

3rd Edwards on some distinctions that help explain what "give glory to God" means, pt2

Such a common phrase as "give glory to God" can easily have a vagueness about it. It can be familiar as to use but unfamiliar as to meaning. So, we need to explore and re-examine some of the basic notions related to the glory of God with the help of Jonathan Edwards (*Works*, I, 94-121).

1A. We can paint this picture, first of all, with a broad brush.

The glory of God in principle means that God has made the display of his own virtue, majesty and excellence the great end of every created fact of human existence. He is himself the great objective and goal. He takes delight in himself. He is happy in himself and delights in his own worthiness, value and beauty. Thus, He delights to display His excellence. This is definitely sweeping, deep-rooted, and radical.

2A. We can now state this doctrine in more particular terms.

One way to do this is by distinguishing between ends that are ultimate and ends that are chief.

1) Ultimate versus subordinate ends

An ultimate end has as its opposite a subordinate end. The contrast between ultimate versus subordinate will make an ultimate end stand out clearly. A subordinate end is "that which is aimed at not upon its own account but wholly on account of a further end for which it is a means" (Edwards, p. 95). So, you go to the store for some cold medicine because you are sick. Perhaps, you seek some castor oil because even though it tastes terrible, it is an old stand by remedy for whatever ails you. Your goal of obtaining the castor oil is a subordinate end in that: a) it is a means to health; your health is "a further end." b) Castor oil is not desired in itself; without the health aim there would be no desire for the awful tasting stuff.

The ultimate end in our illustration of the castor oil is, of course, health. It is that which someone seeks, in what he does, for its own sake. He loves, values, and takes pleasure in it on its own account and not as a means to any further end.

There can be a chain of subordinate ends: "there may be a succession or chain of many subordinate ends, one dependent on another; before you come to any thing that the agent aims at, and seeks for its own sake" (Edwards, p. 95). I may fix a flat on my car so I can drive it. But I drive it so I can go to the store for some castor oil. This, of course, I do for my health. In the health goal the aim I have in this chain finally comes to rest since health is that which is sought for its own sake in relation to these other ends.

We can put such a chain of ends in perspective in relation to an ultimate end by consideration of Aristotle's view. He sought happiness as his ultimate end beyond which there is nothing further; all chains of subordinate ends finally come to rest in the ultimate end of happiness. Having happiness, one could lose everything else and life would still be worth living since all other things are subordinate ends. *How can we correct this outlook?*

2) Chief versus inferior ends

A chief end has as its opposite an inferior end (less valued and less sought after). A chief end is the end most valued and most sought after. A chief end may not be ultimate. Sometimes a subordinate end may be more valued and sought after than an ultimate end. Consider a man who travels a distance to visit friends and to receive a large sum of money. The money is a subordinate end and is not valued in itself since it is only a means to pleasure and power. Friendship is an ultimate end. Yet he may value obtaining the money to a higher degree than seeing his friends. His chief end is not an ultimate end.

3C. God's end is both ultimate and chief

God has one ultimate end: his own glory. His ultimate end is his chief end. His own glory is more valuable than anything else. It is more sought after than any other end. All other ends are lesser ends. His own glory is not a means to anything higher than himself. He is his own chief end for which all other things in the entire creation serve as means or subordinate ends.

What radical Christian virtue arises from knowing God's ultimate and chief end?