

# Against Divine Amorism: An Argument for Glorificationism

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**ABSTRACT:** Why did the triune God summon creation into being? What did God aim at in the creation of the world? There are two main camps in the Christian tradition in response to this question: divine amorism and divine glorificationism. Recently, Jordan Wessling has forcefully argued for the former. But it seems to me that divine glorificationism follows from doctrinal cornerstones most Christians take to be true. In this paper, I will argue that the metaphysics of creation entailed by the conjunction of divine aseity and divine perfectionism (e.g., the notion that God is the Source and Sum of all Being, Goodness, Beauty, Truth, and Value—all perfections derive from God's perfections) necessarily entails divine glorificationism. This paper will proceed as follows. First, I will outline both divine glorificationism and divine amorism, briefly sketching arguments for both positions with an emphasis on objections to glorificationism. Second, I will sketch the doctrines of divine aseity and divine perfectionism and argue that both doctrines yield a doctrine of divine ideas and a particular metaphysics of creation's relationship to God. Third, I will argue that this metaphysics necessarily entails a version of divine glorificationism that answers the concern of divine amorists. Finally, I will conclude by responding to potential objections.

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## 1. Divine Glorificationism and Divine Amorism

To understand both positions, it will be useful to outline what's at stake in this debate. Each position is a position about *God's last end* in creating the world. In a famous elucidation of kinds of ends, Jonathan Edwards distinguishes between “subordinate ends,” “ultimate ends,” and “chief ends.” For instance, suppose I go to the store to buy my wife flowers. Ultimately, I wish

my wife's happiness; hence, I seek to buy flowers *in order to* please my wife. My buying flowers is a subordinate end ordered to the ultimate end of my wife's happiness, which I do not seek for some other end. Chief ends are ultimate ends prized above all other ultimate ends. Thus, suppose I go on a journey to see a friend, but on the way I stop to see a mountain range. Both ends are, arguably, ultimate ends that take place along the journey. I am not sight-seeing in order to see my friend. But I might prize seeing my friend more than sight-seeing (Edwards 1998, 125–128).

Among such ends, it will be useful to speak of an *ordering* end—that is, a reason for which many individual ultimate ends are sought. For instance, suppose one wishes to listen to music. While turning on the radio might be a subordinate end to that ultimate end, the many songs that play are not subordinate ends to some other end of “listening to music.” Jonathan Edwards calls this an *original* ultimate end, such that other ultimate ends might be consequentially pursued on account of this original ultimate end; for example, a man who loves social relationships and pursues them for their own sake might come to pursue his family for its own sake, even though the latter ultimate end originated from the former (Schultz 2013). Nevertheless, I think it useful to speak of an ordering end instead of an original ultimate end, since I'm not sure that ultimate ends are all “consequential” upon some original end in that way. Rather, certain ultimate ends are *instantiations* of an original end and thus, even if consequential in some sense, are not consequential in the same way that sweat is the consequence of a difficult work out.<sup>1</sup> We might therefore think of ordering ends as the organizing principle behind the pursuit of the many various ultimate ends sought.

Why think God has only *one* ordering end in all that he does? This assumption is not without controversy. As Jordan Wessling notes, one might argue that God has multiple motives in creating the world (Wessling 2020, 81–82), and some philosophers have argued that this is plausible (Hess 2022). But that a perfect being must have at least one primary end becomes clear when we consider the nature of value hierarchies. Suppose Timmy is wrestling with whether to bike to his friend's house to play a video game or to walk to the library to read a book. Both playing a video game and reading a book are ends enjoyable in themselves to Timmy. When he chooses to play video games, he's doing it presumably because he values one end more than the other. In so doing, Timmy reveals that there is some fundamental “thing” he aims at, which precludes his doing the other thing. Further still, if one's ethical and value system is *coherent*—that is, there is a rationale for why one value might take precedence over another—then that rationale serves as an ordering end, precluding some actions while embracing others. For instance, suppose on the journey mentioned above, the adventurer values sight-seeing less than the visit with his friend. In this case, there will be some principle of order that explains why these values assume the particular fit they have. Thus, even if God had multiple motives for creating the world, it is reasonable to think that he had one *chief* motive (which may or may not be compatible with other inferior motives).

### 1.1 Divine Glorificationism

Divine glorificationism specifies an answer to the question of God's chief motive. According to Wessling, there are two forms: pure and impure glorificationism. Pure glorificationism argues that *all* that God does is ordered towards the pursuit of his glory, whereas impure

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<sup>1</sup> This distinction will become relevant later, but for now, consider the relationship between “redness” and an instance of “red.” It might be the case that the latter is consequential from the former. But it's not “caused” by the former so much as it exemplifies the former.

glorificationism suggests that this is God’s *primary* aim (while he might have other non-competing aims that do not have his self-glorification as his goal) (Wessling 2020, 79–82). But what is meant by the phrase “the glory of God”? Wessling (2020, 79–80) suggests that God’s self-glorification is God’s self-enjoyment in a particular manner (e.g., to say, “God creates the world for his glory” is to say that God created the world to enjoy himself in a particular manner). But this definition is slightly amiss. It leaves out a crucial component of what the glorificationist tradition has meant by “the glory of God.”

So what is “the glory of God”? In the pivotal Sinai encounter in Exodus 32–34, Moses asks to “see God’s glory.” The glory of God takes the form of both a cloud that passes Moses by *and* the proclamation of God’s name: “YHWH, YHWH is a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and full of steadfast love.” Glory is thus closely associated with the image of *light*, which reveals the splendor and character of the God of Israel (Morgan and Peterson 2010). In John’s Gospel, Jesus, who is the glory of God, is understood to be the “light of the world” (i.e., the true revelation of God’s splendor, in person, which leads humanity into eternal life) (Akala 2021, 15–26). Importantly, while glory does not *reduce* to the theme of light, it is nevertheless closely associated with light in Christian writings, as shown in St. Paul’s writings (Newman 2020). For instance, Paul speaks of the “light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor 4:6), and the “glory of the stars” (1 Cor 15:40–41). And yet, this glory often dazzles to the extent that humans cannot behold it—as when looking at the sun too long (2 Cor 3). We may define the glory of God, then, as the revelation of God’s splendor and excellence which illumines and dazzles, revealing God’s perfections in creation while pointing to the super-abundance of those perfections beyond the reach of created intellects. The glory of God is therefore the display of the excellencies of God’s nature in the created order. Thus, to say that God created the world “for his glory” is to say that God created all things to display the excellence of the divine nature.

As it happens, this seems to be what the Reformed tradition means by “the glory of God.” Thus Edwards:

The thing signified by that name, the glory of God, when spoken of as the supreme and ultimate end of all God’s works, *is the emanation and true external expression* of God’s internal glory and fullness . . . or the excellent brightness and fullness of the divinity diffused, overflowing and, as it were, enlarged; or in one word, existing *ad extra*. (1998, 242–243, emphasis mine)

Indeed, Edwards (1998, 151) argues that the “emanation itself” was aimed at by God as the last end in the creation of the world. Thus, it isn’t *quite* right to say that God created the world so that he might delight in his attributes in a new way (although this is, as Wessling argues, compatible with the glorificationist tradition and divine aseity). It is more precise to speak of the *diffusion* or *display* of God’s excellencies in the created order as “the glory of God.” For Calvin, the arrangement of the body and universe “illustrate” the glory of God (Calvin 1960, I.V.4), the world was made to *display* the glory of God (I.V.5), and serves as the visible display of the perfections of God (I.V.1). Bavinck (2004, 549) writes that the glory of God is the display of God in all of nature as a revelation of his attributes, and traces this theme through Peter Lombard, Thomas Aquinas, Tertullian, and Athenagoras.

Aquinas seems to have a similar conception in speaking of God as his own last end. For Aquinas, as for Edwards, Calvin, and Bavinck, God does not act to *gain* something he did not already possess. Rather, he acts to *diffuse* and *communicate* the divine goodness—which Aquinas equates with the divine nature (1952, I.q44.a4). That Aquinas means something similar to the

Reformed tradition, contra Oliver Crisp (2016), is evident from his treatise on predestination, in which Aquinas argues that predestination is *not* on account of foreseen merits or foreseen faith, but that “the divine goodness might be represented in things . . . in respect to those whom he predestines, by means of mercy, as sparing them; and in respect of others, whom he reprobates, by means of his justice in punishing them” (ST I.q23.a5).<sup>2</sup>

We may therefore modify the definition of glorificationism as such. To say that God acts “for his glory” is to say that God aims at the display of the divine excellencies in the created order—and it is the *display of divine excellencies itself* that God aims at in the creation of the world. Pure glorificationism will therefore specify God’s acting purely for the display and communication of the divine excellencies in all that he does, whereas impure glorificationism will refer to God’s acting *primarily* (but not solely) for this end.

## 1.2 Divine Amorism

To distinguish divine amorism from glorificationism, it will be useful to articulate what it *is not*. Divine amorists like Wessling (2020, 220–246) freely affirm that the *telos* of the created order is union with God, and thus deification. Creation was made to share in the divine excellencies as the fulfillment of its nature. Furthermore, most amorists affirm that we ought to love God above all else, and even might love God through loving other creatures to some extent. Rather, amorism is fundamentally a claim about *God’s* motivational structures for creating the world. Amorism claims that God chief end for creating the world is *love for creatures*. Oliver Crisp, a Reformed proponent of amorism, argues that God’s ultimate end is *union with creatures through Christ*; this leads Crisp to affirm universalism, since nothing can ultimately thwart the will of God. This does *not* mean that God doesn’t seek his own glory, but rather that God seeks his glory *unto* union with the creature (Crisp 2023). Thomas McCall is another good representative of this way of thinking when he says that God’s “passion for his glory is *so that* we may benefit, that we may know him in the fullness of his blessed life of holy love as Trinity.” Unlike Crisp, McCall and Wessling do *not* affirm universalism (McCall 2008).

Divine amorism, like divine glorification, comes in pure and impure forms. Pure amorism suggests that *all* of God’s actions are ordered towards the singular end of joyful union with creatures; Oliver Crisp seems to be a representative of this way of thinking. Impure amorism, on the other hand, suggests that this is God’s *primary* motivation. Both versions raise substantive critiques against divine glorificationism. First, it is argued that glorificationism entails that God cannot love or do good to a creature for her own sake only, but primarily acts for his own self-interest. Thus, God can never act in a purely benevolent way; for pure benevolence is an action where the motive for gaining for oneself simply does not factor into the action (Wessling 83–84).

Second, Wessling argues that Jonathan Edwards’s argument from *The Nature of True Virtue* based on “the action principle” fails. Edwards seems to argue that an agent should always act for what’s of highest or most ultimate value. Since God is “being-in-general,” the source and sum of all being, God is both the highest value and the Value of all values; indeed, there is no value outside of God’s being, and so God must always act for God’s sake (Edwards and Pauw 2002, 122). Wessling replies to this by observing that love casts its object as particular, not instrumental. That is, we ought not *only* love the creature for God’s sake, but ought to love the creature for her own sake as well—even if these loves are mutually informing. Such love, per Wessling, is non-comparative; thus,

<sup>2</sup> See also Long, Nutt, and White (2016).

the degree to which you love someone only because and insofar as she is made in the image of God, the less it looks as if you love her—even if it is the case that recognition of the fact that she is made in the divine image gives you reason to want to love her or sustain your love for her. That someone is made in the divine image or otherwise reflects God’s value might be a necessary condition for the kind of love you are rightly willing to direct towards her, but it is hardly an impressive love for the creature at issue to love her exclusively or primarily as a means of loving God. (2020, 96)

For instance, if Romeo loves Juliet simply because she’s more beautiful than other women or only as a means to finding a beautiful woman to love, and not because of her particular and specific beauty, then something has gone horribly wrong.

Third, it is argued that glorificationism makes God unduly egoistic. Thus, God is like the man who only ever does what’s good for others so long as it benefits himself; he “is only charitable to others when it is in God’s interest to be charitable” (Wessling 2020, 98). It’s even claimed that a God who bestows benefits on others to glorify himself cannot be said to be a paradigm of love, since perfect love is motivated either solely or primarily by the benefit of the other (Kvanvig 1993, 116).

A successful argument for glorificationism will adequately respond to the objections above. To this end, we turn to laying the doctrinal foundations for such an account.

## 2. Divine Aseity, Divine Perfectionism, and the Divine Ideas

Divine aseity, divine perfectionism, and the consequent doctrine of divine ideas will be explored here. I will define each doctrine in turn and articulate how the classic doctrine of divine ideas emerges from the first two doctrines.

### 2.1 Divine Aseity and Divine Perfection

The doctrine of divine aseity stipulates that God exists “of himself.” That is, God’s being does not derive from anything external to God, and all being outside of God is derived from God (Crisp 2020, 45–47). That is, God is the sole ultimate reality, and thus all reality outside of God is from him (Craig 2016). He alone is “being subsisting in itself,” such that all other being participates in God’s being (ST I.q3.a4). Further, God does not depend on anything outside of himself for his bliss, virtue, beatitude, or anything that he is; all that he is, he is from himself (Bavinck 2004, 151–153). For if God is the *sole* ultimate reality, existing of and from himself, then there is nothing he receives to be God from outside himself.

This affirmation has historically been paired with the doctrine of divine perfection. That is, if God is the sole ultimate reality, then there are no independently existing abstract objects, standards of goodness, beauty, truth, or being. Indeed, God is *unconditioned* by anything external to himself, but rather his own being *conditions* all other being. In other words, God is not merely good of himself, beautiful of himself and so forth; he *is* goodness, beauty, truth, and being itself. Thus, all that is good, beautiful, and excellent is so by virtue of imitating and participating in God’s own beauty, truth, and goodness (Anselm, Davies, and Evans 2008, 46–47). He is the “beauty of all things beautiful” (St. Augustine 2008, VI.1) and is the “good of all good” (St. Augustine 2012, VIII.3). He is the very condition for the goodness, beauty, and value of

all being outside of himself—himself being the standard and form of the transcendentals (Kemp 2022). These two affirmations lead very quickly to an affirmation of creation as rooted in God’s self-understanding—the broadly Latin understanding of the divine ideas.

How is this so? If God’s being is metaphysically ultimate, such that all other being is conditioned by God’s being, then the condition for the possibility of the being of creatures must be rooted in God’s being. In other words, there is no metaphysical structure to which God belongs which conditions the kinds of ideas he has of possible creatures. If we were to ask, “Why is it that the set of all possible colors is what it is, and is not filled with some other members?” we ought not seek an answer outside of God’s being in “being-in-general,” abstracted from God, if God is really the sole ultimate reality and the metaphysical ground of all other reality.<sup>3</sup> Thus, any idea God has of a creature’s goodness is an idea of a goodness that’s derivative from his own being. Any idea he has of creaturely being is ultimately a derivative from his own being.

## 2.2 The Doctrine of Divine Ideas

This observation is the ground of the classic doctrine of divine ideas. According to this doctrine, all creaturely being that exists or could exist is contained primordially in the mind of God as “ideas.” Ideas, in this sense, are the exemplars contained in the mind of God of all possible creatures he could create. More specifically, God knows all creatures by knowing himself, since every creature is a possible way God’s own divine life and being may be represented by creaturely being (Wippel 2000, 130). As Mark MacIntosh has argued, God’s knowledge of creatures is his knowledge of the way in which his own infinite existence and life as Father begetting the Son in the Spirit might be manifest, or represented (McIntosh 2021, 13–14). Indeed, the ultimate truth of even matter is a material language which communicates divine meaning—particularly, the divine life displayed in created contours (McIntosh 2021, 21–22). Thus, Aquinas argues that God, in knowing his own essence, knows all the perfections of being by knowing his own essence, such that God has a real and proper and entire knowledge of creaturely being simply by knowing himself; for the truth of creaturely being subsists in God in an intelligible mode prior to being instantiated in creation (ST I.q14.a6).

The Trinitarian location of the divine ideas has, historically, been appropriated to the eternal Word of God, the *Logos*. According to Aquinas, it is the Word himself who is expressive of not only what is in God, but what is in creatures—since creatures are expressive of the Word as likenesses to the Word, who is himself the full, complete, and eternal representation of the Father (ST. I.q34.a3). As McIntosh writes,

Because the Word is the perfect expression of the Father, and because the world is created through this same Word, the world not only expresses the Word who is its exemplar but also, in its inner structure, ceaselessly represents the Word’s own expressive or exemplary quality. (2021, 28)

To borrow an analogy from Oliver Crisp (2020, 48), it is as if the Word contains all possible creatures as a “single zipped file” with all the data necessary for those creatures contained in

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<sup>3</sup> I realize that this may raise problems for certain versions of Molinism. A full treatment of this issue would require a paper of its own, and is outside the scope of the current paper. However, it suffices to note that the way the Divine Ideas doctrine is employed in Molinism is, on this score, ruled out by the argument above. See MacGregor (2015) for more on how Molina employed this doctrine.

the Word. But (and crucially for my argument here) the “data necessary” is *constituted* by its imitation of the Word himself, “for a nature’s comparative existence is the comparative similarity of its essence to the supreme essence, in just the same way as its comparative excellence is its comparative proximity, through its natural essence, to superlative excellence” (Anselm, Davies, and Evans 2008, 46–47). It is in this sense that Maximus the Confessor posited the Logos as the pre-eminent exemplar of the *logoi* of all created things, such that the *logoi* are contained within and manifest the *Logos*, who is the summative unity and fundamental truth of all *logoi* (Tollefsen 2008, 21–63).

This yields a particular picture of God’s relationship to creation. Creaturely being, given divine aseity, divine perfection, and the divine ideas, is simply and entirely the communication of divine being. For all creaturely being is nothing other than a finite imitation of and participation in divine being. The excellence of all creaturely being is a communication of divine excellency, since there is no other excellency to be found outside of the being of God, who is the metaphysically ultimate ground of all being. And since, as Aquinas argues, God knows creaturely being *perfectly* in knowing himself, creaturely being is *all the way down*, as it were, expressive of divine being. If God, then, is the ultimate source of all reality—the form of all beauty, all being, all goodness, and all excellency whatsoever—then it is impossible to find in all reality any being, goodness, beauty, or excellency that is ultimately not an echo of God’s perfect plenitude.

But what does this have to do with divine glorificationism? Much in every way!

### 3. Glorificationism as the Implication of the Metaphysics of Aseity

Given the above, we are now in a position to articulate the central argument. Recall that glorificationism—the claim that God acts for himself as the end of all his works—is, more precisely, the claim that God acts to *display* and *communicate* the divine perfection and excellency in all that he does. In other words, it is to say that the last ordering end of all of God’s works is the display of his own perfections in a created modality. This isn’t *simply* to say that God created the world to *enjoy himself* in new ways, since many authors in this tradition held that God eternally willed to create, and thus beheld his works of creation from eternity. Rather, it is to say that God’s act of creation was aimed at the manifestation of the plenitude of divine being.

Now, why does this follow given the metaphysics which, as I’ve argued, follow divine aseity and divine perfectionism? Consider God’s selection of any end. Presumably, since the Lord is good in all that he does, he chooses any given end—whether union with a creature, the salvation of a sinner, the cross, etcetera—because he deems it a good end to choose. But *why* does God deem any good end valuable, praiseworthy, or noble? If God alone is the good by which all things are good, the beauty by which all things are beautiful, and so forth, then there can only be one answer: he deems any end good because it reflects his own goodness. For there is no other good than that which ultimately does not derive from God himself. Hence, if God seeks as an ultimate end union with a creature, he presumably seeks this end because it’s a good end to seek. But God’s goodness is that goodness by which this end is a good end; hence, God seeks this end because it’s a God-reflecting end to seek. Further still, the creature with which God desires union is nothing other than an imitation of and participation in the divine nature. Hence, when God sees creaturely being, and therein seeks

the good of creaturely being, he sees a reflection of his own goodness and being instantiated in a material mode and thereby seeks to conform that instantiation to his own life (since assimilation to God's goodness is the good of any creature). Therefore, if pure glorificationism stipulates that God displays the excellencies of his nature in creation and in all his works, and God can do no other than seek to display the divine goodness in seeking the good of the creature, nor can he go outside of himself in whatever he seeks for the creature, then pure glorificationism follows from the metaphysics of aseity.

Given this picture, how might the glorificationist reply to the amorist objections? Recall the first objection: if God does all things for his glory, then he can never act in a purely benevolent way insofar as pure benevolence acts for the good of the other without regard to self-benefit. There are several things to say here. First, recall that on glorificationism, God does not *benefit* from the creation of the world, as though he "gains" anything at all. Rather, the last end of creation is the display and emanation of God's perfections. But perhaps the amorist would want to say that pure benevolence involves acts for the good of the other without regard to the self at all. Yet, in light of the metaphysics of aseity, such a thing is not a defect in God's love, but a metaphysical consequence of his aseity and ultimacy. That is, if the truth of the creature's essence just *is*, all the way down, expressive of the Eternal Word, then there is no such thing as a "creature in itself apart from consideration of God." It is therefore *impossible* for God to act "for the good of the other without any regard to self," insofar as the "good" and "the other" are both reflections of the goodness, being, and excellency of God. When God acts for his creature, he sees that creature in the truth of their very being; hence, for God to act for the creature's sake *is just* for God to act for his own sake, insofar as the creature and their good are the manifestation of God's last end—the communication of his perfection in creation.

Second, recall that Wessling argues that love casts its object as particular. Thus, if Romeo loves Juliet *only* as an instantiation of his love for beautiful women, then his love is deficient. But given the metaphysics of aseity, this picture of God's love for creation is amiss. Wessling is absolutely *right* to insist that love casts its object as particular, and not merely as an instance of some other thing. But if love seeks to love the creature *in the truth of their particular being*, and if each particular created being just is a particular way the divine goodness and excellency are disclosed in time, then the God who seeks his own glory in all things is absolutely able to love a creature as particular. For God's love for the creature is nothing other than his love for a particular, unique, and irreplaceable instantiation of God's excellencies in a created modality—since that is the fundamental truth constituting creaturely essences. It is wrong for Romeo to love Juliet as an instantiation of his love for beautiful women in general because the latter general sort of love does not attend to Juliet in her particulars. But in God's case, his love for himself *utterly comprehends*, as argued above, every particular creaturely essence; thus, his love for himself attends to all particulars of the creature as a particular imitation of his own nature.

Third, recall that Wessling argues that glorificationism portrays God in a way analogous to a man who is only charitable when it is in his interests to be charitable. Indeed, God is said to be unduly egotistical insofar as he does not focus primarily on the benefit of others. There are several things to say here. First, a man who is only charitable when it is in his interests to be so is looking to *gain* something he does not already have. God's "interests" do not consist in gaining anything at all, but rather in giving the plenitude of his perfection and being in and to created things. Second, and more importantly, egotism is not just any focus on self, as Wessling acknowledges, but an *undue* focus on self. But seeing as there is no creaturely being, beauty, value, or excellency which is not ultimately a reflection of God's being, beauty, value, and excellency, it is *metaphysically impossible* for God's self-focus to be egotistical. For when God

focuses on the creature, seeing it in the truth of its being, he sees a particular imitation of his own goodness, excellency, and value. He cannot gaze on the proverbial sun reflected on the stream, as it were, without gazing at the sun, because both the sunlight and the stream are echoes of his excellencies; these echoes are before his eyes in their entirety, insofar as God's love always loves a creature in the truth of what that creature is: a finite participation in the divine being.

Thus, if God seeks any end because he deems it good, beautiful, valuable, or excellent, then he seeks the communication of his own nature—insofar as He is the goodness, beauty, value, and excellence through which all things are so. If he seeks the good of a creature for its own sake, he does not instrumentalize the creature as a means to some “other thing,” nor does he trivialize it as a particular, since the creature just *is* a particular display of the divine nature in creation. He is, therefore, the beginning and end of all things; for there could be no other.

#### 4. Fielding Objections and Summary of Argument

There are several objections one might raise to this picture. First, one might argue that glorificationism is ethically problematic. For if pure benevolence, in the sense defined above, is metaphysically impossible in God—who is the source and standard of all good—why think that pure benevolence is a virtue in us? That is, why should humans seek to love others without regard to themselves if God does not do so? This objection, however, does not pay adequate attention to the fact that love rejoices with truth (1 Cor 13:6). When Bobby loves Jennifer without regard to himself, his love is virtuous *not* because of what it lacks (self-regard) but because he is utterly focused on another. His love for Jennifer, when perfected, will involve loving her in the truth of her being: as a particular and unique embodiment of the excellencies of God. It is therefore virtuous for Bobby to love Jennifer without regard to himself because Jennifer is a unique and distinctive expression of God; she displays God's excellencies in ways he doesn't. The core of the virtue, then, is loving another in their particularity and in the truth of their being. When God does so, however, his love for the creature *is* his love for a particular and unique expression of his own excellencies. For all being is a reflection of his being, and all excellencies echo his own excellencies—much unlike Bobby's relation to Jennifer. Bobby's “pure benevolence” mirrors God's benevolence insofar as Bobby, like God, regards Jennifer as a particular expression of the excellencies of God.

Second, one might argue in a Barthian vein that I have abstracted from a doctrine of God's goodness apart from God's self-revelation as the one who loves in freedom. That is, instead of attending to God as the one who elects to be God-with-us, fitted to his relational nature as Father, Son, and Spirit, I've argued from a theology proper abstracted from the content of revelation to divine glorificationism (Barth 2010, 276–278). However, this objection is misguided. Rather, in incorporating the doctrine of divine ideas and its proper location in the logos, I've aimed to *integrate* considerations of God as the Good with God as triune love. Creation, on this account, is the unfolding of the Father's love for the Son in the Spirit. The Father loves all things *in* loving the Son by the Spirit, and as such all of creation is an emanation of triune love—namely, the Father's love for the Son in the Spirit. On this view, it is correct to say that the triune God created the world for fellowship with his creatures. But this fellowship, understood in a trinitarian setting, is itself an instantiation in creation of God's eternal three-in-one bliss. In other words, God's fellowship with his creatures is itself a

communication of the Father's love for the Son in the Spirit, insofar as even the idea of "fellowship-with-creatures" is itself an imitation of and participation in the divine nature.

Third, one might worry that I've inadvertently compromised the doctrines of creation ex-nihilo and divine transcendence. For I've argued that creatures just are finite imitations of the divine nature, instantiated in a created modality. This entails that God is not *wholly* other. Barthians, for instance, would argue that any continuity between God and creatures is a gift given miraculously "from above," as it were, thus ruling out the analogy of being (Hunsinger 2020). A pure commitment to creation ex-nihilo, one might argue, entails that any creaturely reality which God creates considered with respect to that creaturely reality is radically discontinuous with God's being, and only shares God's life by miraculous grace. But this picture of the world seems incoherent. For if creaturely reality *as* creaturely reality is in fact "good" in itself, and if there is no goodness outside of God's being—God is the source and standard of all good—then it will follow that a creaturely reality is good via participation in God's being and goodness. That is, if God is the source and standard of *all* good, then he is the source and standard of the goodness of creatures. Furthermore, it has been argued that creation ex-nihilo *as it has been argued in the tradition* need not be set against creation ex-deo. Rather, the point of creation ex-nihilo is simply that God did not create the world out of any pre-existing "stuff," or any being that co-existed alongside God. It is, in this sense, an entailment of divine aseity (Soars 2021).

I will end with a summary of the argument. God is utterly *a se*—he exists in himself and depends on nothing outside of himself for his own being. Furthermore, he is utterly *perfect*. That is, God is the source, sum, and standard of *all* good, beauty, and being. Given that God is *a se*, this can only mean that God does not depend on some reality outside of himself for the goodness of anything he creates. And if God is the Good, the Beautiful, and all things exist by participation in his being, then a doctrine of divine ideas follows. That is, God knows creaturely being *in its entirety* by knowing himself, since creaturely being is wholly a particular imitation of and participation in divine being. Thus, when God chooses to instantiate some created reality, he chooses to instantiate some facet or excellency of the divine being—for that is what any created reality is.

Furthermore, God presumably chooses to create the world for *some* end. And God, because he is good, chooses that end because he deems it a good end to choose. But if there is no goodness outside of God's being, then the goodness through which that end is good is God's own goodness. In other words, any end that God seeks—which he seeks on account of its being a good end to seek—is good precisely because it reflects God's goodness and being, for there just is no other goodness outside of God's being. If he aims at "union with a creature," then he aims at some reflection of himself, for the creational reality of "union with a creature" is itself a finite participation in and imitation of the divine being per the argument above.

Pure glorificationism, then, follows. For pure glorificationism, as argued above, stipulates that God aimed at the communication or display (or emanation) of the divine excellencies and nature in the creation of the world. Given that any creaturely reality just is a communication of the divine nature, God's love for the creature just is a mode of God's love for God. God seeks the good of the creature for its own sake, and this is identical to God's seeking a communication of the divine nature since the "good of the creature" and the creature itself are nothing other than particular communications of the divine nature. God's glory is therefore the glory of the Father who loves all created things in his love for the Son in the Spirit, such that all of creation is, in its innermost being, a symphony of praise to the eternal three-in-one love.

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