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A Body of Practical Divinity, Consisting of above one hundred and seventy-six sermons on the Lesser Catechism, composed by the Reverend Assembly of Divines at Westminster.

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## Introduction to Volume 2

Thomas Watson's *A Body of Practical Divinity* is a magnum opus of catechetical theology and piety. First published in 1692, a few years after the Puritan preacher died, the book collects sermons that Watson preached on the first forty-two questions from the Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Assembly.

Ever since its publication, *A Body of Practical Divinity* has enjoyed a heralded influence upon Christ's church. The British periodical *Watchman and Observer* commended *A Body of Practical Divinity* as containing "wisdom and searching spirituality...packed into its compact lectures."<sup>1</sup> "We have never seen in any author such a variety and exuberance of rich thought," commented *The Evangelical Repository*.<sup>2</sup> Charles Spurgeon, ever eager to commend Thomas Watson, wrote, "Every divine of Calvinistic views should read it, and every private Christian also. We can heartily recommend it to all lovers of sound doctrine."<sup>3</sup> A more recent examination

1. *Watchman and Observer*, quoted in *The Centennial Memorial*, ed. Archibald Niven (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1859), 38.

2. Joseph C. Cooper, ed., *The Evangelical Repository* (Philadelphia: William S. Young, 1855), 14:60.

3. C. H. Spurgeon, quoted in Susannah Spurgeon, *Ten Years of My Life in Service of the Book Fund* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1889), 6.

of Puritan writings calls *A Body of Practical Divinity* “perhaps the most experiential systematic theology ever written.”<sup>4</sup>

An assessment of Watson’s work shows how *A Body of Practical Divinity* offers theology for knowing God, living in holiness, and preaching Christ. Before considering those themes, it is vital to understand, however briefly, two contexts for Christian catechesis: the broader context of its historical practice in the church, and the particular context of the Westminster Assembly in the 1640s.

### **The Church and Its Catechesis**

Catechism concerns formation. The word *catechism* comes from the Greek word *κατηχέω*, which means “to instruct or inform.” Through questions and answers, the catechumen is encouraged to learn the truth as it is found in Jesus Christ (Eph. 4:21) that he might increase in the Savior’s knowledge (2 Peter 3:18).

In the early church, a well-established practice of catechesis prepared candidates for baptism.<sup>5</sup> As the church matured, catechesis happened after baptism due to the prevalence of infant baptism. A typical Christian catechism was something of a truth-instilling trilogy, as it focused on the Apostles’ Creed, Ten Commandments, and Lord’s Prayer. Martin Luther “fixed the name of a new genre of Christian literature” when he published his Small Catechism in 1529.<sup>6</sup> He took the ancient trilogy of the Creed, Decalogue, and Lord’s Prayer, and added instruction on the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Luther wrote his catechism for young children and urged verbatim repetition of the answers. The Reformation generated countless catechisms. Some came from notable figures like Johannes Oecolampadius and Heinrich Bullinger, while many more came from ordinary pastors. As the Reformation advanced, these catechisms

4. Joel R. Beeke and Randall J. Pederson, *Meet the Puritans: With a Guide to Modern Reprints* (Reformation Heritage Books, 2006), 608.

5. For example, see Gregory Dix and Henry Chadwick, eds., *The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus of Rome: Bishop and Martyr* (Routledge, 1937), 26–28.

6. David F. Wright, “Catechism,” in *The Westminster Handbook to Reformed Theology*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 26.

were used not only for training and discipleship, but also for confirmation. Martin Bucer helped popularize a practice whereby catechesis was a tool for analyzing a child's profession of faith.<sup>7</sup>

The most influential sixteenth-century Reformed catechisms were John Calvin's Geneva Catechism and the Heidelberg Catechism. Calvin divided his catechism into five parts: (1) Of Faith, an exposition of the Creed, (2) Of the Law, the Ten Commandments, (3) Of Prayer, the Lord's Prayer, (4) Of the Word of God, and (5) Of the Sacraments. The Geneva Reformer's scheme is somewhat artificial, as some questions lead to a particular truth and invite the answer of, "Correct!" The Heidelberg Catechism, however, is one of the most effective catechisms ever written. It exudes a warm, pastoral piety combined with doctrinal depth. Designed for instruction on the Lord's Day throughout a calendar year, the Heidelberg Catechism contains three sections: (1) Of Man's Misery, (2) Of Man's Redemption, which treats the Creed and the Sacraments, and (3) Of Thankfulness, unfolding the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer. The more popular language of guilt, grace, and gratitude has shaped countless generations of Reformed churches in their approach to the Christian life.

Despite the clear influence of these sixteenth-century catechisms, David Wright has argued that "no Reformed catechism has been more influential than the Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Assembly."<sup>8</sup>

### **The Assembly and Its Catechisms**

When the Long Parliament appointed over one hundred clergy to reform the Church of England, they could not have predicted how the subsequent Assembly's work would mold Christian theology for generations. This shaping influence came through documents that are collectively known as the Westminster Standards: the Confession of Faith, Larger Catechism, and Shorter Catechism. The Standards are considered by many to be

7. Wright, "Catechism," 27.

8. Wright, "Catechism," in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Westminster John Knox, 1992), 60.

“the highwater mark of Reformed theology in the early modern period (ca. 1500–1800).”<sup>9</sup>

The Westminster Assembly began in 1643 and comprised 151 members and some thirty laymen, men whom Parliament described as “learned, godly, and judicious.” They were chosen to represent the counties, universities, House of Lords, and House of Commons. Three divines (theologians) served Canterbury and London congregations of the Reformed Church of France. Three New England ministers declined the invitation to participate, citing the long journey required. Twenty-eight divines did not attend, primarily due to the king’s prohibition, and a total of twenty-one “superadded divines” were later appointed as replacements for members who did not attend, or who died during the proceedings. Some of the most famous Puritans of the era—Richard Baxter and John Owen, for example—were not among the invited attendees. Of particular importance in the Assembly’s work were eight commissioners from the Church of Scotland who arrived “fresh from the battle ‘with lordly bishops, popish ceremonies, and royal mandates.’”<sup>10</sup> One such mandate related to catechizing.

A civil war was raging when the Westminster Assembly began. The Assembly’s eventual charter was to help establish a more uniform religion in England, Scotland, and Ireland. Ideally, a fresh statement of Reformed theology and practice would align with Puritan principles. “The change was particularly crucial since the king’s compliance with the policies of Archbishop William Laud was one cause for the civil war,” writes John Bower.<sup>11</sup> The Assembly’s work was meant to bring “the nearest conjunction and Uniformity in Religion, Confession of Faith, Form of Church-government, Directory for Worship and Catechizing.”<sup>12</sup>

9. J. V. Fesko, *The Theology of the Westminster Standards: Historical Context & Theological Insights* (Crossway, 2014), 23.

10. Philip Schaff, quoted in Brian Kinney, ed., *The Confessions of Our Faith* (Fortress Press, 2007), xi.

11. John R. Bower, *The Larger Catechism: A Critical Text and Introduction* (Reformation Heritage Books, 2010), 3.

12. *A Solemn League and Covenant* (London, 1643).

Work on a single catechism commenced in 1643 under the leadership of Herbert Palmer, considered the “most noted catechist in England.”<sup>13</sup> The work proceeded in fits and starts for over three years. After discarding various drafts, the Assembly adopted a new plan that called for two different catechisms. One would instruct children and the theologically uneducated. Another would disciple those more advanced in the faith.

The Assembly approved the Larger Catechism in July of 1647 and the Shorter Catechism eight days later. The Shorter Catechism was first published in 1648, and its truth has stood the test of time. Richard Baxter called it “the best catechism I ever saw, a most excellent sum of the Christian faith and doctrine, and a fit test to try the orthodoxy of teachers.”<sup>14</sup> Noted church historian Philip Schaff believed the Shorter Catechism “likely to last to the end of time.”<sup>15</sup> Writing in 1866, Horatius Bonar explained,

Our Scottish Catechisms (which includes the *Shorter*), though grey with the antiquity of three centuries, are not yet out of date. They still read well, both as to style and substance; it would be hard to amend them, or to substitute something better in their place. Like some of our old church bells, they have retained for centuries their sweetness and amplitude of tone unimpaired.<sup>16</sup>

More recently, T. F. Torrance called the Shorter Catechism “one of the greatest and most remarkable documents in the whole of Christian theology.”<sup>17</sup>

13. Robert Baillie, *The Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie* (Edinburgh: Robert Ogle, 1841), 2:140.

14. Quoted in A. A. Hodge and J. Aspinwall Hodge, *The System of Theology Contained in the Westminster Shorter Catechism* (Wipf & Stock, 2004, reprint 1888), 6.

15. Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom with Historical and Critical Notes* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1877), 1:787.

16. Horatius Bonar, *Catechisms of the Scottish Reformation* (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1866), viii.

17. T. F. Torrance, *The School of Faith: The Catechisms of the Reformed Church* (James Clarke & Co., 1959), 262.

### Shorter Catechism Catechesis

Although it may be the least-used document, produced by the Westminster Assembly, the importance of the *Westminster Directory for Publick Worship* is evident in the fact that it was published in 1645, before the Confession or Catechisms. The *Directory* includes several statements on when and why to catechize. Catechesis—in the mold of Westminster—meant earnest catechizing, especially on the Lord’s Day. The *Directory* urges “catechizing in a plain way” so that “the understandings of the simpler may be the better enabled to profit under the public ordinances, and they made more capable to understand the Scriptures when they are read.”<sup>18</sup> Pastors and parents alike were to catechize the children regularly so the youth could express “the first principles of the oracles of God.”<sup>19</sup> Many think the Shorter Catechism’s sole intended audience is children, but the Westminster divines’ intention was that it “be more easy and short for beginners” and “for the more rude and ignorant,” namely, people of any age who are unfamiliar with sound doctrine.<sup>20</sup> Faithful catechesis provides a theological grid and grammar by which a Christian can “glorify God and enjoy him forever.”

Like earlier Reformed catechisms, the Shorter Catechism covers the essentials of Christian theology before moving to the Ten Commandments and the Lord’s Prayer. Whereas Reformed catechesis typically mined the Apostles’ Creed for instruction on basic doctrine, the Shorter Catechism’s first thirty-eight questions—the material Thomas Watson covers in *A Body of Practical Divinity*—are summaries of the doctrine articulated in the Westminster Confession of Faith.<sup>21</sup> The topics move logically along key loci of theology, covering the truth about Scripture, God, and providence, before moving to man, sin, Christ, the *ordo salutis*, and future judgment.

18. *The Directory for the Publick Worship of God* (Philadelphia: B. Franklin, 1745), 82.

19. *The Directory for the Publick Worship of God*, 52.

20. I. M. Green, *The Christian’s ABC: Catechisms and Catechizing in England c. 1530–1740* (Oxford University Press, 1996), 80.

21. Torrance states, “It is typical of the Westminster theology that it should replace the order of the Apostles’ Creed for a more scholastic scheme of exposition.” *The School of Faith*, 262.

Two words encapsulate the Shorter Catechism's theology: Calvinistic and covenantal. Both themes emerge early. For example, questions 7 and 11 underscore the Reformed view of God's sovereignty over the whole world:

Question 7: "What are the decrees of God?" Answer: "The decrees of God are his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass."

Question 11: "What are God's works of providence?" Answer: "God's works of providence are his most holy, wise and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions."

Standard seventeenth-century federalism, or covenant theology, is likewise urged at the outset. Question 12 asks, "What special act of providence did God exercise towards man in the estate wherein he was created?" The answer: "When God had created man, he entered into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of perfect obedience; forbidding him to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, upon pain of death." The Catechism's covenantalism is also seen in question 20: "Did God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery?" The answer: "God having, out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a Redeemer."

Thomas Watson was happy to wade into the Confession's Calvinistic and covenantal waters, as *The Body of Divinity* reveals Watson's harmony with the contours of Westminster doctrine.

### **Thomas Watson's Catechesis and *A Body of Practical Divinity***

Watson begins *A Body of Practical Divinity* with preliminary comments about catechizing. Taking a cue from Colossians 1:23, "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled," Watson tells his readers that Christians must be settled in the faith. The Lord commissions the Christian ministry

to strengthen and settle souls in the truth. “If you be not settled, you do not answer God’s end in giving you the ministry,” Watson warns.<sup>22</sup>

As mentioned already, Watson’s Puritan tradition prized catechesis. The question-and-answer scheme was well suited to a ministry model of precision and plainness. The goal of catechesis, however, was not mere memorization. As Watson explains, its aim is to settle men, women, and children in the basics of sound doctrine and living. Without such grounding, people are like wandering stars (Jude 13) or unstable water (Gen. 49:4).

Watson hoped catechesis would keep his church stable and steadfast in Christ. “Catechizing is the best expedient for grounding and settling of people,” he teaches.<sup>23</sup> Proper catechesis enables a Christian to serve God rightly, grow in the grounds of true religion, be fitted with weapons to fight against error, and see grace increase in the heart.

Watson was convinced that one reason why preaching did little good for the churches was because “the chief heads and articles in religion have not been explained in a catechetical way.”<sup>24</sup> Rightly understood and employed, catechetical preaching builds a theological foundation upon which a Christian can grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. If there is no foundation in truth, there will be no spiritual maturity—and catechesis is the foundation. According to Watson, this is why so many figures in the early church gave themselves to earnest catechesis: for example, Fulgentius, Augustine, Theodoret, and Lactantius.

Watson concludes by mentioning his planned practice of catechesis: “I intend every other sabbath, in the afternoon to make it my whole work to lay down the grounds and fundamentals of religion in a catechetical way.”<sup>25</sup>

The reader should note how Watson offers catechesis for knowing, living, and preaching.

22. Thomas Watson, *A Body of Practical Divinity* (London, 1692), 6.

23. Watson, *A Body of Practical Divinity*, 8.

24. Watson, *A Body of Practical Divinity*, 8.

25. Watson, *A Body of Practical Divinity*, 9.

### *A Body of Practical Divinity* Is for Knowing God

The Shorter Catechism soars from the start. The first question memorably asks, “What is the chief end of man?” Its answer has echoed through the ages ever since its publication: “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.” To glorify and enjoy God eternally, one must know Him intimately (John 17:3). We must understand all the Lord has revealed about Himself—His attributes, actions, words, ways, and works. “To have the knowledge of the true God, is more than if we had mines of gold, rocks of diamonds, islands of spices,” Watson says.<sup>26</sup> He acknowledges that one can learn about God through the books of conscience and creation, but it is the special book of God’s Word that brings saving knowledge of God.

Watson’s Word-saturated focus is required by the Shorter Catechism. Question 3 asks, “What do the Scriptures principally teach?” The answer: “The Scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man.” Thus, *A Body of Practical Divinity* pulses with instruction as to what every person must know and believe about God. It is best defined as “doctrinal instruction.” Watson employs a predictable pattern with each question from the Shorter Catechism. He takes the main doctrine communicated in the question at hand and then moves to mine the Bible for truth on the topic, truth he can systematize into clear teaching. After addressing common objections or questions, he closes with “uses” or applications. The pattern creates a packed and pithy work of systematic theology. One of Watson’s many talents is his ability to let his great learning deepen, rather than detract from, his instruction. The wise reader notes how Watson was acquainted with early church figures as well as the main theological interlocutors of the seventeenth century. The primary enemies that draw his polemical ire are the papists, Arminians, and Socinians. While his erudition in theology and history is obvious, it never overwhelms his focus, which is the truth of God’s Word. God’s truth takes center stage in Watson’s teaching because the “ear is the

26. Watson, *A Body of Practical Divinity*, 80.

conduit-pipe through which knowledge is conveyed.”<sup>27</sup> Faith comes by hearing God’s Word.

It is unsurprising, therefore, that Scripture saturates Watson’s work. “The word is a rule of faith,” he comments, “a canon to direct our lives.”<sup>28</sup> The Bible gives a model of devotion and “perfectly instructs us in the deep things of God.”<sup>29</sup> Rarely can the reader pass through a paragraph from Watson without some interaction with Scripture. Every person should read *A Body of Practical Divinity* with a mind to studying the God revealed in His Word. The Bible is a blessed book that “will fill your head with knowledge and your heart with grace.”<sup>30</sup>

### ***A Body of Practical Divinity* Is for Living in Holiness**

“One of the most significant characteristics of seventeenth-century Reformed thought,” remarks Richard Muller, “was its sense of the positive relationship between theological orthodoxy and practical piety, as evidenced in its consistent emphasis on the intimate relationship between faith and practice, doctrine and life.”<sup>31</sup> In brief, doctrine was for living unto godliness.

The Shorter Catechism stresses the dual intent of God’s Word. The Bible tells us what to believe about God, “and what duty God requires of man.” As a typical Puritan preacher, Watson always brings the truth home to a believer’s heart. *A Body of Practical Divinity* never hurries past the doctrinal substance in each question, nor does it ever miss the chance to show how the given doctrine shapes a life of holiness. The Puritan project was one of complete conformity to Christ—in head, heart, and hand. Puritan “literature stressed the search for assurance of salvation, a personal experience of conversion, regeneration by the Holy Spirit, the

27. Watson, *A Body of Practical Divinity*, 85.

28. Watson, *A Body of Practical Divinity*, 26.

29. Watson, *A Body of Practical Divinity*, 26.

30. Watson, *A Body of Practical Divinity*, 29.

31. Richard Muller, “Principles and Practice for the Household: Thomas Gouge’s Catechesis ‘with Practical Applications,’” in Michael A. G. Haykin and Paul M. Smalley, eds., *Puritan Piety: Writings in Honor of Joel R. Beeke* (Christian Focus Publications, 2018), 151.

mystical union of the soul with Christ, growth in holiness of life, and a devout frame of mind designated ‘heavenly-mindedness.’”<sup>32</sup>

In *A Body of Practical Divinity*, Watson employs what the Puritans famously called the “uses” of a given doctrine. The *Westminster Directory for Publick Worship* declares that the preacher “is not to rest in general doctrine...but to bring it home to special use by application to his hearers.”<sup>33</sup> The *Directory* urges pastors to employ various “uses,” all of which are found in *A Body of Practical Divinity*.

*Instruction* in a particular truth arising from the doctrine.

*Confutation* of false teaching.

*Exhortation* to perform those duties that the doctrine requires.

*Admonition* to avoid being “overtaken and surprised” by sin or error.

*Comfort* for a “troubled heart” and “afflicted spirit.”

*Trial* for self-examination.

The *Directory* states that it is not necessary for every sermon to contain every use. The faithful preacher should only put forward those uses that “he finds most needful and seasonable: and, among these, such as most draw their souls to Christ, the Fountain of light, holiness and comfort.”<sup>34</sup>

By adopting this approach to application in preaching, Watson shows the diverse ways God’s Word shapes a heart to Christlikeness. An example of this is how he applies his instruction on “Christ the Mediator.” He proves from Scripture that “Jesus Christ is the sum and quintessence of the gospel.”<sup>35</sup> He unfolds the names and person of Jesus Christ and then puts forth four “uses.” The first is instruction: We should “admire the glory of this Mediator.” The second is exhortation: Since Christ is the God-man in one person, we should “look to Him alone for salvation.” The third is comfort: The fact that Christ is “God and man in one person”

32. Dewey D. Wallace, Jr., “Puritanism, English” in “Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith,” 311.

33. *The Directory for the Publick Worship of God*, 18.

34. *The Directory for the Publick Worship of God*, 19–20.

35. Watson, *A Body of Practical Divinity*, 117.

should be of “unspeakable comfort.” The fourth is admonition: We should “admire the love of Christ our Mediator,” because He humbled Himself and took our flesh “that He might redeem us.”<sup>36</sup>

It is important to note Watson’s Christ-centered approach to piety. A life of holiness is nothing more than union and communion with the Savior. “Grace cannot but grow from a believer’s ingrafting into Christ,” Watson instructs.<sup>37</sup> This union by grace must overflow into a communion of grace. “He who has grace is never weary of it, but still would have more.”<sup>38</sup>

### ***A Body of Practical Divinity Is for Preaching Jesus Christ***

Not only are we to know Christ and grow into His likeness, we are to preach Him (Col. 1:28). Watson’s preaching of Christ in *A Body of Practical Divinity* is worthy of our attention.

First, it displays the power of doctrinal sermons. Hughes Oliphant Old reminds us that, in Watson’s hands, “Catechetical preaching is obviously doctrinal preaching.”<sup>39</sup> The *Westminster Directory for Publick Worship* summarizes the Puritan ideal: “Ordinarily, the subject of the sermon is to be some text of Scripture, holding forth some principle or head of religion.”<sup>40</sup> Puritan preachers typically took a single text of Scripture, discerned a doctrine from it, and then declared the implications of that doctrine in the sermon.

The *Directory* called preachers to take care in three main areas as they developed the doctrine. First, they must ensure that the “matter be the truth of God.” No pastor should introduce a doctrine that is not manifestly given in God’s Word. Second, the doctrine must “be a truth contained in or grounded on that text” from which the sermon comes. When the doctrine rises from the sermon text, hearers gain confidence that it is indeed a biblical doctrine. Third, the preacher must insist upon “those doctrines which are principally intended, and make most for the edification of the

36. Watson, *A Body of Practical Divinity*, 119–20.

37. Watson, *A Body of Practical Divinity*, 194.

38. Watson, *A Body of Practical Divinity*, 194.

39. Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church: Vol. 4: The Age of the Reformation* (Eerdmans, 2002), 317.

40. *The Directory for the Publick Worship of God*, 17.

hearers.”<sup>41</sup> A preacher must employ wisdom in knowing how the sermon text best feeds his congregation. “Doctrinal preaching certainly bores the hypocrites,” writes J. I. Packer, “but it is only doctrinal preaching that will save Christ’s sheep.”<sup>42</sup> Watson models the power—and attraction—of doctrinal preaching. Far from boring hearers, faithful doctrinal preaching gives people the solid matter of God’s Word, food that can sustain them on their journey to the celestial city.

A second reason why Watson’s preaching remains alluring is how it vividly and vibrantly communicates truth. Watson belonged to a school of Puritan preaching known for its “tidy lucidity.”<sup>43</sup> Over two hundred years after Watson’s death, the celebrated preacher William Jay said he could go to Watson’s preaching and “find it ever fresh, pointed and instructive.”<sup>44</sup> Just as a paragraph rarely passes without some interaction with Scripture, Watson rarely leaves a truth unillustrated. His work bulges with word pictures, metaphors, and analogies. Charles Spurgeon says Watson won “the popular ear” by “his frequent illustrations.”<sup>45</sup> It is the reason one recent analysis of Watson’s preaching concluded, “Because of his extensive use of word pictures, Watson rises out of history as one of the greatest Puritan preachers.”<sup>46</sup> A small sample shows Watson’s skill in illustrating God’s truth:

Praise is the rent we pay to God. While God renews our lease, we must  
renew our rent.<sup>47</sup>

The proud man is the mark which God shoots at, and he never misses  
the mark.<sup>48</sup>

41. All quotes from *The Directory for the Publick Worship of God*, 18.

42. J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Crossways, 1990), 285.

43. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness*, 75.

44. Thomas Wallace, *A Portraiture of the Late Rev. William Jay of Bath* (London: Arthur Hall, Virtue and Co., 1854), 149.

45. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *The Art of Illustration* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1897), 27.

46. Jack Hughes, *Expository Preaching with Word Pictures: With Illustrations from the Sermons of Thomas Watson* (Christian Focus, 2001), 31.

47. Watson, *A Body of Practical Divinity*, 16.

48. Watson, *A Body of Practical Divinity*, 144.

As the sea covers great rocks, so God's covenant-mercy covers  
great sins.<sup>49</sup>

As the chameleon is changed into the color of that which it looks  
upon, so faith looking on Christ, changes a Christian into the  
image of Christ.<sup>50</sup>

The jewel of assurance is best kept in the cabinet of a humble heart.<sup>51</sup>

Scripture is a living, breathing power. Every sermon ought to contain both simple language and colorful images to communicate the truth of Jesus Christ. Watson shows the way to both.

### **Thomas Watson and The Lord's Supper**

The second, and much shorter, work in this volume is Thomas Watson's *The Holy Eucharist, or The Mystery of the Lord's Supper Explained*. It was first published in 1665 and is a devotional meditation more than a doctrinal instruction on the sacrament. Watson admits as much when he says, "The scope of this ensuing discourse is to raise a high value and appreciation of the sacrament, to excite holy ardors of soul in such as intend to partake of it."<sup>52</sup> His desire is to urge fresh joy in communion with Christ.

### **A Reformed View of the Lord's Supper**

Eucharistic theology was a flash point in the Reformation and post-Reformation. The primary point of debate concerned Christ's presence in the sacrament. The Roman Catholic Church taught that He was physically present in the elements of the Lord's Supper. Rome believed that, upon the blessing of the priest, the elements transformed into Christ's real body and blood—hence the name "transubstantiation."

While the Reformers rejected Rome's teaching, they were not united in their understanding of the Lord's Supper. Different proposals existed regarding the nature of Christ's presence in the sacrament. The Reformed

49. Watson, *A Body of Practical Divinity*, 115.

50. Watson, *A Body of Practical Divinity*, 156.

51. Watson, *A Body of Practical Divinity*, 185.

52. Thomas Watson, *The Holy Eucharist* (London, 1668), 3.

theologians of Switzerland were the first to divide over this. “Two types of eucharistic theology developed among them, with Zwingli and Calvin furnishing the respective models.”<sup>53</sup> While Zwingli became the figurehead of a movement that called for a mere remembrance of Christ in the Supper, Calvin argued for the real spiritual presence of Christ in the sacrament.

The Westminster Assembly confessed a Calvinistic understanding of Christ’s presence in the Lord’s Supper:

Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements, in this sacrament, do then also, inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally but spiritually, receive, and feed upon, Christ crucified, and all benefits of his death: the body and blood of Christ being then, not corporally or carnally, in, with, or under the bread and wine; yet, as really, but spiritually, present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses.  
(WCF 29.7)

Watson reflects the Calvinistic consensus. He definitively argues against transubstantiation. “The papists affirm that the bread, after the consecration, is turned into the substance of Christ’s body. We hold that Christ’s body is in the sacrament spiritually. But the papists say that it is there carnally, which opinion is both absurd and impious.”<sup>54</sup> Watson also rejects the idea that the Eucharist is a mere memorial, the simple act of remembering Christ’s sacrifice. “Surely,” Watson argues, “this glorious ordinance is more than an effigy or mere representative of Christ.”<sup>55</sup> He goes on to announce that “Christ gives himself to believers” in the Supper. Further, “We shall have not only a representation, but a participation of Christ in the sacrament.”<sup>56</sup>

53. Brian A. Gerrish, “The Lord’s Supper in the Reformed Confession” in *Major Themes in the Reformed Tradition*, ed., Donald K. McKim (Eerdmans, 1992), 245.

54. Watson, *The Holy Eucharist*, II.

55. Watson, *The Holy Eucharist*, II.

56. Watson, *The Holy Eucharist*, 33.

A key feature of the Reformed teaching on the Eucharist is the necessity of faith. Rome proclaimed that the sacrament's efficacy is *ex opere operato*, "from the working of the work." It announced that sacramental efficacy is automatic and independent of faith. The Reformers believed in sacramental efficacy but insisted that it depended on faith. This is why a simple reading of *The Holy Eucharist* finds faith everywhere explained and extolled. Watson is careful to state that faith is only the instrument in communion. The object is Christ. He asks, "Does the virtue [in the sacrament] lie in faith?" He answers, "Not in faith considered purely as a grace, but as it has respect to the object. The virtue is not in faith, but in Christ."<sup>57</sup>

Because faith only comes by hearing, and it is central to the Supper, the preaching of the Word is vital.

### **Sermons on the Supper**

Appended to Watson's brief treatise on the Lord's Supper are what he describes as "a few lines from a sacramental discourse."<sup>58</sup> These "few lines" include two sacramental sermons. The first, "The Fiery Serpent," is an exposition of Numbers 21:6–9. It is a Christ-centered sermon intended to prepare his audience to look to Christ. "What need have we to look often upon Christ in the frequent celebration of the Lord's Supper," says Watson, "where Christ in a special manner is lifted up."<sup>59</sup>

The second sermon, "The Spiritual Vine," expounds John 15:1. Watson seeks to "raise the saints' esteem of Christ, [so] that they may come to the sacred supper with more eagerness" and receive from the true vine.<sup>60</sup>

An affectionate Christology permeates Watson's teaching on the Lord's Supper. This is perhaps most evident in his regular references to the Song of Songs.<sup>61</sup> Like his contemporaries, he interpreted this book as "a marriage-song" between Christ and His bride—the church. Tom

57. Watson, *The Holy Eucharist*, 28.

58. Watson, *The Holy Eucharist*, 47.

59. Watson, *The Holy Eucharist*, 58.

60. Watson, *The Holy Eucharist*, 65.

61. Elizabeth Clarke, *Politics, Religion and the Song of Songs in Seventeenth-Century England* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 180.

Schwanda calls the Song of Songs “the premiere biblical book” for Puritan spirituality as it develops “the metaphor of mystical union or spiritual marriage.”<sup>62</sup> For Watson, in the Song of Songs, we see the love of Christ and His church running towards each other. Therefore, to read Watson on the Lord’s Supper is to be summoned to join Christ’s bride at His banqueting table. “Let poor doubting Christians be encouraged to come to the Lord’s table” that they may commune with their Savior.<sup>63</sup> As the bride was “sick with love” for the bridegroom, Watson wants his readers to approach the Lord’s Supper “with hearts fired with love to Christ.”<sup>64</sup>

—JORDAN STONE

62. Tom Schwanda, “‘Sweetness in Communion with God’: The Contemplative–Mystical Piety of Thomas Watson,” *Journal for the History of Reformed Pietism* 1, no. 2 (2015): 39.

63. Watson, *The Holy Eucharist*, 33.

64. Watson, *The Holy Eucharist*, 26.

## To the Reader

These catechetical lectures of the late reverend Mr. Thomas Watson—all but one written with his own hand—I have read over, together with some sermons annexed to them. Since my testimony is desired concerning them, I do hereby declare that—though I will not undertake to justify every expression or sentence in them, or in any human writing—I find them, in the main, agreeable to the doctrinal articles of this church and to the Westminster Assembly’s Confession of Faith and Catechisms. I believe that, through the blessing of God, they may be profitable for the edification of all who read them with an honest desire to know and do the will of God. Certainly, there are many excellent things in them, which, if they meet with a well-disposed [and] serious mind, are very apt to have a good effect upon it. If it proves otherwise with any who happen to read this book, it will be their own fault more than the book’s.

Most writers have different styles, and it is well-known that Mr. Watson had one peculiar to himself, which yet has found good acceptance with, and has been useful to, serious people. I hope this—by reason of the great variety of excellent matter—may be more generally useful than any other thing he ever wrote. I little doubt but every sober Christian will be of this mind, after he has read his *Lectures on God’s Attributes*, *The Ten Commandments*, *Lord’s Prayer*, etc. I sincerely profess, I have no other end in giving this testimony of this book, but thereby to serve the common good of Christ’s church, and not the private interest of any person or party in the world. If my conscience did not bear me witness that this book may be useful to that excellent end, no man should ever have prevailed with me thus to prefix my testimony and name to it.

That it may answer the main end for which it was at first written by the author—whom I always took to be a grave, serious, modest, good man—and for which, I hope, it is now published, to wit, the edification of

the church of Christ in faith, holiness, and comfort, is the hearty desire of one of the meanest servants of our most blessed Lord Jesus.

—WILLIAM LORIMER

We whose names are subscribed, having seen the testimony of our worthy brother, Mr. William Lorimer, after his perusal of this book, doubt not but it may be of use to many, as the former writings of Mr. Thomas Watson have been. And with that desire and hope we recommend it to masters of families and others.

William Bates, Matthew Barker, John Howie  
Matthew Mead, Edward Lawrence, Samuel Slater  
Richard Mayo, Matthew Sylvester, Daniel Burges  
Joseph Cawthorne, Daniel Williams, Richard Wavel  
Timothy Cruso, Timothy Rogers, Nathaniel Oldfield  
Richard Adams, Richard Steel, Samuel Stancliff  
John Raynolds, Nathaniel Vincent, John Hughes  
Joseph Read, Abraham Hume, Richard Stretton  
John Shower, Francis Glascock, Daniel Williams

# Man's Chief End

*Question 1.* What is the chief end of man?

*Response.* Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

Here are two ends of life specified: the glorifying of God, and the enjoying of God.

## **End 1: Glorifying God**

I begin with the first. "That God in all things may be glorified" (1 Peter 4:11). The glory of God is a silver thread which must run through all our actions. "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). Everything works to some end in things natural and artificial. Being a rational creature, man must propose some end to himself, and that is that he may lift up God in the world. It is better to lose his life than lose the end of his living. So then, the great truth asserted is this: that the end of every man's living is to glorify God. This is the yearly rent that is paid to the crown of heaven. Glorifying of God has respect to all the persons in the Trinity. It respects God the Father, who gave us our life. It respects God the Son, who lost His life for us. It

respects God the Holy Spirit, who produces a new life in us. We must bring glory to the whole Trinity.

**QUESTION 1** What are we to understand by God's glory?

*Answer.* There is a twofold glory. First, [we are to understand] the glory that God has in Himself—His intrinsic glory. Glory is essential to the Godhead, as light is to the sun. He is called the “God of glory” (Acts 7:2). Glory is the sparkling of the deity. Glory is so co-natural to the Godhead that God cannot be God without it. The creature's honor is not essential to its being. A king is a man without his regal ornaments when his crown and royal robe are taken away, but God's glory is such an essential part of His being that He cannot be God without it. God's very life lies in His glory. This glory can receive no addition because it is infinite. This glory is that which God is most tender of, and which He will not part with. “My glory I will not give to another” (Isa. 48:11). God will give temporal blessings to His children, such as wisdom, riches, [and] honor. He will give them spiritual blessings: He will give them grace, He will give them His love, and He will give them heaven. But His essential glory He will not give to another. King Pharaoh parted with a ring off his finger to Joseph, and a gold chain, but he would not part with his throne. “Only in the throne will I be greater than you” (Gen. 41:40). So God will do much for His people. He will give them the inheritance. He will put some of Christ's glory, as mediator, upon them. But His essential glory He will not part with—“in the throne he will be greater.”

Second, [we are to understand] the glory which is ascribed to God, or which His creatures labor to bring to Him. “Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name” (1 Chron. 16:29). “Glorify God in your body and in your spirit” (1 Cor. 6:20). The glory we give God is nothing else but our lifting up His name in the world and magnifying Him in the eyes of others. “Christ shall be magnified in my body” (Phil. 1:20).

**QUESTION 2** What is it to glorify God, or in what does it consist?

*Answer.* Glorifying of God consists in four things: appreciation, adoration, affection, [and] subjection. This is the yearly rent we pay to the crown of heaven.

First, glorifying God consists of appreciation. To glorify God is to set God highest in our thoughts, to have a venerable esteem of Him. "Thou, Lord, art most high for evermore" (Ps. 92:8). "Thou art exalted far above all gods" (Ps. 97:9). There is in God all that may draw forth both wonder and delight. There is in Him a constellation of all beauties. He is *prima causa*, the original and springhead of being who sheds a glory upon the creature. This is to glorify God, when we are God-admirers. We admire God in His attributes, which are the glistening beams by which the divine nature shines forth. We admire Him in His promises, which are the charter of free grace and the spiritual cabinet where the pearl of price is hid. We admire God in the noble effects of His power and wisdom, namely the making of the world, which is called the "work of his fingers" (Ps. 8:3). It was such curious needlework that no one but God could work. This is to glorify God, to have God-admiring thoughts. We esteem Him most excellent and search for diamonds only in this rock.

Second, glorifying of God consists in adoration or worship. "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" (Ps. 29:2). There is a twofold worship. First, a civil reverence we give to persons of honor. "Abraham stood up and bowed himself to the children of Heth" (Gen. 23:7). Piety is no enemy to courtesy. Second, a divine worship which we give to God is His royal prerogative. "They bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces towards the ground" (Neh. 8:6). God is very jealous of this divine worship. This is the apple of His eye and the pearl of His crown which He guards, as He did the tree of life, with cherubim and a flaming sword, that no man may come near it to violate it. Divine worship must be such as God Himself has appointed, or else it is offering strange fire (Lev. 10:2). The Lord would have Moses make the tabernacle "according to the pattern in the Mount" (Ex. 25:40). He must not leave out anything in the pattern, nor add to it. If God was so exact and curious about the place of worship, how exact will He be about the matter of His worship? Surely here everything must be according to the pattern prescribed in His Word.

Third, glorifying God consists of affection. This is a part of the glory we give to God. God counts Himself glorified when He is loved. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul"

(Deut. 6:5). There is a twofold love. (1) *Amor concupiscentiæ* (a love of concupiscence), which is self-love, as when we love another because he does us a good turn. Thus, a wicked man may be said to love God, because He has given him a good crop or filled his cup with wine. To speak properly, this is rather to love God's blessing than to love God. (2) *Amor amicitia* (a love of delight), as a man takes delight in a friend. This is indeed to love God. The heart is set upon God, as a man's heart is set upon his treasure. And this love is exuberant—not a few drops, but a stream. It is also superlative, for we give God the best of our love, the cream of it. "I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine, of the juice of my pomegranate" (Song 8:2). If the spouse had a cup juicier and more spiced, Christ must drink of it. It is intense and ardent. True saints are seraphim, burning in holy love to God. The spouse was *amore percussa*,<sup>1</sup> in fainting fits, "sick of love" (Song 2:5). Thus, to love God is to glorify Him. He who is the chief of our happiness has the chief of our affections.

Fourth, glorifying God consists of subjection: we dedicate ourselves to God and stand ready dressed for His service. Thus, the angels in heaven glorify Him. They wait on His throne and are ready to take a commission from Him. Therefore, they are represented by the cherubim with their wings displayed to show how swift the angels are in their obedience. This is to glorify God. When we are devoted to His service, our head studies for God, our tongue pleads for Him, [and] our hands relieve His members. The wise men that came to Christ did not only bow the knee to Him but presented Him with gold and myrrh (Matt. 2:11). So we must not only bow the knee and give God worship but also bring the presents of golden obedience. This is to glorify God: when we stick at no service, when we fight under the banner of His gospel against regiments, and say to Him as David to king Saul, "Thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine." (1 Sam. 17:32).

Thus, you see the glorifying of God consists in appreciation, adoration, affection, [and] subjection. A good Christian is like the sun, which does not only send forth heat, but goes its circuit round the world. Thus, he

1. "Stricken with love."

who glorifies God has not only his affections heated with love to God, but he goes his circuit too, as he moves vigorously in the sphere of obedience.

**QUESTION 3** Why must we glorify God?

*Answer 1.* God gives us our being. "It is he that made us" (Ps. 100:3). We think it a great kindness in a man to spare our life, but what kindness is it in God to give us our life? We draw our breath from Him. And as life, so all the comforts of life are from God. He gives us health, which is the sauce to sweeten our life. He gives us food, which is the oil that nourishes the lamp of life. Now, if all we receive is from the hand of His bounty, is it not good reason we should glorify Him and live to Him, seeing we live by Him? "For of him, and through him are all things" (Rom. 11:36). Of Him are all—all we have is of His fullness. Through Him are all—all we have is through His free grace. Therefore, to Him should be all. So, it follows: "To him be glory forever." God is not only our benefactor, but our founder. The rivers come from the sea, and they empty their silver streams into the sea again.

*Answer 2.* God has made all things for His own glory. "The Lord has made all things for himself" (Prov. 16:4), that is, for His glory. As a king has a portion out of commodities, God will have His glory out of everything. He will have glory out of the wicked, which is the glory of His justice. They will not give Him glory, but He will get His glory upon them. "I will get me honor upon Pharaoh" (Ex. 14:17). But especially He has made the godly for His glory. They are the lively organs of His praise. "This people have I formed for myself, and they shall shew forth my praise" (Isa. 43:21). It is true that they cannot add to His glory, but they may exalt it. They cannot raise Him in heaven, but they may raise Him in the esteem of others. God has adopted the saints into His family and made them a royal priesthood, that they should show forth the praises of Him who has called them (1 Peter 2:9).

*Answer 3.* Because the glory of God has such intrinsic value and excellency in it, it transcends the thoughts of men and the tongues of angels. God's glory is His treasure; all His riches lie here. As Micah said, "What have I more?" (Judg. 18:24). So it is of God: What has God more? God's glory is more worth than heaven, more worth than the salvation of all

men's souls. It is better that kingdoms are thrown down, better that men and angels are annihilated, than God should lose one jewel of His crown, one beam of His glory.

*Answer 4.* Creatures below us and above us bring glory to God. Do we think to sit rent-free? Shall everything glorify God but man? It is a pity, then, that ever man was made. First, creatures below us glorify God, the inanimate creatures. And the heavens glorify God. "The heavens declare the glory of God" (Ps. 19:1). The curious workmanship of heaven sets forth the glory of its maker. The firmament is beautified and penciled out in blue and azure colors, where the power and wisdom of God may be clearly seen. "The heavens declare his glory." We may see the glory of God blazing in the sun and twinkling in the stars. Second, look into the air, at the birds, who, with their chirping music, sing hymns of praise to God, says Anselm. Every beast does, in its kind, glorify God. "The beasts of the field shall honor me" (Isa. 43:20). Third, creatures above us glorify God. "The angels are ministering spirits" (Heb. 1:14). They are still waiting on God's throne and bring some revenues of glory into the bank of heaven. Then surely man should be much more studious of God's glory than the angels, for God has honored him more than the angels. Christ took man's nature upon Himself, and not the angels. Although, in regard of creation, God has made man "a little lower than the angels" (Heb. 2:7). Yet, in regard of redemption, God has set him higher than the angels. He has married mankind to Himself. The angels are Christ's friends, but not His spouse. He has covered us with the purple robe of righteousness, which is a better righteousness than the angels have (2 Cor. 5:21). So that if the angels bring glory to God, how much more should we, being dignified with honor above the angelical spirits.

*Answer. 5.* We must bring glory to God because all our hopes hang upon Him. "My hope is in thee" (Ps. 39:7). "My expectation is from him" (Ps. 62:5). I expect a kingdom from Him. A child that is good-natured will honor his parent, as expecting everything he is like to be worth from him. "All my springs are in thee" (Ps. 87:7)—the silver springs of grace and the golden springs of glory.

**QUESTION 4** How many ways may we glorify God?

*Answer 1.* We glorify God when we aim purely at God's glory. It is one thing to advance God's glory, another thing to aim at it. God must be the *terminus ad quem*, the ultimate end of all actions. Thus, Christ declares, "I seek not mine own glory, but the glory of him that sent me" (John 8:50). It is the note of a hypocrite that he has a squint eye; he looks more to his own glory than God's glory. Our Savior deciphers such and gives a caveat against them. "When thou givest alms, do not sound a trumpet" (Matt. 6:2). A stranger would ask, "What means the noise of this trumpet?" Then it was answered, "They are going to give to the poor." And so they did not give alms but sold them for honor and applause that they might have glory of men. The breath of men was the wind that blew the sails of their charity—"verily they have their reward." The hypocrite may make his acquittance and write, "Received in full payment." Chrysostom calls vainglory one of the devil's great nets to catch men. And Cyprian says, "Whom Satan cannot prevail against by intemperance, those he prevails against by pride and vain glory." O let us take heed of self-worshipping! Aim purely at God's glory.

How will we know we aim at God's glory? First, when we prefer God's glory above all other things—above credit, estate, relations—[and] when the glory of God comes in competition with them, and we prefer His glory before them. If relations lie in our way to heaven, we must either leap over them or tread upon them. A child must un-child himself and forget he is a child. He must know neither father nor mother in God's cause. "Who said unto his father and mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren" (Deut. 33:9). This is to aim at God's glory.

Second, we aim at God's glory when we can be content that God's will should take place, though it crosses ours. "Lord, I am content to be a loser, if you be a gainer; to have less health, if I have more grace, and you more glory. Whether it be food or bitter pain you give me, Lord I desire that which may be most for your glory." So it was with our blessed Savior who said, "not as I will, but as you will" (Matt. 26:39). So God might have more glory by His sufferings, Christ was content to suffer. "Father, glorify thy name" (John 12:28).

Third, we aim at God's glory when we can be content to be outshined by others in gifts and esteem, so God's glory may be increased. A man that has God in his heart, and God's glory in his eye, desires that God should be exalted. If this be effected, no matter the instrument, he rejoices. "Some preach Christ of envy: notwithstanding Christ is preached, and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice" (Phil. 1:15). They preached Christ of envy, they envied Paul that concourse of people, and they preached that they might outshine him in gifts and get away some of his hearers. "Well," said Paul, "Christ is preached, and God is like to have glory, therefore I rejoice." Let my candle go out if the Sun of Righteousness may but shine.

*Answer 2.* We glorify God by a sincere confession of sin. The thief on the cross had dishonored God in his life, but at his death he brings glory to God by confession of sin. "We indeed suffer justly" (Luke 23:41). He acknowledged he deserved not only crucifixion, but damnation. "My son, give, I pray thee, glory to God, and make confession unto him" (Josh. 7:19). A humble confession exalts God. How God's free grace is magnified in crowning those who deserve to be condemned, as the excusing and mincing of sin does cast a reproach upon God! Adam did not deny he tasted the forbidden fruit,<sup>2</sup> but, instead of a full confession, he blames God. "The woman whom thou gavest me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Gen. 3:12). If you had not given me the woman to be a tempter, I would not have sinned. So, confession glorifies God. It clears him; it acknowledges He is holy and righteous in whatever He does. Nehemiah vindicates God's righteousness by saying, "Thou art just in all that is brought upon us" (Neh. 9:33). A confession then is sincere when it is free, not forced. "I have sinned against heaven, and before thee" (Luke 15:18). He charges himself with sin before his father charged him with it.

*Answer 3.* We glorify God by believing. "Abraham was strong in faith, giving glory to God" (Rom. 4:20). Unbelief affronts God; it gives Him the lie. "He that believeth not, maketh God a liar" (1 John 5:10). So faith brings glory to God, as it sets to its seal that God is true (John 3:23). He who believes flies to God's mercy and truth, as to an altar of refuge. He does engarrison himself in the promises. He trusts all he has with God.

2. In the margin: "Ovid."

“Into thy hands I commit my spirit” (Ps. 31:5). This is a great way of bringing glory to God. Therefore, God honors faith because faith honors God. It is a great honor we do to a man when we trust him with all we have. When we put our lives and estates into his hand, it is a sign we have a good opinion of him. The three children glorified God by believing: “The God whom we serve is able to deliver us, and will deliver us” (Dan. 3:17). Faith knows there are no impossibilities with God and will trust Him where it cannot trace Him.

*Answer 4.* We glorify God by being tender of God’s glory. God’s glory is dear to Him as the apple of His eye. Now, when we are tender of His glory by laying to heart His dishonors, this is a glorifying of Him. A sincere child weeps to see a disgrace done to his father. “The reproaches of them that reproach thee are fallen upon me” (Ps. 69:9). When we hear God reproached, it is as if we were reproached. When God’s glory suffers, it is as if we suffer. This is to be tender of God’s glory.

*Answer 5.* We glorify God by fruitfulness. “Hereby is my Father glorified, if ye bring forth much fruit” (John 15:8). As it is a dishonor to God to be barren, so fruitfulness does honor Him: “Filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are to the praise of his glory” (Phil. 1:11). We must not be like the fig tree in the gospel, which had nothing but leaves. We must be like the pome-citron that is continually either mellowing or blossoming and is never without fruit. It is not profession, but fruit glorifies God. God expects to have His glory from us this way. “Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit of it?” (1 Cor. 9:7). Trees in the forest may be barren, but trees in the garden are fruitful. We must bring forth the fruits of love and good works. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). Faith does sanctify our works, and works do testify our faith. To be doing good to others, to be eyes to the blind and feet to the lame, does much glorify God. And thus Christ did glorify His Father. “He went about doing good” (Acts 10:38). By being fruitful, we are fair in God’s eyes. “The Lord called thy name a green olive-tree, fair and of goodly fruit” (Jer. 11:16). And we must bear much fruit. It is muchness of fruit [that] glorifies God: “if ye bear much fruit.” The spouse’s breasts are compared to clusters of grapes to show how fertile she is (Song 7:7).

Though the lowest degree of grace may bring salvation to you, yet not so much glory to God. It was not a spark of love that Christ commended in Mary, but much love. “She loved much” (Luke 7:47).

*Answer 6.* We glorify God by being contented in that state where His providence has set us. We give God the glory of His wisdom when we rest satisfied with what He carves out to us. Thus did holy Paul glorify God. The Lord cast him into as great variety of conditions as any man: “in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft” (2 Cor. 11:23). Yet he had learned to be content. Paul could sail either in a storm or a calm. He could be anything that God would have him. He could either want or abound (Phil. 4:13). A good Christian argues thus: It is God that has put me in this condition. He could have raised me higher, if He pleased, but that might have been a snare to me. God has done it in wisdom and love. Therefore, I will sit down satisfied with my condition. Surely this glorifies God much! God counts Himself much honored with such a Christian. God says, “Here is one after my own heart; let me do what I will with him, I hear no murmuring, he is content.” This shows abundance of grace. When grace is crowning, it does not mean so much to be content. But when grace is conflicting with inconveniences, then to be content is a glorious thing indeed. For one to be content when he is in heaven is no wonder. But to be content under the cross is like a Christian. This man must bring glory to God, for he shows to all the world that though he has little meal in his barrel, yet he has enough in God to make him content. He says, as David, “The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance; the lines are fallen to me in pleasant places” (Ps. 16:5).

*Answer 7.* We glorify God in working out our own salvation. God has twisted these two together: His glory and our good. We glorify Him by promoting our own salvation. It is a glory to God to have multitudes of converts. Now, His design of free grace takes [hold], and God has the glory of His mercy, so that, while we are endeavoring our salvation, we are honoring God. What an encouragement is this to the service of God, to think, while I am hearing and praying, I am glorifying God. While I am furthering my own glory in heaven, I am increasing God’s glory! Would it not be an encouragement to a subject to hear his prince say to him, “You will honor and please me very much if you will go to yonder mine of gold

and dig as much gold for yourself as you can carry away?" So, for God to say, "Go to the ordinances. Get as much grace as you can; dig out as much salvation as you can. The more happiness you have, the more I shall count myself glorified."

*Answer 8.* We glorify God by living to God. "That they which live, should not live to themselves, but unto him who died for them" (2 Cor. 5:15). "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord" (Rom. 14:8). The Mammonist lives to his money, the Epicurean lives to his belly, the design of a sinner's life is to gratify lust. But we glorify God when we live to God.

What is it to live to God? When we live to His service and lay out ourselves wholly for God. The Lord has sent us into the world as a merchant sends his factor beyond the seas to trade for him. We live to God when we trade for His interest and propagate His gospel. God has given every man a talent. Now, when he does not hide it in a napkin but improves it for God, this is to live to God. When a master in a family, by counsel and good example, labors to bring his servants to Christ; when a minister does exhaust himself in the labors of his holy calling, when he spends himself, and is spent, that he may win souls to Christ and make the crown flourish upon Christ's head; when the magistrate does not wear the sword in vain, but labors to cut down sin and suppress vice—this is to live to God, and this is a glorifying of God. "That Christ might be magnified, whether by life or by death" (Phil. 1:20). Paul had three wishes, and they were all about Christ. He wished to be found in Christ, be with Christ, and magnify Christ.

*Answer 9.* We glorify God by walking cheerfully. It is a glory to God when the world sees a Christian who has within him that which can make him cheerful in the worst times. He can, with the nightingale, sing with a thorn at his breast. The people of God have a ground of cheerfulness—they are justified and instated into adoption. This creates inward peace. It makes music within, whatever storms are without (2 Cor. 1:4; 1 Thess. 1:6). If we consider what Christ has wrought for us by His blood and wrought in us by His Spirit, it is a ground of great cheerfulness, and this cheerfulness glorifies God. It reflects upon a master when the servant is always drooping and sad. [It is] sure he is kept to hard commons, [and] his master does not give him what is fitting. So, when God's people hang

their heads, it looks as if they did not serve a good master or they have repented of their choice, and this reflects dishonor on God. As the gross sins of the wicked bring a scandal on the gospel, so do the uncheerful lives of the godly. “Serve the Lord with gladness” (Ps. 100:2). Your serving Him does not glorify Him unless it is with gladness. A Christian’s cheerful looks glorify God. Religion does not take away our joy but refines and clarifies it. It does not break our violin but tunes it and makes the music sweeter.

*Answer 10.* We glorify God by standing up for His truths. Much of God’s glory lies in His truth. God has entrusted us with His truth, as a master entrusts his servant with his purse to keep. We have not a richer jewel to trust God with than our souls. God has not a richer jewel to trust us with than His truth. Truth is a beam that shines from God; much of His glory lies in His truth. When we are advocates for truth, this glorifies God. So [it was] Athanasius—the bulwark for truth. “That ye should contend earnestly for the faith” (Jude 3), which is the doctrine of faith. The Greek word *to contend* signifies a great contending, as one would contend for his land and not suffer his right to be taken from him. So we should contend for the truth. Were there more of this holy contention, God would have more glory. Some can contend earnestly for trifles and ceremonies, but not for the truth. We should count a person indiscreet who would contend more for a picture than for his land of inheritance, for a box of counters more than for his box of evidences.

*Answer 11.* We glorify God by praising Him. Doxology, or praise, is a God-exalting work. “Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me” (Ps. 50:23). The Hebrew word *bara* (to create) and *barak* (to praise) are little different because the end of creation is to praise God. David was called “the sweet singer of Israel,” and his praising God was called a glorifying of God. “I will praise thee, O Lord my God, and I will glorify thy name” (Ps. 86:12). Though nothing can add to God’s essential glory, yet praise exalts Him in the eyes of others. When we praise God, we spread His fame and renown; we display the trophies of His excellency. In this manner the angels glorify God, and they are the choristers of heaven and do trumpet forth God’s praise. Praising of God is one of the highest and purest acts of religion. In prayer, we act like men, while in praise, we act like angels. This is a

high degree of glorifying God. Believers are called “temples of God” (1 Cor. 3:16). When our tongues praise, the organs in God’s spiritual temple are going. How sad is it that God has no more of His glory from us this way! Many are full of murmurings and discontents, but seldom do they bring glory to God by giving Him the praise due to His name. We read of the saints having harps in their hands (Rev. 5:8), the emblems of praise. Many have tears in their eyes and complaints in their mouth, but few have harps in their hand, blessing and glorifying of God. Let us honor God this way. Praise is the rent we pay to God. While God renews our lease, we must renew our rent.

*Answer 12.* We glorify God by being zealous for His name. “Phinehas has turned my wrath away, while he was zealous for my sake” (Num. 25:11). Zeal is a mixed affection, a compound of love and anger. It carries forth our love to God and anger against sin in a most intense manner. Zeal is impatient of God’s dishonor. A Christian fired with zeal takes a dishonor done to God worse than an injury done to himself. “Thou canst not bear them that are evil” (Rev. 2:2). Our Savior Christ did thus glorify His Father. He, being baptized with a spirit of zeal, drove the moneychangers out of the temple. “The zeal of thine house has eaten me up” (John 2:14, 17).

*Answer 13.* We glorify God when we have an eye at God, both in our natural and in our civil actions. First, in our natural actions—in eating and drinking. “Whether therefore ye eat or drink, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31). A gracious person holds the golden bridle of temperance. He takes his meat as a medicine to heal the decays of nature, and that he may be the fitter, by the strength he receives for the service of God. He makes his food not fuel for lust, but help to duty. Second, in buying and selling, we do all to the glory of God. The wicked live upon unjust gain by falsifying the balances. “The balances of deceit are in his hands” (Hos. 12:7). While men make their weights lighter, they make their sins heavier. Or, by exacting more than the commodity is worth, they do not for fourscore write down fifty, but for fifty, fourscore. They exactly double the price that a thing is worth. But we buy and sell to the glory of God, when in our buying and selling, we observe that golden maxim, “To do to others, as we would have them to do to us” (Matt. 7:12). When we sell our

commodities, we do not sell our conscience. “Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men” (Acts 24:16). This glorifies God, when we have an eye at God in our civil and natural actions and will do nothing that may reflect any blemish on religion.

*Answer 14.* We glorify God by laboring to draw others to God. We convert others and so make them instruments of glorifying God. We should be both diamonds and lodestones: diamonds for the luster of grace, and lodestones for our attractive virtue in drawing others to Christ. “My little children, of whom I travail” (Gal. 4:19). This is a great way of glorifying God, when we break the devil’s prison and turn men from the power of Satan to God.

*Answer 15.* We glorify God in a high manner when we suffer for God and seal the gospel with our blood. “When thou shalt be old, another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not: this spoke he, signifying by what death he should glorify God” (John 21:18–19). God’s glory shines in the ashes of his martyrs. “Wherefore glorify the Lord in the fires” (Isa. 24:15). Micaiah was in the prison, Isaiah was sawn asunder, Paul beheaded, and Luke hanged on an olive tree. Thus, they did glorify God by their deaths. The sufferings of the primitive saints honored God and made the gospel famous in the world. What would others say? See what a good master they serve and how they love Him, that they will venture the loss of all in His service. The glory of Christ’s kingdom does not stand in worldly pomp and grandeur, as other kings. It is seen in the cheerful sufferings of His people. The saints of old “loved not their lives to the death” (Rev. 12:11). They snatched up torments as so many crowns. God grant we may thus glorify Him if He calls us to it. Many pray, “Let this cup pass away.” But few pray, “Thy will be done.”

*Answer 16.* We glorify God when we give God the glory of all we do. When Herod had made an oration and the people gave a shout, saying, “It is the voice of a god, and not of a man,” [he] took this glory to himself, the text says. “And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him because he gave not God the glory, and he was eaten of worms” (Acts 12:23). We glorify God when we sacrifice the praise and glory of all to God. “I laboured more abundantly than they all” (1 Cor. 15:10). One would think

Paul's speech savored of pride, but the apostle pulls the crown from his own head and sets it upon the head of free grace: "yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." As Joab, when he fought against Rabbah, sent for King David that he might carry away the crown of the victory (2 Sam. 12:28), so a Christian, when he has gotten power over any corruption or temptation, sends for Christ that he may carry away the crown of the victory. As the silkworm, when she weaves her curious work, hides herself under the silk and is not seen, so when we have done anything praiseworthy, we must hide ourselves under the veil of humility and transfer the glory of all we have done to God. Constantine used to write the name of Christ over his door. So should we write the name of Christ over our duties. Let Him wear the garland of praise.

*Answer 17.* We glorify God by a holy life, for a bad life dishonors God. "Ye are a holy nation, that ye should shew forth the praises of him that has called you" (1 Peter 2:9). "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you" (Rom. 2:24). Epiphanius says, "That the looseness of some Christians, in his time, made many of the heathens shun the company of the Christians, and would not be drawn to hear their sermons." So, by our faithful Bible conduct, we glorify God. Though the main work of religion lies in the heart, our light must so shine that others may behold it. The chief of a building is the foundation, yet the glory of it is in the frontispiece. So is beauty in the conduct. When the saints, who are called jewels, cast a sparkling luster of holiness in the eyes of the world, they "walk as Christ walked" (1 John 2:6). When they live as if they had seen the Lord with bodily eyes and been with Him upon the mount, then they adorn religion and bring revenues of glory to the crown of heaven.

**USE 1** It shows us what should not be our chief end: to get great estates, to lay up treasures on earth. This is a degeneracy of mankind since the fall. Their great design is to compass the earth and grow rich, and this they make their chief end. They never think of glorifying God; instead, they trade for the world but are not factors for heaven. "Madness is in their heart while they live" (Eccl. 9:3). Sometimes they never arrive at an estate. They do not get the venison they hunt for, and even when they do, what have they? That which will not fill the heart, no more than the mariner's

breath will fill the sails of a ship—a picture drawn on the ice! So, they spend their time, as Israel, in gathering straw, but remember not the end of living to glorify God. “What profit has he that laboureth for the wind?” (Eccl. 5:16). And these things are soon gone.

**USE 2** First, it reproves such as bring no glory to God. They do not answer the end of their creation; their time is not time lived, but time lost. They are like the wood of the vine (Ezek. 15:2). Their lives are, as Bernard speaks, “either sinfulness or barrenness. A useless burden on the earth.” God will one day ask such a question as King Ahasuerus did: “What honor and dignity has been done to Mordecai?” (Est. 6:3). So will the Lord say, “What honor has been done to me? What revenues of glory have you brought into my exchequer?” There is none here present that God has not put you in some capacity of glorifying Him. The health He has given you, the parts, estate, seasons of grace, are opportunities put into your hand to glorify Him. Be assured, God will call you to account, to know what you have done with the mercies He has entrusted you with, what glory you have brought to Him. The parable of the talents, where the men with the five talents and the two talents are brought to a reckoning, does evidently show that God will call you to a strict account, to know you have traded with your talents, and what glory you have brought to Him. (Matt. 25:15). Now, how sad will it be with them who hide their talents in a napkin, that bring God no glory at all? “Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness” (Matt. 25:30). It is not enough for you to say that you have not dishonored God. Have you not lived in gross sin? What good have you done? What glory have you brought to God? It is not enough for the servant of the vineyard that he does no hurt in the vineyard, that he does not break the trees or destroy the hedges. If he does not do service in the vineyard, he loses his pay. If you do no good in your place, do not glorify God, you will lose your pay and miss salvation. Oh, think of this, all you that live unserviceably! Christ cursed the barren fig tree.

Second, it reproves such as are so far from bringing glory to God that they rob God of His glory. “Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me” (Mal. 3:8). They rob God who take the glory due to God to themselves. If they have gotten an estate, they ascribe all to their own wit and industry;

they set the crown upon their own head, not considering that, "Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth" (Deut. 8:18). If they do any duty of religion, they look squint to their own glory, "that they may be seen of men" (Matt. 6:5), that they may be set upon a theatre that others may admire and canonize them. The oil of vainglory feeds their lamp. How many has the wind of popular breath blown to hell! Those [whom] the devil could not destroy by intemperance, he has [destroyed] by vainglory. It also reproves those who fight against God's glory: "Lest ye be found to fight against God" (Acts 5:39).

But who do fight against God's glory? Such as do oppose those things whereby God's glory is promoted. God's glory is much promoted in the preaching of the Word because it is His engine whereby He converts souls. Now, such as would hinder the preaching of the Word, these fight against God's glory. "Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved" (1 Thess. 2:16). Diocletian, who raised the tenth persecution against the Christians, prohibited church meetings and had the temples of the Christians to be razed down. Those who hinder preaching do as the Philistines that stopped the wells: They stop the well of the water of life and take away the physicians that should heal sin-sick souls. Ministers are lights (Matt. 5:14), and who but thieves hate the light? These persons do directly strike at God's glory. And what an account will they have to give to God when He shall charge the blood of men's souls upon them? "Ye have taken away the key of knowledge; ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered" (Luke 11:52). If there is either justice in heaven or fire in hell, they will not go unpunished.

**USE 3** Let us all, in our place, make this our chief end and design: to glorify God. Let me speak to magistrates. God has put much glory upon them: "I have said ye are gods" (Ps. 82:6). Will they not glorify Him whom he has put so much glory upon? Magistrates should be zealous for God's worship and day. They should not let the sword rust in the scabbard but draw it out for the cutting down of sin. Also, how ministers should study to promote God's glory! God has entrusted them with two of the most precious things: His truths, and the souls of His people. Ministers are, by virtue of their office, to glorify God.

First, they must glorify God by laboring in the Word and doctrine. “I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead: preach the word, be instant in season, out of season” (2 Tim. 4:1–2). It was Augustine’s wish “that Christ, at his coming, might find him either praying or preaching.”

Second, ministers must glorify God by their zeal and sanctity. The priests under the law, before they served at the altar, washed in the laver. Such as serve in the Lord’s house must first be washed from gross sin in the laver of repentance. It is matter of grief and shame to think how many who call themselves ministers do, instead of apparently bringing glory to God, dishonor God (2 Chron. 11:15). Their lives, as well as doctrines, are heterodox. They are not free from the sins which they reprove in others. Plutarch’s servant upbraided him, “It is not as my master Plutarch said, ‘He has written a book against wrath, anger. *Et ipse mihi irascitur*—yet he falls into a passion of anger with me.’” So, this minister preaches against drunkenness, yet he will be drunk. He preaches against swearing, yet he will swear. This reproaches God and makes the offering of the Lord to be abhorred.

Masters of families, do you glorify God [by] seasoning your children and servants with the knowledge of the Lord? Your houses should be little churches. “I know that Abraham will command his children that they may keep the way of the Lord” (Gen. 18:19). You who are masters, know you have a charge of souls under you. For want of the bridle of family discipline, youths run wild. Well, let me lay down some motives to glorify God.

*Motive 1.* It will be a great comfort in a dying hour to think we have glorified God in our lives. It was Christ’s comfort before His death: “I have glorified thee on the earth” (John 17:14). At the hour of death, all your earthly comforts will vanish. If you think how rich you have been or what pleasures you have had on earth, this will be so far from comforting you that it will but torment you the more. What is one the better for an estate that is spent? But now, to have conscience telling you that you have glorified God on earth, what sweet comfort and peace will this let in to your soul! How will this make you long for death! The servant that has been all day working in the vineyard longs till evening comes when he shall receive his pay. Those who have lived and brought no glory to God,

how can they think of dying with comfort? They cannot expect a harvest [because] they never sowed any seed. How can they expect glory from God who never brought any glory to Him? O, in what horror will they be at death! The worm of conscience will gnaw their souls before the worms are gnawing their bodies.

*Motive 2.* If we glorify God, He will glorify our souls forever. By raising God's glory, we increase our own. By glorifying God, we come at last to the blessed enjoying of Him. And that brings me to the second: "the enjoying of God."

## **End 2: Enjoying God**

Man's chief end is to enjoy God forever. "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" (Ps. 73:25). That is, "What is there in heaven I desire to enjoy but thee?" There is a twofold fruition or enjoying of God: One is in this life, the other in the life to come.

### **Point 1**

Enjoying God here in this life means enjoying God's presence. It is a great matter to enjoy God's ordinances (a mercy that some do envy us), but to enjoy God's presence in the ordinances is what a gracious heart aspires after: "to see thy glory so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary" (Ps. 63:2). This sweet enjoying of God is when we feel His Spirit cooperating with the ordinance and distilling grace upon our hearts. (1) When in the Word, the Spirit quickens and raises the affections. "Did not our hearts burn within us?" (Luke 24:32). (2) When the Spirit transforms the heart, leaving an impress of holiness upon it. "We are changed into the same image, from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18). When the Spirit revives the heart with comfort, it comes not only with His anointing, but His seal. He sheds God's love abroad in the heart (Rom. 5:5). This is to enjoy God in an ordinance. "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). In the Word, we hear God's voice, and in the sacrament, we have His kiss. This is enjoying God, and what infinite contentment does a gracious soul find in this! The heart is warmed and inflamed in a duty. This is God's answering by fire when a Christian has the sweet elapses of God's Spirit. These are the firstfruits of glory when God comes down to

the soul in an ordinance. Now, Christ has pulled off His veil and showed His smiling face. Now, He has led a believer into the banqueting house and given him of the “spiced wine” of His love to drink. He has put in His finger at the hole of the door. He has touched the heart and made it leap for joy. O, how sweet is it thus to enjoy God! The godly have, in the use of the ordinances, had such divine raptures of joy and soul-transfigurations that they have been carried above the world and have despised all things here below.

**USE 1** Is the enjoying of God in this life so sweet? How prodigiously wicked are they that prefer the enjoying of their lusts before the enjoying of God! “The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life,” is the Trinity they worship (1 John 2:16). Lust is an inordinate desire or impulse, provoking the soul to that which is evil. There is revengeful lust and wanton lust. Lust is like a feverish heat; it puts the soul into a flame. Aristotle calls sensual lusts brutish because, when any lust is violent, reason or conscience cannot be heard, and the beast rides the man. These lusts, when they are enjoyed, do stain and dispirit persons. “Whoredom and wine take away the heart” (Hos. 4:11). They have no heart for anything that is good. How many make it their chief end not to enjoy God but to enjoy their lusts! As that cardinal said, “Let him but keep his cardinalship of Paris, and he was content to lose his part in Paradise.” Lust first bewitches with pleasure, and then comes the fatal dart: “till a dart strike through his liver” (Prov. 7:23). This should be as a flaming sword to stop men in the way of their carnal delights. Who would for a drop of pleasure drink a sea of wrath?

**USE 2** Let it be our great care to enjoy God’s sweet presence here, which is the beauty and comfort of the ordinances. Enjoying spiritual communion with God is a riddle and mystery to most people. Everyone that hangs about the court does not speak with the king. We may approach to God in ordinances and, as it were, hang about the court of heaven, yet not enjoy communion with God. We may have the letter without the Spirit, the visible sign without the invisible grace. It is the enjoying of God in a duty at which we should chiefly look. “My soul thirsteth for God, for the

living God" (Ps. 42:2). Alas! What are all our worldly enjoyments without the enjoying of God? What is it to enjoy a great deal of health, a brave estate, and not to enjoy God? "I went mourning without the sun" (Job 20:28). So may you say in the enjoyment of all creatures without God, "I went mourning without the sun." I have the starlight of outward enjoyments, but I cannot enjoy God. I want the Sun of Righteousness. "I went mourning without the sun." This should be our great design, not only to have the ordinances of God but the God of the ordinances. The enjoying of God's sweet presence with us here is the most contented life. He is a hive of sweetness, a magazine of riches, a fountain of delight (Ps. 36:8-9). The higher the lark flies, the sweeter it sings. And the higher we fly by the wing of faith, the more of God we enjoy, the sweeter delight we feel in our souls. How is the heart inflamed in prayer and meditation! What joy and peace in believing! Is it not comfortable being in heaven? He that enjoys much of God in this life carries heaven about him. O let this be the thing we are chiefly ambitious of: the enjoying of God in His ordinances. Remember, the enjoying of God's sweet presence here is an earnest of our enjoying Him in heaven.

## Point 2

[The second is] enjoying God in the life to come. Man's chief end is to enjoy God forever. Before this plenary fruition of God in heaven, there must be something previous and antecedent—that is, our being in a state of grace. We must have conformity to Him in grace before we can have communion with Him in glory. Grace and glory are linked and chained together. Grace precedes glory, as the morning star ushers in the sun. God will have us qualified and fitted for a state of blessedness. Drunkards and swearers are not fit to enjoy God in glory. The Lord will not lay such vipers in His bosom. Only "the pure in heart shall see God." We must first be, as the king's daughter, glorious within before we are clothed with the robes of glory. As King Ahasuerus first caused the virgins to be purified and anointed and they had their sweet odors to perfume them, and then they went to stand before the king (Est. 2:12), so must we. We must have the anointing of God and be perfumed with the graces of the Spirit, those sweet odors, and then we shall stand before the King of heaven. Now,

being thus divinely qualified by grace, we shall be taken up to the mount of vision and enjoy God forever. This enjoying God forever is nothing else but to be put in a state of happiness. As the body cannot have life but by having communion with the soul, so the soul cannot have blessedness but by having immediate communion with God. God is the *summum bonum*, the chief good. Therefore, the enjoying of Him is the highest felicity. He is, I say, the chief good.

First, God is a universal good, *bonum in quo omnia bona*, “a good, in which are all goods.” The excellencies of the creature are limited. A man may have health, not beauty; learning, not parentage; riches, not wisdom. But in God are eminently contained all excellencies. He is a good, commensurate fully to the soul. He is a sun, a portion, and a horn of salvation. In Him dwells “all fullness” (Col. 1:19).

Second, God is an unmixed good. Every condition in this life has its mixture. For every drop of honey, there is a drop of gall. Solomon who gave himself to find out this philosopher’s stone, to search out for a happiness here below, he found vanity and vexation (Eccl. 1:2). But God is a perfect, quintessential good. He is sweetness in the flower.

Third, God is a satisfying good. The soul cries out, “I have enough.” “I shall be satisfied with thy likeness” (Ps. 17:15). If a man who is thirsty [is] brought to the ocean, he has enough. If there is enough in God to satisfy the angels, then surely enough to satisfy us. The soul is finite, but God is an uncreated infinite good. And though God be such a good as does satisfy, yet not surfeit. Fresh joys spring continually from God’s face, and God is as much to be desired after millions of years by glorified souls as at the first moment. There is so much fullness in God as satisfies and so much sweetness that the soul still desires, it is satisfaction without surfeit.

Fourth, God is a delicious good. That which is the chief good must ravish the soul with pleasure. There must be in it spirits of delight and fullness of joy. This is to be enjoyed only in God, *In Deo quadam dulcedine delectatur anima, immo rapitur*.<sup>3</sup> The love of God drops such infinite

3. “In God the soul delights in a certain sweetness, nay, it is raptured.”

graciousness into the soul as is unspeakable and full of glory. If there is so much delight in God when we see Him only by faith (1 Peter 1:8), what will the joy of vision be when we shall see Him face to face? If the saints have found so much delight in God while they were suffering, oh then what joy and delight will they have when they are crowning! If flames are beds of roses, oh then what will it be to lean on the bosom of Jesus! What a bed of roses will that be!

Fifth, God is a superlative good. He is better than anything you can put in competition with Him. He is better than health, riches, [and] honor. Other things maintain life; He gives life. But who would go to put anything in balance with the deity? Who would weigh a feather with a mountain of gold? God excels all other things more infinitely than the sun the light of a taper.

Sixth, God is an eternal good. He is "the ancient of days," (Dan. 7:9), yet never decays nor waxes old. The joy He gives is eternal; the crown fades not away (1 Peter 5:4). The glorified soul shall be ever resting itself in God. It shall be feasting on His love and sunning itself in the light of His countenance. We read of "the river of pleasure at God's right hand," but will not this in time be dried up? No, there is a fountain at the bottom which feeds it. "With the Lord is the fountain of life" (Ps. 36:9). Thus, God is the chief good, and the enjoying God forever is the supreme felicity of which the soul is capable.

**USE 1** Let it be the chief end of our living to enjoy this chief good hereafter. This is that which will crown us with happiness. Augustine reckons up two hundred and eighty-eight opinions among the philosophers about happiness, but all did shoot short of the mark. The highest elevation of a reasonable soul is to enjoy God forever. It is the enjoying God that makes heaven. "Then shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17). The soul trembles, as the needle in the compass, and is never at rest until it comes to God.

To set out this excellent state of a glorified soul's enjoying God, [consider the following.] First, this enjoying of God must not be understood in a sensual manner. We must not conceive any carnal pleasures in heaven. The Turks, in their Alcoran, speak of a paradise of pleasure where they

have riches in abundance and red wine served in golden chalices. Here is a heaven consisting of pleasures for the body. The epicureans of this age would like such a heaven when they die. Though indeed the state of glory be compared to a feast and is set out by pearls and precious stones, yet these metaphors are only to be helps to our faith, to show us that there is superabundant joy and felicity in the empyrean heaven. Yet those are not carnal, but sacred delights. As our employment shall be spiritual, it will consist in adoring and praising God, so our enjoyment shall be spiritual; it shall consist in having the perfection of holiness, in seeing the pure face of Christ, in feeling the love of God, and in conversing with heavenly spirits. These delights will be more adequate and proper for the soul and infinitely exceed all carnal voluptuous delights.

Second, we will have a lively sense of this glorious estate. A man in a lethargy, though he be alive, is as good as dead because he is not sensible, nor does he take any pleasure in his life. We will have a quick and lively sense of the infinite pleasure which arises from enjoyment of God. We will know ourselves to be happy. We shall reflect with joy upon our dignity and felicity. We will taste every crumb of that sweetness and every drop of pleasure that flows from God.

Third, we will be made able to bear a sight of that glory. We could not now bear that glory, for it would overwhelm us, as a weak eye cannot behold the sun. But God will capacitate us for glory. Our souls shall be so heavenly and perfected with holiness that they may be able to enjoy the blessed vision of God. Moses in a cleft of the rock saw the glory of God passing by (Ex. 33:21). Through our blessed rock, Christ, we shall behold the beatific sight of God.

Fourth, this enjoyment of God shall be more than a bare contemplation of Him. Some of the learned move this question, "Whether the enjoyment of God shall be only by way of contemplation?" That is something, but it is but one half of heaven. There shall be a loving of God, an acquiescence in Him, a tasting His sweetness—not only inspection but possession. "That they may behold my glory" (John 17:24)—there is inspection. "And the glory thou hast given me, I have given them" (John 17:22)—there is possession. "Glory shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18)—not only revealed to us, but in us. To behold God's glory, there is glory

revealed to us, but to partake of His glory, there is glory revealed in us. As the sponge sucks in the wine, so shall we suck in glory.

Fifth, there is no intermission in this state of glory. We shall not only have God's glorious presence at certain special seasons, but we shall be continually in His presence, continually under divine raptures of joy. There shall not be one minute in heaven wherein a glorified soul may say, "I do not enjoy happiness." The streams of glory are not like the water of a conduit, often stopped, that we cannot have one drop of water. Those heavenly streams of joy are continually running. O, how should we despise this valley of tears, where we now are, for the Mount of Transfiguration! How should we long for the full enjoyment of God in paradise! Had we a sight of that land of promise, we should need patience to be content to live here any longer.

**USE 2** Let this be a spur to duty. How diligent and zealous should we be in glorifying God, that we may come at last to enjoy Him? If Tully, Demosthenes, and Plato, who had but the dim watch light of reason to see by and did fancy an Elysium<sup>4</sup> and happiness after this life did take such Herculean pains to enjoy it, O then how should Christians, who have the light of Scripture to see by, bestir themselves that they may attend at the eternal fruition of God and glory! If anything can make us rise off our bed of sloth and serve God with all our might, it should be this: the hope of our near enjoyment of God forever. What made Paul so active in the sphere of religion? "I laboured more abundantly than they all" (1 Cor. 15:10). His obedience did not move slow as the sun on the dial, but swift as the sun in the firmament. Why was he so zealous in glorifying God but that he might at last center and terminate in Him? "Then shall we be ever with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17).

**USE 3** Let this comfort the godly in all the present miseries they feel. You complain, Christian, that you do not enjoy yourself. Fears disquiet you. Wants perplex you. In the day you cannot enjoy ease, and in the

4. *Elysium*: a mythical conception of happiness in the afterlife.

night you cannot enjoy sleep. You do not enjoy the comforts of your life. Let this revive you, that shortly you shall enjoy God and then shall have more than you can ask or think. You shall have angels' joy—glory without intermission or expiration. We will never enjoy ourselves fully until we enjoy God eternally.