly blessed.

2. Since our God alone is truly blessed, it follows that He is also our highest good: by participating in Him, we are made blessed: He is also the author of our blessedness and our blessedness itself.

All men seek blessedness, but few know what our blessedness actually is. Our blessedness, properly speaking, is the enjoyment of God or communion with God, who is our highest good, as explained in the first book. To enjoy is to cling in love to something for its own sake. This differs from

use: for to use is to refer something that has come into use to obtaining what you love. There are different things: some are to be enjoyed, others are to be used, and still others both enjoy and use. Those things which are to be enjoyed make us blessed. By those things which are to be used, we are helped towards blessedness, so that we may reach and cling to those things that make us blessed. We who both enjoy and use are positioned between the two. The things to be enjoyed are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This world is to be used, not enjoyed, so that the invisible things of God may be seen through His visible creations. God does not enjoy us, but uses us: He does not enjoy us because otherwise, He would need some good outside Himself, which no sane person would claim.

God is also called our blessedness: because He is the object whose enjoyment makes us blessed; because He is the author and preserver of blessedness; and because in Him we are, and in Him we also enjoy Him.

Refutation. Since God is truly blessed, there is no evil in Him, nor is He the author of any sin.

Correction. Since God is truly blessed, those who do not strive to be like God are in error, so that they might partake in true blessedness and have this part of the image of God: for blessedness is part of the image of God.

Instruction. Since God alone is truly blessed, we must therefore strive to enjoy Him if we wish to partake in blessedness: the mind must be purified so we can enjoy God.

Encouragement. Since our God alone is truly blessed, He will also enable us to become perfectly blessed after this life, who have already begun to be so in this life.

Since our God alone is truly blessed, it is well for those who through bodily death reach Him, that without any hindrance, they may now enjoy Him, and remain closely united to Him.

Thus far the description of the blessedness of God; what follows is its distinction.