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How to cite

SEALS, Zachary Willam. The beatific vision in early modern Lutheranism : polemics between Roman Catholicism, Calvinism, and Lutheranism. In: Early modern debates on the beatific vision : Byzantine Revival and Latin reactions. Louvain-la-Neuve. Leuven : Peeters, 2025.

This publication URL: <https://archive-ouverte.unige.ch/unige:184961>

The Beatific Vision in Early Modern Lutheranism: Polemics Between Roman Catholicism, Calvinism, and Lutheranism

While historians of theology have long examined the doctrine of the beatific vision within Roman Catholicism, and recently begun to do so within the Reformed tradition, its development within Lutheran orthodoxy remains comparatively underexplored. This paper conducts a systematic analysis of the development of teaching on the beatific vision within early modern Lutheranism focusing on the polemical exchanges with both Roman Catholic and Calvinist perspectives. By situating these Lutheran treatments of the beatific vision within their historical and doctrinal contexts, this study seeks to illuminate the principal theological challenges they faced and delineate more precisely where the lines of agreement and disagreement lie with other Christian traditions.

Hans Boersma's monumental work *Seeing God: The Beatific Vision in Christian Tradition* surveyed the doctrine throughout history in its Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Reformed variations, yet curiously neglected to mention any Lutheran theologians.¹ Recent expositions of Lutheran theology can appear to justify this absence as the beatific vision is regularly left overlooked or underdeveloped.² A review of the twentieth and nineteenth century reveals only a modest improvement.³ Isaak Dorner's (1809-1884) celebrated exposition of Lutheran dogmatics in *System der christlichen Glaubenslehre* (1880) briefly notes the scriptural metaphor of seeing God, but passes over developing this theme or engaging with the historic debates.⁴ Although Conrad Lindberg's (1852-1930) widely used *Christian Dogmatics* (1922) sought to summarize earlier scholastic Lutherans on eternal life, the work focused on the diversity of heavenly rewards rather than whether there is a vision of the divine essence or a

¹ Boersma, H., *Seeing God: The Beatific Vision in Christian Tradition*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018).

² Kolb, R., *The Christian Faith: A Lutheran Exposition*, (St Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1993) omits treatment of the beatific vision entirely and Lange, L., *God So Loved the World: A Study of Christian Doctrine*, (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2005) only briefly mentions it as the grounds for the saints' perfection in heaven without addressing any of the traditional disputes. Jordan Cooper's work on deification in Lutheranism, *Christification: A Lutheran Approach to Theosis*, (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2014) also does not address the beatific vision. A welcome exception to this trend is the work of Stephenson, J., *Eschatology* (Fort Wayne: Luther Academy, 1993). Samuel Parkinson also briefly summarizes Johann Gerhards teaching on the beatific vision in *The Gaze Upon God: The Beatific Vision in Doctrine, Tradition, and Practice*, (Downers Grove: IVP, 2024), 111-115.

³ Stump, J., *The Christian Faith: A System of Christian Dogmatics*, (New York: Macmillan, 1932), 426, mentions the beatific vision in passing with no consideration of the traditional disputes. Schlink, E., *Theology of the Lutheran Confession*, trans. Paul Koehnke and Herbert Bouman, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1961), makes no comments on the beatific vision.

⁴ Dorner, I., *A System of Christian Doctrine*, vol 4, transl. A. Cave and J. Banks, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1890), 428-434.

bodily vision of God.⁵ Wolfhart Pannenberg (1928-2014) comments briefly on the Roman endorsement of a vision of the divine essence in *Benedictus Deus* (1336), and affirms the qualitative difference between the knowledge of God by present faith and the deeper knowledge had in the full and final vision of God, but says nothing on other traditionally disputed points concerning the doctrine.⁶ Robert Jenson (1930-2017) recognized differences between Palamas and Thomas regarding the inaccessibility of the divine essence and expressed preference for Thomas' view that the divine essence will be seen by the saints.⁷ Yet, Jenson departed heavily from Thomas in insisting that *hearing* is the superior paradigm for knowing rather than seeing as has been held broadly by the Christian tradition.⁸ As Boersma noted, Lutheran theologian Allen Jorgenson even claims "if medieval thinkers were enamored with a beatific vision, Luther proposed a beatific hearing in its stead."⁹ In this regard, Lutheran theologian Mark Mattes, in a review of Boersma's work, has astutely suggested Boersma could have consulted the orthodox Lutheran tradition to find sympathetic voices for his own classical view as evidenced in the work of Johann Gerhard (1582-1637) and David Hollatz (1638-1714).¹⁰ In another review of Boersma's work, the Roman Catholic theologian Michael Root has suggested Lutheran orthodoxy, as exemplified in Johann Gerhard, Johann Baier (1647-1695), Johann Quenstedt (1617-1688) and David Hollatz, appear to largely follow Aquinas' account of the beatific vision whereas the Reformed tradition contains more internal variety.¹¹ Yet these claims require considerable qualification. It is true these Lutheran theologians affirmed a vision of the divine essence via the *lumen gloriae* (light of glory), but such a position was hardly distinctive of Thomism or a point of significant contrast with the Reformed. That the object of the beatific vision is the divine essence was enshrined in *Benedictus Deus* and the Council of Vienne (1312) had already established the necessity of affirming the light of glory for all Roman Catholic theologians.¹² For these early modern Lutheran theologians to affirm the beatific vision of the divine essence via the *lumen gloriae* then indicates no particular affinity to Thomism. On the contrary, as will be seen below, many of these Lutheran theologians denied the characteristically Thomist view of the primacy of the intellect for beatitude and even affirmed a vision of the

⁵ Lindberg, C., *Christian Dogmatics and Notes on the History of Dogma*, transl. C. Hoffsten, (Rock Island: Augustana Book Concern, 1922), 574-575.

⁶ Pannenberg, W., *Systematic Theology*, transl. G. Bromiley, Vol 3, (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 138, 577.

⁷ Jenson, R., *Systematic Theology: The Works of God*, Vol 2, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 345.

⁸ *Ibid.*,

⁹ Jorgenson, A., «Martin Luther on Preaching Christ Present », *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 16 (2014), 46, cited in Boersma, *Seeing God*, 27.

¹⁰ Mattes, M., «Seeing God: The Beatific Vision in Christian Tradition by Hans Boersma (review)», *Lutheran Quarterly*, 33 (2019), 364-366.

¹¹ Root, M., «The Christological Character of the Beatific Vision: Hans Boersma's *Seeing God*», *The Thomist*, 84 (2020), 130.

¹² Lauge, O., «Parisian Discussions Of The Beatific Vision After The Council Of Vienne: Thomas Wylton, Sibert Of Beka, Peter Auriol, And Raymundus Bequini», in Brown, S., Dewender, T., Kobusch, T., (eds), *Philosophical Debates at Paris in the Early Fourteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 180.

divine essence via glorified bodily eyes; a position Thomas firmly rejected.¹³ Furthermore, when a number of twentieth century Lutheran dogmatics have treated the beatific vision, even briefly, they have emphasized the stream of the Lutheran tradition which has affirmed a bodily vision of the divine essence without noting those who have disagreed.¹⁴ With regards to how the Lutherans relate to the Reformed, though there were internal disputes amongst the Reformed regarding whether the divine essence itself was seen, many leading influential Reformed theologians agreed with the Lutherans and the late medieval Latin consensus regarding the sight of the divine essence found in *Benedictus Deus*.¹⁵ Not only so, significant Lutherans such as Gerhard were aware of these internal disagreements and did not see this point as a fundamental difference between Calvinists and the Lutheran tradition.¹⁶ In light of the above, I suggest there is considerable neglect and confusion over exactly where the historic lines of disagreement lie between the Roman Catholic, Reformed, and Lutheran understanding of the *visio dei*.

Here I seek to survey the period of early modern Lutheranism in a more indepth fashion which reveals its internal disputes regarding the beatific vision as well as how these theologians relate to their Roman Catholic and Reformed counterparts. I contend, although there is no single monolithic “Lutheran” position on the *visio dei*, a family of distinctive Lutheran emphasises on prolegomenal and Christological concerns often are significant in shaping their position on the beatific vision.

1. Martin Luther and the beginnings of Early Modern Lutheranism (1577-1610)¹⁷

A great deal of scholarship has been devoted to the question of Luther's relationship to mysticism and deification, but considerably less so on his specific references to the beatific vision.¹⁸ Nevertheless, throughout his writings references can be found on the theme of “seeing

¹³ ST.I.Q12.A3.

¹⁴ Jacobs, H., *A Summary of the Christian Faith*, (Philadelphia: General Council Publication House, 1905), 545. Pieper, F., *Christian Dogmatics*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), 551, Mueller, J., *Christian Dogmatics*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1934), 641.

¹⁵ Seals, Z., «The Beatific Vision in the Synopsis Purioris: Its Medieval Context», *Reformed Theological Review*, 82 (2023), 1–24.

¹⁶ As will be demonstrated below.

¹⁷ Here I follow the chronology of Robert Kolb in *Lutheran Ecclesiastical Culture, 1550-1675*, (Brill: Leiden, 2008), 11-12. Following other scholars, Kolb marks out Early Orthodoxy (1577-1610) from “High Orthodoxy” which begins with Gerhard and ends with the death of Calov and Quenstedt (1610-1688). Kolb notes Lutheran Orthodoxy has waned by 1750 so I will term this final period “Late Orthodoxy” and conclude this survey with David Hollatz (1648-1713). For a different chronology see, Preus, R., *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1970), 45, who has divided early modern Lutheran Orthodoxy into a “Golden Age” (1577-1620), “High Orthodoxy” (1620-1648) and “Silver Age” (1648-1713). For Preus, Lutheran Orthodoxy begins with the Formula of Concord and ends with the death of David Hollatz.

¹⁸ For Luther and mysticism in Pseudo Dionysius see Rorem, P., *The Dionysian Mystical Theology*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 101-119. See also, Rittgers, R., «Martin Luther», in ed. Tiggers, R. -Evener, V. (eds), *Protestants and Mysticism in Reformation Europe*, (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 34-55. Many work's which address Luther's eschatology neglect treating the beatific vision entirely: Strohl, J., «Luther's Eschatology» in Kolb, R. - Dingel, I. - Batka, L. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 353-362. Kramm, H., *The Theology of Martin Luther*, (London: James Clarke & Co., 1947), 102-104. Lohse, B., *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011). Asendorf, U., *Eschatologie bei Luther*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967). Vogel, W., «The

God” in expected places. Already in his early Wartburg exile (1521-1522) sermon on John 1:14 Luther was affirming that after death the believer will see Christ not only in his “humanity and in faith, but we shall see the pure godhead itself openly.”¹⁹ Notably, in a 1522 sermon preached in Wittenberg Luther used 1 Cor 13:12 to illustrate the same point as James 2:14-22: “for a faith without love is not enough - rather it is not faith at all, but a counterfeit of faith, just as a face seen in mirror is not a real face, but merely the reflection of a face.”²⁰ Luther’s appreciation of this mystical theme however did not lead him to stress assimilation into the divine in an Eckhartian way which undermined the saint’s perpetual creaturely status. Beholding God and being thereby transformed is always done in a creaturely mode. Luther’s 1527 commentary on 1 John 3:2 states: “We shall be like Him but not identical with Him as Pythagoras thought. For God is infinite, but we are finite creatures....God is immortal and blessed. Therefore we, too, shall enjoy everlasting bliss, not as it is in God but the bliss that is suitable for us.”²¹ This bliss suitable for creatures features not only a vision of God himself but also the glories radiating from the Word in which “we shall see and behold it present in all its radiance before our own eyes with ineffable, eternal joy.”²² This visible glory and experience of God will be man’s supreme consolation; a description Luther lays out more fully in his 1533 1 Corinthians commentary. When God reveals himself “we will be satisfied in body and soul and will no longer stand in need of so many things as we now do here on earth.”²³ Food, money, health, wealth, and everything acquired which brings joy cannot compare to how “the sight of Him will afford more

Eschatological Theology of Martin Luther. Part I: Luther’s Basic Concepts», *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 24 (1986), 249-264.

¹⁹ Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works* (Saint Louis and Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958–1986), hereafter LW, vol 52, 72.

Martin Luther, *Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe [Schriften]*, 73 vols. (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883–2009), hereafter WA. WA 10 I 1, 222. c22. “Nach diszem leben werden wyr nitt durch die menscheyt unnd ym glawben, szondernn offentlich an yhr selb die bloz gottheyt sehen.”

²⁰ LW, vol 51, 71. WA 10III, 4, c10. “Dann der glaub on die liebe ist nit gnugsam, ja ist nit ein glaub, sonder ein schein des glaubens, wie ein angesicht im spiegel gesehen ist nicht ein warhafftigs angesicht, sondern nür ein scheyn des angesichts.”

²¹ LW, vol 30, 268. WA, 20, 698, c.29-34, “*Scimus autem, quoniam, cum apparuerit, similes ei erimus.*’ *Similes erimus, non iidem, ut Pythagoras censebat. Nam Deus est infinitus, nos creaturae finitae. Nunquam autem creatura evadet creator. Attamen similes ei erimus. Deus est vita, igitur et nos vivemus. Deus est iustus, ergo et nos replebimur iustitia. Deus est immortalis et beatus, ergo et nos beatitudine aeterna fruemur, non qualis in Deo est, sed quae nobis competit.*”

²² LW, vol 69, 114. WA, 28, 195, c.22–25. “Dort aber wird ein ander liecht scheinen, da wirs nicht mehr gleuben noch predigen und im wort furtragen, sondern auff aller helleste und gegenwertig fur augen sehen und anschawen werden mit unaussprechlichen ewigen freuden.” This passage is cited by Johann Gerhard as indicative that Luther affirms the teaching that the object of the beatific vision is the divine essence.

²³ LW, vol 28, 142. WA, 36, 593, c22-25. “Ein iglicher wird an Gott selbs alles haben, was er izt an allen dingen hat, das, wenn er sich offenbaret, werden wir alle gnug haben an seel und leib und nicht mehr so mancherley dürfen, wie wir izt auff erden müssen haben,”

life, joy, and delight than all creatures are able to accord...²⁴ Even so, ultimately the heavenly bliss of the beatific vision is that “which no human tongue can express nor thought attain.”²⁵

For Luther it is the centrality of faith that resolves the paradox scripture generates when it appears to affirm both mankind's inability to see God and ultimate blessedness in the beatific vision. Luther's 1528 commentary on 1 Timothy 6:16 makes this clear. The reason God is said to dwell in unapproachable light is to demonstrate the inability of natural human power to understand his ways. “That takes faith. There you must let speculation go...Man cannot see God, nor can he ever see God. Man does not see God. Therefore he does not know God; he cannot speak about Him.”²⁶ This same teaching is expressed even more clearly in his 1537 sermon on John 1:18. The words “no one has ever seen God” exclude all those who seek God and try to find Him with their reason.²⁷ In this sermon Luther makes clear the connection between reason and the knowledge of God through the law while faith is the knowledge of God which “emerges from the Gospel.”²⁸ Thus, to see God in this life is to know the Gospel. It is to lay hold of Christ through faith. Luther goes so far as to say “the knowledge of the Gospel is the face of God, the message that we have grace and truth through the death of Christ.”²⁹ This is why Jesus can teach “blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.” (Matt 5:8) How can one be pure in heart? For Luther, “purity is watching and pondering what God says and replacing its own ideas with the Word of God.”³⁰ This sight of the Word of God is fundamentally the movement of a heart by faith: “if you have a true faith that Christ is your Savior, then you see immediately that you have a gracious God...That is exactly what it means “to see God,” not with your physical eyes, with which no one can see Him in this life, but with faith which sees His fatherly friendly heart...But in Scriptural language “to see His face” means to recognize Him correctly as a gracious and faithful Father, on whom you can depend for every good thing.”³¹ Thus faith itself is a type of vision. A knowledge of not only who God is but how he is disposed towards his children. It is worth noting that Luther qualifies that the beatific vision of God cannot be seen with physical

²⁴ LW, vol 28, 143. WA, 36, 595, c.20-21. “*Das wird Gott selbs thun, als der allein alles sol inn allen sein, und sein anblick mehr leben, freud und lust geben, denn alle Creaturn vermögen.*”

²⁵ LW, vol 69, 115. WA, 28, 196, c.5-6. “*Ergo ista visio est vivere aeterne in omni gaudio et frolichkeit, quae unausprechlich, da ben las ichs bleiben.*”

²⁶ LW, vol 28, 378. WA, 26, 116, c.5-9. “*Da gehort gleuben zu. Ibi las speculation faren, crede et securus eris...Deum non potest homo videre nec unquam potest. Homo non videt deum, ergo ignorat, non potest loqui de eo.*”

²⁷ LW, vol 22, 150. WA, 46, 667, c.5-6. “*Denn das wörtlin ‘niemand’ schleust alle die aus, so nach der vernunft nach Gott fragen und in finden wollen.*”

²⁸ LW, vol 22, 152. WA, 46, 669, c.1-2. “*Das ander erkenntnis Gottes geschiet aus dem Evangelio*”

²⁹ LW, vol 22, 158. WA, 46, 673, c.19-21. “*Solche erkenntnis des Evangelii ist das Angesicht Gottes, das wir durch den tod Christi gnade und wahrheit haben.*”

³⁰ LW, vol 21, 34. WA, 32, 325, c.33-34. “*Aber das heisst ein rein herz, das darauff fihet und denket was Gott sagt, und an stat seiner eigen gedanken Gottes wort sezet*”

³¹ LW, vol 21, 37. WA, 32, Wenn du einen rechten glauben hast, das Christus dein heiland sey so sihestu slugs, das du einen gnedigen Gott habast...Das heisst recht Gott schawen, nicht mit leiblichen augen (damit jn niemand kan sehen jinn diesem leben), sondern mit dem glawben, der sein veterlich freundlich herz sihet...Sein angesicht aber sehen, wie die schrifft redet, heisst in recht erkennen als einen gnedigen fromen vater, zu dem ma sich alles guts versehen darff,

eyes “in this life” which appears to leave open its possibility after the resurrection. As will be seen, many in the ensuing period of early modern Lutheranism would defend this possibility fervently.

One point where the Lutherans tended not to follow Luther however, regards the state of the soul immediately after death. Althaus explains, “Luther generally understands the condition between death and the resurrection as a deep and dreamless sleep without consciousness and feeling.”³² Conversely, as Martin Chemnitz (1522-1586) points out, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession explicitly affirms “that the saints in heaven pray for the church in general.”³³ This point of contrast must not be overstated as Luther was also keen to stress “that God’s actions with regard to the dead surpass all our understanding and imagination.”³⁴ Nevertheless, both Luther and Calvin became known for emphasizing the full enjoyment of God would not be realized until the final resurrection of the body. While Calvin was arguably more clear regarding the state of the intermediate souls in the presence of God, his emphasis, like Luther, was on the resurrection for the full beatific vision of God.³⁵

With the death of Luther, Melancthon’s approach to theological instruction became formative for early modern Lutherans. Although Melancthon himself says very little about the beatific vision in his various editions of the *Loci Communes*, it became common to treat the question “*quid est vita aeterna?*” which results in a statement on the beatific vision. For example, although Nicholas Selnecker (1530-1592), one of Melancthon’s early students in Wittenberg, fails to attend to the beatific vision in any great detail in the *Institutiones Christianae Religionis* (1573), it does arise when he treats the end of man and the definition of eternal life. While Selnecker vigorously contends man’s beatitude is found in the restoration of God’s glorious image without mentioning the metaphor of sight, his definition of eternal life is the “*conspectus Dei*”.³⁶ Jakob Heerbrand (1521-1600), another early student of Luther and Melancthon in Wittenberg, in a simple but very influential catechetical work *Compendium Theologiae* (1575) also defines eternal life as a divine work where God restores the lost image so that one could see Him face to face.³⁷ Elsewhere Heerbrand will define mankind’s ultimate beatitude as the perfect *cognitio Dei* which is found “as the Fathers say” in the *visio Dei*.³⁸ While Selnecker and Heerbrand are keen to recognize the patristic emphasis on the sight of God

³² Althaus, P., *The Theology of Martin Luther*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 414.

³³ Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, Part III, trans. Fred Kramer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007), 367.

³⁴ Kramm, H., *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 104.

³⁵ For an explanation of Calvin’s view as well as the respective Roman Catholic criticisms see Tyra, S., “*Neither the Spirit without the Flesh*”: *John Calvin’s Doctrine of the Beatific Vision*, (London: T&T Clark, 2024).

³⁶ Nicholas Selnecker, *Institutio Christianae Religionis*, vol 3, (Frankfurt: 1579), 309. For the end of man see Vol 1, 42-44.

³⁷ Jakob Heerbrand, *Compendium Theologiae*, (Tubingen: Gruppenbachius, 1575), 577, “*Est opus divinum, quo Deus resuscitatis restituet suam imaginem amissam perfecte, ac in suo regno coelesti ornabit beatitudine, justitia, gloria: ut videant ipsum a facie ad faciem, similesq: ei sint, et perpetuo ab ipso, qui erit omnia in omnibus, sustententur, ac fruuntur ibi laetitia inenarrabili, ei obtemperent, & in perpetuum celebrent.*”

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 583. “*Erit autem summa beatitudo & felicitas, ac vita ipsa aeterna, cognitio Dei perfecta: & ut Patres locuti sunt, visio Dei, qui erit omnia in omnibus.*”

there is a brevity and caution to enter into any of the more traditionally disputed scholastic points.

Nevertheless, focused attention to the subject can be found in the “alterum Philippum” of early modern Lutherans, David Chytraeus (1530-1600).³⁹ After attending the University of Tübingen, at just fourteen years old he also went to Wittenberg to continue his studies in theology under Philip Melancthon whom he lived with as well. While there Chytraeus had the opportunity to listen to Luther lecture on Genesis and preach at the Stadtkirche.⁴⁰ Although he had to leave Wittenberg during the Schmalkaldic War, he would later return to finish his studies and lecture on Melancthon's *Loci* until he began his professorship at the University of Rostock in 1551 where he taught until his death. Although methodologically Chytraeus recognized his synthesis of humanism and scholasticism was more indebted to Melancthon than Luther, he was at pains to stress the apparent differences between them were only superficial. Cook documents well how Chytraeus sought to defend the ultimate doctrinal harmony between the two foundational figures despite their disagreement in expression.⁴¹ Furthermore, along with Selnecker and Heerbrand, Chytraeus was one of the principal formulators of the Formula of Concord (1577). In light of these considerations, Chytraeus should be consulted as the first major figure in early modern Lutheranism to treat the beatific vision in any level of depth.⁴²

The chief text to consider for the present project is Chytraeus' work *De morte et vita aeterna* (1581) which Jungkuntz notes some have called “the first Lutheran eschatology.”⁴³ In this work, after a lengthy section setting forth biblical proofs for blessed eternal life in heaven, Chytraeus presents an extended section dedicated to the definition of eternal life which is the vision of God and union with God.⁴⁴ Chytraeus is clear the ultimate telos of human nature is beatitude, but sin broke this possibility and Christ has come in the incarnation to raise man back unto God.⁴⁵ For Chytraeus there is a categorical distinction between the faith which grants the friend of God in this life knowledge of God and the future consummate blessed vision of God. Faith in the present life is the beginning of beatitude as it kindles the heart to piety, yet it is

³⁹ For the only modern dedicated biography of Chytraeus see Krabbe, O., *David Chyträus* (Rostock: Stiller'sche Hofbuchhandlung, 1870). For an interesting comparison between Chytraeus and Selnecker see Irena Backus, *Reformation Readings of the Apocalypse: Geneva, Zurich and Wittenburg*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 113-129.

⁴⁰ Jungkuntz, T., *Formulators of the Formula of Concord: Four Architects of Lutheran Unity*, (St Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1977), 70.

⁴¹ Cook, T., *Ad Gloriam Dei: Humanism and Theology in David Chytraeus' Regulae Studiorum*, Ph.D. diss., Concordia Seminary, 2017, 65.

⁴² Martin Chemnitz's *Examination of the Council of Trent* (1565-1573) and *Loci Theologici* (1591) contain remarkably sparing references to the beatific vision.

⁴³ Jungkuntz, T., *Formulators of the Formula of Concord*, 84.

⁴⁴ David Chytraeus, *De Morte et Vita Aeterna*, (Rostock: 1590), 160. “*Definitio vitae aeternae, quae est visio dei & unio cum deo*”

⁴⁵ Chytraeus, *De Morte et Vita Aeterna*, *ibid.*, “*Ita enim condita est initio natura humana, ut imago similis et conformis Deo Creatori, et domicilium ac templum Dei esset, in quo acquiescens et habitans Deus, tanquam sol verae virtutis, sapientiae et iustitiae radios spargeret...*”.

imperfect as it does not grant a real comprehension of God.⁴⁶ Like true faith, the blessed vision of God consists not merely in a bare understanding of God, but a true affection in the will and heart as well.⁴⁷ Here Chytraeus appears to reflect an awareness of the dispute between Thomists and Scotists who disagreed on the formality of beatitude, yet he does not mention the dispute explicitly. Juan de Rada OFM (†1608) describes the debate well in his four volume work *Controversiae theologicae inter S. Thomam et Scotum* (1599-1620). Amongst a variety of disagreements concerning the nature of beatitude between the Thomists and Scotists one key debate was whether beatitude per se consists in an operation of the intellect or will.⁴⁸ Thomists affirmed the former and the Scotists the latter. A related dispute is whether the intellect is a nobler faculty than the will which the Thomists affirmed and the Scotists denied.⁴⁹ Here we recall Mattes suggestion Boersma could have consulted the Lutheran Orthodox to find precedent for his own views. One such position Boersma defends is a refusal to prioritize either an intellectualist or voluntarist perspective “when it comes to the mind’s ecstatic entry into the life of God.”⁵⁰ Reacting to Bonaventure, for Boersma to even attempt an answer to this question risks undermining that “the *entire* person - both the intellect *and* the affections - experiences the deifying vision of God by the cruciform identification with Christ of which Bonaventure speaks.”⁵¹ This third way which refuses to identify a priority between the intellect and will was a route often taken amongst the Reformed, albeit not universally so.⁵² Chytraeus also explicitly rejected the utility of prioritizing either the intellect or will in beatitude.⁵³

Yet, this does not indicate a total disregard for the debates found in medieval scholasticism. The Greek theological tradition, stretching back to the fifth century and epitomized in John of Damascus, was well known for emphasizing the unknowability of the

⁴⁶ Ibid., 165, “*In futuro autem saeculo erit conspectus seu Visio Dei, quem faventem et propicium, mentes beatae coram aspicientes, ardenti Dei amore et laetitia inenarrabili accenduntur: et Deus ipse in beatis habitans et fulgens, et omnia in omnibus existens, omnem suam bonitatem, sapientiam, lucem, iustitiam, vitam, et laetitiam in eos diffundet...*”.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 145, “*Optimae igitur & supremae facultatis in homine rationalis, optima & suprema actio, versans circa supremum et nobilissimum obiectum, videlicet Deum, finis eius & vita hominis aeterna est, videlicet agnitio Dei & redemptoris nostri Iesu Christi nobis placati & propicij, & sua luce, sapientia, iusticia, vita & laetitia aeterna nos implentis, quam dilectio Dei ardes, & leticia in Deo adquiescens, eumq; grata mente & voce celebrans, perpetuo comitatur. Sicut usitatissime verba Notitiae & sensum in lingua Ebrae, non solum notione in mente vel sensu, sed etiam affectus & effectus sequentes simul complectuntur.*”

⁴⁸ Juan de Rada, *Controversiae theologicae inter S. Thomam, et Scotum; super quatuor sententiarum libros*, vol 4, (Coloniae Agrippinae: Apud Ioannem Crithium), 1618, 338. “*Utrum beatitudo per se consistat in operatione intellectus vel voluntatis*”

⁴⁹ Juan de Rada, *Controversiae theologicae inter S. Thomam, et Scotum*, 354. “*An intellectus sit nobilior potentia quam voluntas*”

⁵⁰ Boersma, H., *Seeing God*, 208.

⁵¹ Ibid., 217.

⁵² Schendel, J., «The Reformed Orthodox and the Visio Dei», *Reformed Theological Review*, 77 (2018), 41. Two notable exceptions here, amongst others, being Antonius Waelaues (1573-1639) who defended the priority of the intellect and Gisbertus Voetius (1589-1676) who defended the priority of the will for beatitude.

⁵³ Chytraeus, D., *De Morte et Vita Aeterna*, 175. “*An beatitudo in solo intellectu, vel voluntate, & an in speculativo vel practico intellectu operatione consistat? Nihil opus fit.*”

divine essence, even into blessed eternity.⁵⁴ When the Greek delegation at the Council of Florence (1431-1449) expressed concern over the doctrines of purgatory and the immediate disembodied beatific vision of the saints, Pope Eugenius IV included the affirmation that the departed souls of the saints in heaven clearly behold God as he is in *Laetentur Caeli* (1439) which the Greek church subsequently rejected. In this respect, Chytraeus firmly favors the consensus of the Latin west that the object of the beatific vision is the divine essence, as was also found in Luther.⁵⁵ He even uses two of the exact words found in *Benedictus Deus* and speaks of a knowledge that will be “*intuitiva*” and “*clara*” found in beholding the divine essence in the face of God.⁵⁶

Chytraeus is not concerned with the question of the light of glory (*lumen gloriae*), but his survey of the biblical texts forces him to treat the question whether the eyes of the body will see God (Job 19:26), at which point he differs sharply with the “*scholastici thomistae*”.⁵⁷ While Chytraeus will also affirm the sight of Christ's glorified human face in the heavenly vision, he takes no discomfort in disagreeing with the Thomists that the scriptures attest to a bodily sight of the divine essence via glorified eyes. This is not a point of focus however, as the heart of this biblical teaching is to console the believer that their archetypal good, righteousness, and delight will be received in their hearts by the consummate *visio dei*.⁵⁸

Chytraeus' treatment of eternal life in this work would become incorporated into the *Loci* commentarial tradition, often with his own language being repeated. Matthias Hafenreffer (1561-1619), the prominent Tübingen professor and eventual chancellor, followed Chytraeus when defining eternal life as eternal beatitude and felicity before God.⁵⁹ When defining more specifically what it means to have beatitude before God, Hafenreffer uses Chytraeus' exact language of having a vision and knowledge of the divine essence and will.⁶⁰ Hafenreffer also echoes Selneckers earlier stress that the purpose of the beatific vision is to perfectly repair the loss of knowledge of God from the fall of Adam.⁶¹ While he does take care to note the universal experience of the beatific vision by the heavenly saints does not undermine a variety of heavenly

⁵⁴ Lossky, V., *The Vision of God*, transl. Asheleigh Moorhouse, (London: The Faith Press, 1963), 113. Geréby, G., «A supremely idle question? Issues of the beatific vision debate between 1331-1336» *Przegląd Tomistyczny* XXIV (2018): 509.

⁵⁵ Chytraeus, D., *De morte et Vita Aeterna*, 167-168. “...in vitae aeternae descriptione, primus hic 'fons & origo, & velut mater affectuum', & actionum vitae beatae omnium, scilicet, Visio & Cognitio essentiae & voluntatis Dei, & Dominus noster Iesus Christus erga nos clementissimae & plus quam paternae, velut radix praeceptum nominatur, ex qua caeterarum beatitudinis partium rami & fructus enascuntur.”

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 173.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 187-188. “Et si autem Scholastici Thomistae negant in caelis Deum corporalibus oculis a beatis cerni: de modo visionis beatificae, qua intellectus humanus Deum per essentiam videt, cum videlicet a Deo, qui est actus purus, seu forma tantum, intellectus luce divina velut informatus, & unum cum aspectus (ut lux aeris unita) per divinam illam lucem, seu essentiam, videre ipsam divinam essentiam poterit: varie et intricate disputant; tamen simplicissime in verbis loqui, sicut sonant, acquiescamus.”

⁵⁸ Chytraeus, D., *De Morte et Vita Aeterna*, 189.

⁵⁹ Hafenreffer, M., *Loci Theologici*, (Tübingen: Philipp Gruppenbach, 1603), 832.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 836. “Quia de facie ad faciem illum videbunt, tam essentiam, quam voluntatem ipsius perfecte cognoscendo & summo cum desiderio & voluptate exequendo.”

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 837.

degrees of glory for the blessed, Hafenreffer does not treat other disputes such as whether there is a bodily sight of the divine essence. These positions would be largely reproduced by Leonhard Hutter (1563-1616), a defender of Lutheranism against the Reformed theologian David Pareus (1548-1622) and professor of theology at Wittenberg. In his widely read, *Compendium Locorum Theologicorum* (1610), he says the same as Hafenreffer and defines eternal life as beatitude which is having a face to face vision of God's essence and perfect knowledge of his will.⁶² Hutter's work would become particularly significant, as shall be seen, for it became a standard reference work for later Lutheran commentators.

Before continuing, it should be noted here Lutheran "Orthodoxy" did not consist merely of theologians writing in the scholastic style of academic instruction. Kolb's recent assessment of historical studies on Lutheranism points out many scholars have pitted "orthodoxy" against "pietism" to such an extent that both have become obscured.⁶³ Following Kolb, I contend any examination of early modern Lutheran teaching should consult devotional works of piety as well as the scholastic manuals. Luther himself was considerably influenced by the anonymous fourteenth century mystical work the *Theologia Germanica* which focused on how man can achieve union with God.⁶⁴ Johann Arndt (1555-1621), a forerunner of late seventeenth century Lutheran Pietism, also published an edition of the *Theologia Germanica* (1597) where he wrote a preface which emphasized pursuing a true spiritual experience of God through repentance, faith, and the pursuit of a holy life.⁶⁵ Arndt's most well known work *Vier Bücher Von wahrem Christenthumb* (1605-1610), was profoundly formative on Lutheran Pietism as it stressed the transformative power of faith, love, and living with a heavenly mindedness.⁶⁶ Unsurprisingly then, the work contains several references to the beatific vision. For Arndt, one of the many consolations for the soul fearing death is to reflect on the joy of eternal life which consists in "the beatific vision of the face of God."⁶⁷ Eternal life is the vision of God, but as was seen with Chytraeus, this is hardly merely an intellectual experience. Rather Arndt repeatedly stresses the sight of the saints "creates the most exalted joy"⁶⁸ and "exalted pleasure, arising from their vision of God."⁶⁹

In review, at this stage in early modern Lutheranism there has been some definite preference for a vision of the divine essence contra the Greeks, beatitude consisting in the

⁶² Hutter, L., *Compendium Locorum Theologicorum*, (Wittenberg: Paul Helwig, 1610), 353.

⁶³ Robert Kolb, «Early Modern Lutheranism as (Still) a Research Frontier», *Lutheran Quarterly*, 38 (2024), 4. Kolb points to the work of Christian Witt for the difficulties with the term "Lutheran Orthodoxy", *Lutherische "Orthodoxie" als historisches Problem. Leitidee, Konstruktion und Gegenbegriff von Gottfried Arnold bis Ernst Troeltsch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2021).

⁶⁴ Podmore, S., «The gaze of divine sorrow: Envisioning mystical union with Dürer, Cusa and the *Theologia Germanica*», Appleton, H. - Nelstrop, L. (eds.), *Art and Mysticism: Interfaces in the Medieval and Modern Periods*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 256.

⁶⁵ Illg, T., «Johann Arndt», *Protestants and Mysticism in Reformation Europe*, 311.

⁶⁶ Arndt, J., *True Christianity: A Treatise on Sincere Repentance, True Faith, The Holy Walk of the True Christian, etc.* transl. A.W. Boehm and C. F. Schaeffer, (Philadelphia: Smith, English & Co., 1868).

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 668.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 373.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 667.

equally fundamental enjoyment of the intellect and will contra both the Scotists and Thomists, and a few authors endorsing a bodily vision of the divine though without universal emphasis. No explicit comments against Calvinists authors can be found regarding the beatific vision. Yet, more careful attention to these disputed points would come forth in the period of High Orthodoxy, which Preus notes is marked by Lutherans defining themselves in an increasingly clarified manner “relative to Romanism, Calvinism, and other antitheses.”⁷⁰

2. *The Beatific Vision in Lutheran High Orthodoxy (1610-1688)*

Johann Gerhard (1582-1637) is “generally considered to be the third preeminent Lutheran theologian after Luther and Chemnitz.”⁷¹ Though he was raised in Quedlinburg under the pastoral teaching and spiritual care of Johann Arndt, Gerhard also studied theology at Wittenberg where he was heavily influenced by Leonhard Hutter.⁷² He then studied at the University of Jena (1603) where he later took up a permanent post as professor of theology (1616) until his death in 1637. Gerhard’s *magnum opus* is his massive work the *Loci Theologici* (1610-1622) which sought to integrate his philosophical, dogmatic, and pastoral concerns. Gerhard was the first Lutheran dogmatician to develop a theological prolegomena in any great matter of depth and his prolegomena is the first *loci* which treats the beatific vision unlike in the earlier age where the student often had to wait until the end of the work to find a definition of eternal life. Here the reader finds, in an explicit rejection of Aquinas, Gerhard denies theology is a science preferring to call it a God given habit most closely related to the Aristotelian category of wisdom.⁷³ Since the medievals disagree whether theology is fundamentally active/practical or speculative/contemplative, Gerhard goes farther in specifying his agreement with eminent Franciscans such as Richard of Middleton, Alexander of Hales, and Bonaventure that theology is more practical than contemplative as the ultimate end of theology is action.⁷⁴ As Michael concludes, “Gerhard sees the active life (and ultimately the beatific vision in heaven) as the goal of theology rather than its beginning.”⁷⁵ From here Gerhard follows the classifications by the Reformed theologian Franciscus Junius (1545-1602) whose prolegomenal work was influential across Protestantism.⁷⁶ Gerhard, like Junius, distinguished between God’s self knowledge (*archetypal*) which is uncreated and infinite and his graciously communicated knowledge (*ectypal*) which is an accidental expression of the former.⁷⁷ As *ectypal theology* varies depending on the subject one must further distinguish between this habitual wisdom as present in the

⁷⁰ Preus, R., *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, 45.

⁷¹ Ibid., 52.

⁷² Illg, T., «Philipp Nicolai and Johann Gerhard», *Protestants and Mysticism in Reformation Europe*, 295.

⁷³ Gerhard, J., *Loci Theologici*, vol 1, ed. Edward Preuss, (Berlin: Gust. Schlawtitz, 1863), 3.

⁷⁴ Ibid.,

⁷⁵ Michael, A., «Johann Gerhard on the Theologian’s Vocation in Theory and Practice» *Lutheran Quarterly*, 36 (2022), 303.

⁷⁶ Preus, *The Theology of Post Reformation Lutheranism*, 114, claims, “these and other distinctions were not the invention of Gerhard but were already in use in Reformed circles and had their origin in scholastic theology...Infact Gerhard followed the very order of Francis Junius, who became normative for many Reformed theologians in their discussion of theology and dogmatic prolegomena.”

⁷⁷ Gerhard, J., vol 1, *Loci Theologici*, 4.

incarnate Christ (*theologia unionis*), the wayfarers already in blessedness (*theologia beatorum*) and the wayfarers in this life (*viatorum*).⁷⁸ The *theologia beatorum* is fundamentally a “clear and intuitive knowledge of God or the beatific vision communicated to the blessed in eternal life.”⁷⁹

Gerhard would treat this subject more fully in his final volume of the *Loci* (1622) in a work dedicated to eternal life. Here he defines life as “the very blessed and happiest condition of the living which depends on the beatific vision of the living God and the glorification of the body and soul by which the righteous are greatly distinguished from the damned.”⁸⁰ The desire for ultimate blessedness is a part of humanity by nature, yet the reality of the beatific vision is intrinsically supernatural both in the means to acquire it and in understanding what it is, therefore Gerhard concludes Thomas is correct to argue “in man there is no perfect or efficacious desire or natural appetite for this blessedness.”⁸¹ Mankind generally desires blessedness, but not particularly to see God.⁸² Here Gerhard appears to reflect a more Thomistic view where the natural desire to see God is conditional upon an elicited movement of grace whereas the Scotistic view held the natural desire is intrinsic and innate to human nature.⁸³ This connection is further supported by considering Gerhards positive citation of Francisco Suarez (1548-1617) concerning God’s power to take up creatures through their obediential potency to receive an effect beyond their own power.⁸⁴ Though this principle in itself is hardly distinctive, Suarez elsewhere is clear this obediential potency is not natural in direct opposition to Scotus when he speaks of the beatific vision.⁸⁵ Caution must be exercised though before concluding Gerhard was aware of or intended to deploy Suarez’s specific usage of obediential potency.

Unlike those before him, Gerhard is careful to use the common scholastic distinction between objective beatitude (God himself) and formal beatitude (the act of seeing and enjoying God).⁸⁶ This distinction is necessary to maintain a continued distinction between the creature and creator even in eternal beatitude. Yet, a constant emphasis for Gerhard is the intrinsically supernatural reality of eternal life. The form of eternal life is “incomprehensible and

⁷⁸ Ibid.,

⁷⁹ Ibid., 4. “*Theologia beatorum vocatur theologia visionis ac vitae, quia in clara et intuitiva Dei notitia, sive beatifica visione in vita aeterna beatis communicata consistit.*”

⁸⁰ Gerhard., J, *Loci Theologici*, vol 9, ed. Edward Preuss, (Berlin: Gust. Schlawtitz, 1875), 289. “*Intelligitur autem vitae nomine non nuda viventis existentia ab animae et corporis unione dependens, ea enim et pii in coelo, et damnatis in inferno erit communis, sed beatissima et felicissima viventis conditio, quae a beatifica Dei viventis visione et corporis et animae glorificatione dependet, per quam pii a damnatis vel maxime distinguuntur.*”

⁸¹ Ibid., 318. “*Quapropter Scholastici part. 1 quaest. 12. Art 1. Recte disputant, gloriam et beatitudinem aeternam esse supernaturalem non tantum in assecutione, sed etiam in cognitione, et per consequens non esse in homine perfectum et efficax desiderium vel appetitum naturalem hujus beatitudinis.*”

⁸² Ibid.,

⁸³ Feingold, L., *The Natural Desire to See God According to St Thomas Aquinas and his Interpreters*, (Naples: Sapientia Press, 2010), 64.

⁸⁴ Gerhard, J., vol 9, *Loci Theologici*, 405..

⁸⁵ “There is no natural active or passive potency in man with regard to the beatific vision, nor with regard to grace, which has the vision as its connatural end. However, natural appetite follows on natural potency, for an obediential potency does not suffice For who would say that human nature has an innate appetite for the hypostatic union, even though it has an obediential capacity for it?” cited in Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God*, 223.

⁸⁶ Gerhard. J., vol 9, *Loci Theologici*, 318-119.

indescribable in this life as far as we are concerned, if it is a question of detailed, essential, and certain knowledge.”⁸⁷ Nevertheless, the theologian must not resign to utter silence as there are scriptural grounds for a number of firm conclusions. For example, Gerhard believes the beatific vision is “of the most holy Trinity, the putting on of incorruptibility, and the fulfillment of every desire.”⁸⁸ The greatest positive goods of eternal life are “seeing, loving, and glorifying God.”⁸⁹ These positive goods can then be further divided into what is internal to the blessed themselves and those which are externally seen in one's blessed companions.⁹⁰ The first internal good is the beatific vision which is threefold: “corporeal, by which they will see the humanity of Christ, the saints in their glorified bodies, and a new heaven and new earth; spiritual, by which they will see the angels and the souls of the blessed; intellectual, by which they will see God himself.”⁹¹ This vision entails a perfect knowledge of God which results in true rest as the mysteries of “how God is one in essence and three in person” will then be known.⁹²

This mutual affirmation of seeing the essence of God with the eyes of the soul as well as the human face of Christ with the glorified eyes of the bodies was also found in Chytraeus and indicates a harmony between Lutheran and Reformed accounts of the beatific vision. For many scholars, it has become commonplace to stress that the Reformed approach contains a strong Christological reformulation of the beatific vision that repairs a deficit which was left in Latin medieval accounts which focused on the blessed sight of the divine essence. On this view, for a given theologian to provide a distinctively Reformed account of the beatific vision is to depart from the Latin medieval precedent in two ways: 1. An emphasis on a Christological mode of witnessing the beatific vision 2. An emphasis on Christ in his humanity as the object of what is seen in the beatific vision in contrast to a vision of the divine essence.⁹³ This position not only creates a false dichotomy between seeing either the divine essence or the humanity of Christ, but it neglects entirely the regular affirmation of both by early modern Lutherans as well.

Gerhard presses for specificity, but he does not depart from earlier work done by Hutter or Hafenreffer either. Rather, wherever possible he will use the same language they used, such as the beatific vision including an intuitive knowledge of “God’s will and wisdom.”⁹⁴ It might appear at first Gerhard would favor seeing beatitude as ultimately intellectual for he says joy and

⁸⁷ Gerhard, J., transl. Richard Dinda, (eds) Hayes, J., Curtis, H., Mayes, B., *On Eternal Life*, (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2022), 88.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 104.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 112.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 113.

⁹¹ Ibid., 115.

⁹² Gerhard, J., *On Eternal Life*, 140.

⁹³ Horton, M., *Covenant and Salvation: Union with Christ*, (Westminster John Knox Press, 2007). Lee, S., “The Orders of Nature and Grace: Thomistic Concepts in the Moral Thought of Franciscus Junius (1545-1602)” PhD. Diss. (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2021). Strobel, K., “Jonathan Edwards’s Reformed Doctrine of the Beatific Vision,” Andel, K., Minkema, K., Neele, A., (eds), *Jonathan Edwards and Scotland*, (Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press, 2011). McDonald, S., “Beholding the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ: John Owen and the ‘Reforming’ of the Beatific Vision,” Kapic, K., Jones, M., (eds), *The Ashgate Research Companion to John Owen’s Theology*, (New York: Routledge, 2012); Boersma, H., *Seeing God*, 317-321.

⁹⁴ Gerhard, J., *On Eternal Life*, 116.

glory arise from the vision of God⁹⁵, seemingly as an effect from a cause. So too “perfect soundness and holiness of the will” will “flow forth” from the knowledge of God⁹⁶ as does a “burning love” for “it is the nature of the good that once it is known it is desired and loved.”⁹⁷ Yet, after surveying the arguments proffered by Thomas and Scotus for their respective positions Gerhard explicitly seeks to follow Bonaventure and Richard of Middleton in affirming an equal ultimacy of the intellect and will in beatitude.⁹⁸ In this regard, Gerhard self consciously follows Chytraeus in concluding, “whenever Holy Scripture or the ecclesiastical writers place blessedness in the vision and knowledge of God, this does not denote a naked activity of the intellect but connotes also activity of the will, and thus the full reception and possession of the highest good which comes through knowledge and love in life eternal.”⁹⁹

Gerhard is also aware of the historic debate between the Latins who affirmed and the Greeks who denied a vision of the divine essence in the eschaton as well as the relevant quotations from the fathers they each adduced in support. More interestingly however, is that Gerhard is keen to note this is an area of disagreement between the Lutherans and some of the Calvinists.¹⁰⁰ Although the Calvinist he cites (Herman Hamelmann) is unknown today, more influential figures such as Franciscus Gomarus (1563-1641) could have been cited here as well. After making a number of important qualifications, such as the necessity of grace and impossibility of seeing God in this life, Gerhard goes on to present a series of arguments from scripture, reason, and the fathers to affirm the saints will see the very essence of God.¹⁰¹ Significantly, Gerhard is quick to note not all the Calvinists denied a vision of the divine essence, and cites Vermigli and Polanus as endorsing the view he has just defended.¹⁰²

Gerhard is somewhat more cautious than Chytraeus regarding the bodily sight of the divine essence. After noting some of the church fathers deny this possibility and all of the scholastics answer negatively, Gerhard points out the Calvinists are split (Zanchi denying and Alsted affirming).¹⁰³ Rather than firmly asserting a bodily vision of the divine essence will take place in the eschaton, Gerhard explicitly positions himself in the middle of these two positions. He merely seeks to prove the bodily vision of God “seems possible” and it is “more correct to reserve a decision on this question for future experience rather than unpleasantly and scrupulously fighting about it.”¹⁰⁴

Gerhard considers it a matter of divine revelation that the saint needs the grace of the light of glory in order to see God and only mentions Durandus (1230-1296) as denying this

⁹⁵ Ibid., 133.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 143.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 147.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 204.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Gerhard, J., *On Eternal Life*, 223.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 228-237,

¹⁰² Ibid., 238-239.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 241.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 242-243.

which is curious considering Scotus did as well.¹⁰⁵ What is far more important, for Gerhard, to dispute with the Roman Catholics is whether there is an inequality of essential blessedness.¹⁰⁶ Though Gerhard does not cite it, the papal bull *Laetentur Caeli* (1439) had established a difference in the perfect vision of God according to the diversity of merits earned on earth. Gerhard notes Gregory Valencia (1550-1603) and Martin Becanus (1563-1624) contend this diversity is due to a difference in participation in the light of glory which is proportional to earthly merits.¹⁰⁷ While Gerhard is keen to concede there is a diversity of degrees of glory, this is not due to merit rather blessedness is only achieved through the merit of Christ.¹⁰⁸ Gerhard even criticizes the Calvinists, such as Peter Martyr Vermigli, for going too far in denying merit such that some of them even deny all diversity in degrees of glory in eternal life.¹⁰⁹ For Gerhard, if one properly distinguishes between essential beatitude (God himself) and accidental beatitude (ornaments of the body and soul) they can affirm accidental beatitude has a diversity of rewards even though it is not due to merit rather they flow solely from the “dispensation of God’s kindness which has decreed that the labors and sufferings of the godly be repaid with this inequality of glory.”¹¹⁰

Ultimately, Gerhard’s treatment of the beatific vision introduced early modern Lutherans to a variety of distinctions which were common in medieval discussions and contemporary internal Roman Catholic disputes. The increasing complexity of the debate once again, left many of the shorter theological manuals to leave a number of the questions unresolved. For example, Gottfried Cundisius (1599-1651), a professor in Jena, in his work annotating Hutters *Compendium Theologicum* (1648), concludes with regards to the bodily vision of the divine essence that both sides have great authorities so the discerning reader can decide for themselves.¹¹¹ Cundisius also notes the difference between the views of Bonaventure and Becanus on the formality of beatitude but leaves the issue unresolved as well.¹¹² Nevertheless, Gerhard’s positions were followed more closely by many as the seventeenth century progressed.

Johann Ernst Gerhard (1621-1668), the son of Gerhard, follows his father’s views nearly verbatim. Ernst Gerhard also affirms a vision of the divine essence via the light of glory, Bonaventures view of beatitude consisting in both the intellect and will, and that while one must not deny the possibility of a bodily vision it is uncertain whether this will in fact take place.¹¹³

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 244.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 259.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 259.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 260.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 205.

¹¹⁰ Gerhard, J., *On Eternal Life*, 206.

¹¹¹ Cundisius, G., *D. Leonharti Hutteri Compendium Theologicum Notis illustratum*, (George Sengenvald: 1660), 1386. “*Utraque sententia magnos habet autores, ac suis nititur fundamentis: eligat judiciosus lector illam assertionem, quæ ad oracula sacra quàm proximè accedit; iisque collectea est.*”

¹¹² Ibid., 1383. “*Sive amor ille et gaudium concurrant ad essentiam beatitudinis, ut voluit Bonaventura, sive sint essentielles proprietates necessariò formam sive essentiam beatitudinis consequentes, ut ex aliis quibusdam Scholasticis Becanus disput. part. 2. Scholast. Theol. Tract. 1. cap. quest. 4. conclus. 2.*”

¹¹³ Gerhard, Ernst J., *Isgoge locorum theologicorum*, (Jena: George Sengenvaldi, 1658), 1999-2006.

Indeed, unlike the Reformed, it is quite difficult to find any early modern Lutheran denying a vision of the divine essence. Johannes Binchius (1586–1671), a pastor in Herford, endeavored to distill the teachings of preceding early modern Lutheran theologians in his work *Mellificium Theologicum* (1658–1666). Here he affirms, like Gerhard, beatitude is both intellectual and volitional, an intuitive vision of the divine essence, and degrees of glory (accidentally not essentially) not according to merit.¹¹⁴

Arguably, the most influential Lutheran theologian of the later seventeenth century is Abraham Calov (1612-1686).¹¹⁵ Calov began his studies at the University of Königsberg (1626) where he encountered the works of Johann Gerhard which he admired greatly.¹¹⁶ He then moved to the University of Rostock (1634) where he completed his doctorate before returning to teach in the theological faculty at Königsberg (1637) and finally Wittenberg (1650) where he taught until his death. Calov was equally concerned with biblical commentary and dogmatics as evidenced by his widely read exhaustive biblical commentary the *Biblia Illustrata* (1672-1676) and his twelve volume work *Systema Locorum theologicorum* (Vol 1-4, 1655-1661, Vol 5-12, 1677). Beyond his didactic contributions, Calov is also renowned for his vigorous polemical engagements, particularly his extensive disputes over syncretism with George Calixtus (1586-1656) and his followers. This context is particularly important for understanding Calov, as it is reflected in his treatment of eschatology—a term he coined—throughout his work.¹¹⁷ Calixtus, a Lutheran professor at Helmstedt, reacted to the devastation of the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) by attempting to minimize differences between various Protestant groups via a return to the minimal consensus of the first five centuries of the early church.¹¹⁸ Calov saw this as ultimately a dangerous syncretism which threatened those with confessional commitments to the *Formula of Concord* and responded by writing multiple works against Calixtus.¹¹⁹ The most important of these was the *Consensus repetitio fidei verae Lutheranae in illis doctrinae capitibus, quae...scriptis publicis hodieque impugnant D. Georgius Calixtus* which sought to unite Lutherans in a confessional manner against the errors of Calixtus.¹²⁰ The theological faculty at Lutheran universities were largely divided however, into those who defended the work (Wittenberg and Leipzig), those who rejected it merely to preserve peace (Jena) and those who rejected it to defend Calixtus (Helmstedt and Altdorf).¹²¹ Of course, merely because those at Jena did not want to sign the document it does not mean they disagreed with every individual proposition reflected therein. Rather their concern was to cause further division by adding to the

¹¹⁴ Binchius, J., vol 5, *Mellificii Theologici ad Disputandum et Concionandum Proficui*, (Amsterdam: Johann Junior, 1667), 300-302.

¹¹⁵ See Appold, K., *Abraham Calov's Doctrine of Vocation in Its Systematic Context*, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998) for one of the few focused studies on Calov.

¹¹⁶ Schmeling, T., «Strenuus Christi Athleta Abraham Calov», *Lutheran Standard Quarterly*, 44 (2004), 359.

¹¹⁷ Sauter, G., «The Concept and Task of Eschatology — Theological and Philosophical Reflections.» *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 41 (1988), 499.

¹¹⁸ Schmeling, T., «Strenuus Christi Athleta Abraham Calov», 362.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 364-366.

¹²⁰ Calov, A., *Consensus Repetitus Fidei Vere Lutheranae* (Wittenberg: Johann Burckhard, 1666)

¹²¹ Schmeling, T., *ibid.*, 368.

Formula of Concord.¹²² Examining what the *Consensus* says about the final judgment offers valuable insight into the disagreements between Calov and Calixtus on eschatology, providing an illustrative example of an intramural Lutheran dispute.

Against Calixtus, the *Consensus* teaches the essential beatitude of the beatific vision occurs immediately for the elect upon death.¹²³ The work then cites specific passages from Calixtus and others who deny essential blessedness is received before the final resurrection. Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621) and other Roman Catholics had frequently accused the Calvinists of following the error of John XXII who also infamously denied essential beatitude to the elect immediately upon their death. Although most of the Reformed Orthodox had sought to exculpate Calvin of this error on the basis of his own writings, the works of Luther made this more difficult for early modern Lutherans. Nevertheless, for Calov defending true catholicity committed him to affirming an immediate beatitude as *Benedictus Deus* affirms. This is also seen where the *Consensus* condemns those who fail to clarify the distinction between the reward of eternal life which is purely by grace and other heavenly rewards which do correspond to dissimilar earthly labors.¹²⁴ Calov, however, disagrees with *Laetenter Caeli* on the notion that these diverse earthly labors are meritorious of heavenly rewards. In his *Systematis*, he explicitly asserts that heavenly rewards are not granted on the basis of any merit, either geometric or arithmetic.¹²⁵ In the early modern period Roman Catholics often distinguished condign merit (where the work has a just equality with the reward) into that which is arithmetic or geometric.¹²⁶ The equality between the work and reward is arithmetic when the quantity exchanged is one to one with no particular regard to the persons involved as a matter of strict justice.¹²⁷ The equality is geometric when there is due concern for a proportion which also considers the person and thus is not a matter of strict justice.¹²⁸ While Rome taught eternal life is merited with geometric condign merit, not arithmetically, Calov was emphatic that neither eternal life nor heavenly rewards were merited whatsoever.

¹²² Ibid., 368.

¹²³ Calov, A., *Consensus*, 106.

¹²⁴ Calov, A., *Consensus*, 108. *Et cum haec aequalis sit omnium, sicut unus est Christus, dissimila fore praemia propter dissimiles labores.*” In the *Systematis* Calov will criticize certain Reformed theologians such as Peter Martyr Vermigli and Frederick Spanheim the Elder for rejecting the diversity of heavenly rewards. Calov, A., *Systematis Locorum Theologicorum*, vol 12, (Johannes Wilckius, 1677), 336.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 375. “*Quia nulla est ratio discedendi a litera apertissima. Nam non a proportionem sive Arithmetica, sive geometrica operum nostrorum dependent coelestia praemia, sed ex pera Dei gratia, Rom V. 223. Cap XI. 6.*”

¹²⁶ John of St Thomas, *Cursus Theologici in primam secundae D. Thomae tomus secundus: a quaestione vigesima prima usque ad septuagesimam*, (Philip Borde, Lavrenti Arnad, Petri Borde, & Guilielmi Barbier, 1663), 355. “*Ex parte forma, seu medii utraque iustitia respectit aequale, sed commutativa aequalitatem absolute, et secundum quantitatem rei ad rem; distributiva vero aequalitate proportionalem secundum dignitatem et proportionem personarum ad praemium. Et prima aequalitas vocatur Arithmetica, quia sit quasi inter numeros, ut si quis dedit, vel abstulit duo, recipiat, vel recompenset duo: secunda autem aequalitas vocatur Geometrica, quia sit quasi inter proportionem figurarum quarum una excedit aliam, vel exceditur.*”

¹²⁷ Rivas, Severino., Aldama, J., transl. Baker., K. *Sacrae Theologiae Summa IIIB*, (Saddle River: Keep the Faith, 2014), 223.

¹²⁸ Ibid.,

Returning to the *Systematis*, just like Gerhard, Calov defines theology not as *scientia*, *prudentia*, or *ars*, but as a God given practical *habitus*.¹²⁹ Calov also distinguishes between *archetypal* (infinite substance, exemplary) and *ectypal* (accidental, finite) theology, but he goes farther than Gerhard in specifying that the *scientia visionis* which resides in the incarnate Christ is not simply the *ectypal theologia unionis*, rather it is the very *archetypal* knowledge of God as communicated to the human nature in the hypostatic union.¹³⁰ Thus, Calov, citing Colossians 2:3 in support, explicitly disagrees with Junius and Waeleus regarding the incommunicability of *archetypal* knowledge and contends that knowledge “which belongs to Christ according to human nature through union is infinite.”¹³¹ In this regard, prolegomenal concerns quickly reveal fundamental differences between the Christology of the Lutherans and both their Reformed and Roman Catholic counterparts. For the Lutherans, divine attributes such as omniscience can be attributed to the human nature of Christ via the *communicatio idiomatum* in a manner which was classified as the *genus maiestaticum*. The *genus maiestaticum* “indicates the hypostatic relationship of the human nature within the union; since the human nature does not have an independent subsistence, but subsists enhypostatically in the divine person who assumed it, it participates in the divine attributes, specifically in the *gloria* and *maiestas Dei* (hence, *maiestaticum*).”¹³² Bellarmine had attacked this distinctively Lutheran understanding of the *communicatio idiomatum* specifically when after setting out the “real” communication view of Chemnitz and Selnecker he asserted true Catholic doctrine denies a real communication of idioms with respect to the natures themselves “as the Lutherans say.”¹³³ The Reformed likewise rejected the view Christ’s human nature received properly divine omniscience as articulated by Calov. John Davenant (1572-1641), bishop of Salisbury, notes this similarity between the Reformed and medieval Roman Catholic scholastics explicitly in his commentary on Colossians 2:3:

“But the scholastics, although they differ from our theologians in words, nonetheless they agree in reality. For that which they call omniscience, nevertheless includes certain limits: thus it is clear they do not ascribe to the soul of Christ an absolute omniscience, which is a property of the divine nature, but an omniscience in a certain (in a manner of speaking) similitude and in a qualified sense to the soul of Christ. But the ubiquitarians teach much more audaciously

¹²⁹ Calov., A., vol 1., *Systematis*, 1. “*Theologia est habitus practicus cognitionis e revelatione divina haustae de vera religione qua homo post lapsum per fidem ad salutem aeternam perducendus.*”

¹³⁰ Preus, R., *Theology of Post Reformation Lutheranism*, 170.

¹³¹ Calov, A., vol 1, *Systematis*, 3. “*quum ea que per unionem Chrifto fecundum humanam naturam convenit Theosophia infinita fit, & eadem ipsa Filii Dei, non alia ab eâ producta sapientia*”

¹³² Muller, R., *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017).

¹³³ Bellarmine, R., vol 1, *De Controversiis Christianae Fidei, Adversus Huius Temporis Haereticos* (Ingolstadt: Adam Sartori 1601), 483. “*Secundo, ex unionem hypostatica sequitur communicatio idiomatum: quae quidem communicatio non est realis respectu ipsarum naturarum, quasi ipsa Divinitas facta sit passibilis, & humanitas realiter sit facta omnipotens, ut volunt Lutherani*” Richard Cross has presented some of the objections to the *genus maiestaticum* by Gregory Valencia and Francisco Suarez in *Christology and Metaphysics in the Seventeenth Century*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 287-289.

that divine omniscience itself has been truly communicated to the human nature of Christ in the same mode as omnipotence.”¹³⁴

While Lutherans, due to their Christological commitments, often diverged from both Reformed and Roman Catholic perspectives on this prolegomenal issue, the emphasis on theology as a practical *habitus*—and consequently, on the beatific vision as a fulfillment of both the will and the intellect—can be found throughout both the Reformed and Lutheran traditions.¹³⁵ Calov continues the tradition of defining eternal life as that which “consists in the beatific vision of God”, but he expands the definition considerably to include more precisely both the glorified intellect, will, and resurrected body.¹³⁶ Curiously, unlike Gerhard, Calov does not take effort to defend or even assert the necessity of the *lumen gloriae* for the beatific vision though he does cite Irenaeus and Gregory of Nyssa in support of the teaching that the blessed will see God from within an ineffable light.¹³⁷ Yet, very much like Gerhard and those before him, Calov is emphatic it is the very essence of God which is seen in the beatific vision and cites Vermigli and Polanus in support of his conclusion that on this matter the Lutherans, Reformed, and Roman Catholics agree.¹³⁸

Perhaps most interestingly, Calov addresses the potential objection to the vision of God’s essence that the finite is not proportionate to the infinite.¹³⁹ Though this was a typical claim made by the Reformed against the Lutherans with regards to their eucharistic theology, the Reformed themselves often addressed the same objection concerning whether the finite intellect could truly behold the infinite God.¹⁴⁰ For Calov, the answer is to distinguish what the intellect can actively attain throughout itself and what it can passively receive through another. Though the human mind has no active proportion by which it could reach the divine there is a passive potency, which Calov calls obediential, by which nature is disposed to receiving the vision of

¹³⁴ Davenant, J., *Expositio epistolae D. Pauli ad Colossenses*, (Geneve: Sumptibus Samuelis Chouet, 1655), 183. “*Sed scholastici, etsi verbo a nostris Theologis diffentiunt, re tamen conspirant. Nam hanc quam appellant omniscientiam, includunt nihilominus certis limitibus: unde patet eos non omniscientiam absolutam, quae proprietates est Divinae naturae, sed quandam (ut ita dicam) similitudinariam, & secundum quid dictam, Christi animae ascribere. Sed Ubique arii multo audacius ipsam omniscientiam Divinam realiter communicatam docent humanae Christi naturae, quemadmodum & omnipotentiam.*”

¹³⁵ Daniel Lee Hill, outlines this connection well with regards to the Reformed theologian Petrus van Mastricht (1630-1706) in «The Colophon of Eternal Beatitude: Petrus van Mastricht, the *Visio Dei*, and the Resurrection of the Body», *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 27 (2025), 13.

¹³⁶ Calov., A., vol 12., *Systematis*, 278. “*Vita aeterna est actus vivendi continuus animae intellectualis glorificatae, quo expers omnis mali, particeps omnis boni, ex gratia dei, propter Christum fruitur, soluta a corpore, cum in fide excessit: & conjuncta rursus corpori, quod glorificatum accipiet in beata resurrectione, gaudio incredibili in aeternum fruatur in societate coelesti, um omnibus electis, & choro omnium sanctorum Angelorum: consistens in visione dei beatifica, qua deum perfecte cognoscent, cognitum eadem perfectione amabunt, amatum eadem itidem perfectione sine celebrabunt.*”

¹³⁷ Calov., A., vol 12, *Systematis*, 368.

¹³⁸ Ibid.,

¹³⁹ Ibid., 369. “*Finiti ad infinitum nullam esse proportionem*”

¹⁴⁰ Curiously, it is the Reformed theologian Antonius Waeleus who appeals to Christ’s incarnation to resolve the concern that the infinite divine essence can unite with a finite human intellect while the Lutheran Calov responds by making a philosophical distinction! Antoneius Waleus, *Opera omnia*, (Leiden: F. Hackii, 1643), 526.

God.¹⁴¹ It is not quite clear here whether Calov, who likely learned the distinction from Gerhard, would follow Aquinas in seeing this potency as obediential *rather* than natural or Scotus in conflating natural and obediential potency, but it is worth noting both possibilities as Gerhard had earlier appeared to reflect the more Thomistic view that the natural desire for God was conditional rather than innate.¹⁴²

In either case, where Calov does undeniably depart from both the Reformed and Roman Catholic tradition is found in his defense of the possibility of a bodily sight of the divine essence. Although, like Gerhard, Calov is careful not to adamantly assert the truth of a bodily vision, he goes to even greater lengths than Gerhard to defend its possibility, offering twelve arguments in support largely from the standard biblical texts (Job 19:25; Matthew 19:10; 1 Corinthians 13:12; 1 John 3:2).¹⁴³ For example, Calov contends the literal meaning of Job 19:25 is that the eyes of the body will see Christ and since Christ is God therefore God can be seen with the eyes of the body.¹⁴⁴ Calov is well aware this point is highly disputed, but he does not engage with the standard responses provided by Roman Catholic theologians who had anticipated these arguments. For example, Suarez asserts firmly that the teaching of both Aquinas and Scotus was that God cannot be seen with the bodily eye even through absolute power.¹⁴⁵ Though he concedes this teaching is not technically a dogma of the faith, nevertheless he concludes it is nearly so.¹⁴⁶ Suarez addresses Job 19:25 by pointing out Job did not say he would say God *through* the eyes of the body but rather *in* the body by which he refers to the eyes of the body seeing the face of Christ.¹⁴⁷

Though Calov did not go to great lengths to engage polemically with Roman Catholic sources on this question in the final volume of his *Systema* (1677), eleven years earlier Johann Osiander (1622-1697) had written an extended treatise in which he responds more specifically to many Roman Catholic and Calvinist opponents. His work *Deus in Lumine Glorae Delineatur* (1666), the first of which I am aware that is strictly devoted to the subject of the beatific vision within the Lutheran tradition, was published ten years into his professorship at Tübingen where he had spent his undergraduate and master studies as well. Although descended from the fiercely controversial Andreas Osiander (1496-1552), Johann quickly became highly regarded amongst those at Tübingen and eventually became Chancellor (1681).¹⁴⁸ Johann does not cite regularly his forbears at Tübingen, such as Hafenreffer, and in some regards appears to have shifted from

¹⁴¹ Calov., A., vol 12, *Systematis*, 369. “*Ideoque id faltim illud axioma infert, quod non nisi potentiam passivam ad visionem Dei, uti & ad fruitionem Dei universam mens nostra habeat vel si mavis saltim obedientialem & non repugnantiae*”

¹⁴² For more discussion see Seals, 22.

¹⁴³ Calov, A., vol 12, *Systematis*, 370-371.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 370.

¹⁴⁵ Suarez, F., *Commentaria ac Disputationes in Primam Partem Divi Thomae, De Deo uno & Trino*, (Balthasar Lippius: 1607), 44.

¹⁴⁶ Suarez, F., *Commentaria*, 44. “*Estque iam recepta haec sententia, ut licet non possimus diverere esse dogma fidei, proxime ad illud accedat.*”

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁴⁸ Angerbauer, W., *Das Kanzleramt an der Universität Tübingen und seine Inhaber 1590-1817*, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1972), 82.

their primary concerns. For example, at no point does he claim the purpose of the beatific vision was to restore the knowledge of God Adam lost in the Fall nor is he concerned to present a precise definition of eternal life. Yet, substantively in many regards Johann enriches points made by his predecessors. For example, Johann concurs with Gerhard that the Calvinists tend to error dangerously close to the Armenian error, largely defended by the Greeks, that the blessed do not see the essence of God.¹⁴⁹ Writing later than Gerhard, Johann cites three more notable Reformed theologians who defend this view: Johannes Maccovius (1588-1644), Franciscus Gomarus, and Gisbertus Voetius.¹⁵⁰ In contrast, Johann defends not only a vision of the divine essence and attributes of God¹⁵¹ but also that the object of the vision is the Trinitarian persons.¹⁵²

Significantly, Johann's argument in favor of this draws precisely upon De Rada. Johann contends the distinction between intuitive and abstractive knowledge, a distinction Scotus was known for making, entails the following; for a truly intuitive knowledge of the divine essence, which is of present reality, the Trinitarian persons must be seen as well.¹⁵³ For Johann this is important to affirm against Scotists such as Lychetus of Brescia (†1520) and Juan De Rada, who have argued in favor of the possibility of seeing the divine essence apart from the trinitarian persons.¹⁵⁴

Even more notably, Johann goes farther in rejecting what had become a standard Scotist position that the beatific vision is the natural end of man.¹⁵⁵ For Johann there is a stench of Pelagianism in any papal theologians who claim the natural desire for God entails the conclusion God is the natural end of man.¹⁵⁶ Perhaps being influenced by Cajetan, whom he cites regularly throughout the work, Johann affirms a natural desire for God, but recognizes the indispensability of the light of glory to elevate the created intellect to be proportionate to the supernatural act of the beatific vision.¹⁵⁷ Since the vision of God is supernatural in itself rather than merely how it is

¹⁴⁹ Osiander, J., *Deus in Lumine Glorae Delineatus*, (Tubingen: Gregorius Kerner, 1666), 2.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 11. Elsewhere, pg 26, John Cameron is added to this list.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 29. "*Objectum visionis beatificae est essentia Divina, una cum attributis divinis*" Later, pg 32, Johann explicitly rejects the view the divine essence can be seen absolutely without the attributes as attributed to Scotus by Scaliger.

¹⁵² Ibid., 34. "*Objectum visionis beatificae est Deus, non solum secundum essentiam, sed & Trinitatem Personarum.*"

¹⁵³ Ibid., "*Visio quippe Beatifica est intuitiva quidditatis Dei, ut est in se, a parte rei: in hoc enim differt cognitio intuitiva, ab abstractiva; quod intuitiva fertur in rem praesentem, ut est in se, a parte rei; abstractiva autem fertur in rem absentem, repraesentatam potentiae cognoscitivae, quae potest repraesentari aliter, quam est; Divina vero Quidditas importat, ut eest a parte rei, divinam essentiam subsistentem in his tribus personis SS. Trinitatis & hoc necessario;*"

¹⁵⁴ Osiander, J., *Deus in Lumine*, 95. "*Tumultuentur hic, qui ut mare procellosum quiescere nolunt, Lychetus, Rada, Ysambertus, Marti non Lugo & alij tenebrarum Filii, de facto supponentes veritatem assertam, ad possibilitatem autem opposets deflectentes disserendo*" (35) cf. De Rada, "*Nam D. Thom. cum nullam distinctione ex natura rei inter essentiam, & personas collocet: consequenter tenet, esse prorsus impossibile, visione ad essentia terminari, quin simul ad personas terminetur...Scotus vero in 1.d. I.q.2. oppositam tuetur sententiam*"

¹⁵⁵ Macedo, F., *Collationes Doctrinae S. Thomae, et Scoti, cum differentiis inter utrumque*, (Padua: Pietro Maria Frambotti, 1671), 11. Mastri, B., *Disputationes theologicae in primum librum sententiarum quibus ab adversantibus tum veterum tum recentiorum jaculis, scoti theologia vindicatur*, (Venice: Ex Typographia Balleoniana, 1730), 347.

¹⁵⁶ Osiander, J., Ibid., 89. "*Pelagianam certe mephitin redolent illa, quae in papatu doctores theologi proponunt, ad fastidium ingerunt & propugnat; deum scil. Clare visum esse finem hominis naturalem*"

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 91.

received modally, the light of glory must also be received by an *obediential potency* rather than simply a natural potency as Scotus claimed.¹⁵⁸ Unlike Scotus, Johann asserts the light of glory is an obediential potency¹⁵⁹ which elicits the beatific vision.¹⁶⁰

On the formality of the beatific vision however, more in line with Scotists and other Lutherans such as Chrytaeus shown above, Johann asserts it is fundamentally practical and fruitful.¹⁶¹ Although Johann states he believes Thomas and Scotus could be reconciled on this point, he does not detail his own attempt to do so.

Johann Osianders treatise on the beatific vision would go on to be noted by Lutheran theologians throughout the eighteenth century for its in depth treatment of the subject, even by those who disagreed with his position on the light of glory.¹⁶² Nevertheless, it is Johann Quenstedt (1617-1688), professor of Philosophy, Logic, and then Theology at Wittenberg, who is said to have written the single greatest work of Lutheran dogmatics after Chemnitz and Gerhard.¹⁶³ Quenstedt, a nephew of Johann Gerhard, published *Theologia didactico-polemica sive systema theologicum* (Wittenberg, 1685) based on his decades of lectures which resulted in an incredibly extensive work. Yet, in many regards Quenstedt straightforwardly repeats points found in Gerhard and Calov. Beginning with the didactic portion, like those before him, and much more clearly than Luther, Quenstedt affirms a full beatitude found in the beatific vision immediately for the departed souls of the saints.¹⁶⁴ Upon the resurrection of the body beatitude will be increased *extensively* but not *intensively*, a distinction often made by Thomists which he gleans from Gerhard. The object of the beatific vision is the divine essence, attributes, and persons.¹⁶⁵ The mode of the vision is both intellectual (intuitive as well as comprehensive) and corporeal such that the infinite God will be known but not in an infinite manner.¹⁶⁶ After the didactic portion, Quenstedt begins the polemic section by addressing whether eternal beatitude consists in an act of the intellect, the will or some combination.¹⁶⁷ Quenstedt takes the admittedly Scotist position that beatitude is fundamentally an act of the will loving and enjoying the divine.¹⁶⁸ Again, this is a position he claims to be best supported by both Gerhard and Calov. As to whether the divine essence will be seen with bodily eyes, Quenstedt notes *some* among the Lutherans, such as Chrytraus, affirm such a view but he finds it more wise to conclude a middle

¹⁵⁸ Feingold, L., *The Natural Desire to See God*, 121.

¹⁵⁹ Osiander, J., *Ibid.*, 58.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹⁶² Christian Wisemann (1746) and Johann Cotta (1769) both recommend consulting Johann Osiander as a premiere Lutheran theologian for this subject. Thanks to Todd Rester for pointing out the work by Wisemann.

¹⁶³ Preus, R., *The Theology of Post Reformation Lutheranism*, 62. For Quenstedts reception in 19th century Lutheranism see Purvis, Z., «The New Ethicist and the Old Bookkeeper: Isaak Dorner, Johann Quenstedt, and Modern Appropriations of Classical Protestantism», *Journal for the History of Modern Theology*, 19 (2012).

¹⁶⁴ Quenstedt, J., *Theologia didactic-polemica, sive systema theologicum*, (Wittenberg: 1685), 550.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 555.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 555-556.,

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 565.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*,

way with Augustine and Gerhard who say that while the possibility cannot be denied so too the theologian cannot definitively assert there will be a corporeal vision of the divine essence.¹⁶⁹

There is still considerable diversity in this period of Lutheranism however, and the Jena theologian Johann Baier (1647-1695) wrote a widely read *Compendium theologiae positivae* (1686) which defended more Thomistic positions. For example, Baier contends not only that the blessed see the divine essence, attributes, and persons,¹⁷⁰ or that the light of glory is supernaturally infused to repropotion the naturally incapable intellect of seeing God,¹⁷¹ but also that beatitude *formally* pertains to the intellect though it necessarily draws in the will to love as well.¹⁷² Baier goes even farther than those before him in firmly arguing *against* the likelihood of a bodily vision of the divine essence.¹⁷³ He claims, “that the blessed will clearly see the divine essence with their glorified bodily eyes, we do not dare to allege.”¹⁷⁴ He then cites Friedrich Balduin (1575-1627) in support of the position the beatific vision is purely intellectual and claims all Gerhard contended is that the opposition should not be immediately rejected.¹⁷⁵ Baiers colleague at Jena, Friedemann Bechmann (1628-1703), repeated many of these same positions with the exception of admitting beatitude is formally intellectual or that the bodily vision of the divine is to be rejected. Rather, he contends the question of seeing God with bodily eyes can simply be set aside for it does not concern a fundamental tenet of the faith.¹⁷⁶

3. *The Beatific Vision in Late Lutheran Orthodoxy (1688-1713)*

The final major figure in early modern Lutheranism to consider is David Hollatz (1648-1713) who studied under Calov and Quenstedt in Wittenberg though never taught in an academic setting himself.¹⁷⁷ His massive work *Examen Theologicum Acroamaticum* (1707) was the fruit of many years of pastoral ministry and was republished frequently throughout the eighteenth century. Hollatz contends the formal end of theology is to attain the greatest good which for the rational soul is to be directed towards God in the operation of participation in divine goodness.¹⁷⁸ Thus, beatitude is the vital operation of the intellectual soul which has attained union with God.¹⁷⁹ Hollatz concedes there is a natural desire for beatitude and that reason can determine this

¹⁶⁹ 566.

¹⁷⁰ Baier, J., *Compendium Theologiae Positivae*, (Jena: Tobiam Oehrlingum, 1686), 314.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 315.

¹⁷² Ibid., 318.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 326.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 326. “*Quòd autem beati oculis corporum clarificatis, ipsam essentiam divinam visuri sint; non audemus afferere.*”

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 327. Balduin, an assistant to Leonhard Hutter and later colleague on the theological faculty at Wittenberg, wrote in his commentary on 1 Corinthians 13:12, “*Apud Mosen non notatur intuitus essentiae divinae, qui nemini mortalium concessus est, sed per Hebraismum familiarissimum cum Deo colloquium seu manifestatio omnium summa, & communicatio confiliorum uberrima. Et talis putatur fore conversatio beatorum in coelo cum Deo qui non ipsam essentiam Dei videre poterunt (quippe quae corporis oculis, licet clarificatis, sit invisibilis.)* *Commentarius in omnes epistolas Pauli*, (Frankfurt: Balthasar Wulff, 1691), 490.

¹⁷⁶ Bechmann, F., *Annotationes ubiores in compendium theologicum Leonardi Hutteri*, (Frankfurt: 1703), 1003.

¹⁷⁷ Preus, R. *The Theology of Post Reformation Lutheranism*, 65.

¹⁷⁸ Hollatz, D., *Examen Theologicum Acroamaticum Universam Theologiam Thetico Polemicam Complectens*, (Lipsiae: Breitkoopfii et Fil, 1763), 451.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 452.

consists in contemplation but it cannot know eternal supreme beatitude which is supernatural.¹⁸⁰ Beatitude is attained through the beatific vision which Hollatz defined as “an intellectual act, illumined by the light of glory, by which God is clearly and immediately known as he is in himself.”¹⁸¹ Hollatz retains Gerhards position that while it is not certain that there will be a vision of God with the eyes of the body it must be affirmed to be possible.¹⁸² Likewise with Gerhard, and departing from Quenstedt, Hollatz contends beatitude is formally complex; consisting in the intellect by vision and the will by enjoying God.¹⁸³

Conclusion

The results of this study generate some qualifications of certain nineteenth century commentators on the period of early modern Lutheranism. For example, Georg Knapp (1753-1825) claimed that theologians from Jena rejected the bodily vision of God while theologians from Wittenberg advocated the position. This was not found to be the case with perhaps the most famous Lutheran theologian from Jena, Johann Gerhard, nor with his son Ernst Gerhard, Cunidso, or Bechmann all of whom firmly defend the possibility of the corporeal vision. Conversely, the Wittenberg theologian Freidrich Balduin emphatically denied the bodily vision of the divine essence with glorified eyes. Although Knapp was likely thinking of eighteenth century figures from Jena such as Christoph Heumann (1681-1764) or Johann Buddeaus (1667-1729) it is important to note the way these seats of Lutheran orthodoxy shifted from the early modern period. A similar qualification should be made to Johann Cotta’s (1701-1779) claim that “*theologi protestantes*” generally have a tendency to stress the primacy of the will and love when it relates to beatitude. This is undoubtedly true in certain cases, but this work has also demonstrated many Lutheran and Reformed stand together with Bonaventure and Richard of Middleton in affirming both the intellect and will are equally essential to beatitude. Not only so, some, such as Baier, even stress the primacy of the intellect when considering the formality of beatitude. In this regard, while Cotta cites the Reformed theologians Voetius and Turretin as having the same view as Gerhard, Calovius, and Quenstedt there is a wider array of theologians from both traditions which should nuance this conclusion. As with the nineteenth century, so too historiography on the beatific vision within the Lutheran tradition from the twentieth century needs considerable refinement. There was a tendency to neglect entirely those who dissented from the bodily vision of God and emphasize this oracular sight in a manner which did not reflect the more qualified endorsement merely of its possibility throughout the majority of the seventeenth century.¹⁸⁴

By way of summary, as surveyed from the tradition of early modern Lutheranism, both devotional and scholastic, Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and Reformed can join united around the claim the object of the beatific vision is the divine essence in rejection of the Greeks.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 456.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 456.

¹⁸² Ibid., 458.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 459.

¹⁸⁴ Hoenecke, A., *Evangelische Luterische Dogmatik* (Milwaukee; Northwestern Publishing House, 1909), 325, is a welcome exception to this trend.

Furthermore, many Lutherans and Reformed agree on the necessity for the light of glory as well. Despite claims from many contemporary Reformed theologians, the Reformed tradition is not unique in affirming a vision of Christ's face in his human nature. On the formality of beatitude though the majority of the Lutherans surveyed here denied an ultimacy to either the intellect or will some were willing to affirm the priority of the intellect and others the will. Though many Lutherans considered a point of disagreement with some of the Reformed over whether the divine essence itself is seen, or whether there is a diversity of heavenly rewards these disputes concern merely particular theologians being considered rather than the heart of the two traditions. To this point Calov illustrates well the core disagreement between Lutherans, Roman Catholics and the Reformed relate to how prolegomenal concerns were shaped by distinctive Christological convictions. If there is a unique contribution to the Christian tradition to be found within a Lutheran approach to the beatific vision, it will be found, as always, in their distinctive Christology.

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