

Of The
Christian Religion:
God's Glory
The Chief End
Of Man's Being
Hugh Binning

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Agape Chapel Ministries
P.O. Box 59084
Norwalk, CA 90652
USA

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Hugh Binning
(1627-1653)

Rom. xi. 36. "Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever." And 1 Cor. x. 31. Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

All that men have to know, may be comprised under these two heads,--What their end is; and What is the right way to attain to that end. And all that we have to do, is by any means to seek to compass that end. These are the two cardinal points of a man's knowledge and exercise: *Quo et qua uendum est*,--Whither to go, and what way to go. If there be a mistake in any of these fundamentals, all is wrong. All arts and sciences have their principles and grounds that must be presupposed to all solid knowledge and right practice; so hath the true religion some fundamental principles which must be laid to heart and imprinted into the soul, or there can be no superstructure of true and saving knowledge, and no practice in Christianity that can lead to a blessed end. But as the principles are not many, but a few common and easy grounds, from which all the conclusions of art are reduced, so the principles of true religion are few and plain; they need neither burden your memory, nor confound your understanding. That which may save you 'is nigh thee,' says the apostle, (Rom. x. 8.) 'even in thy mouth.' It is neither too far above us, nor too far below us. But, alas! your not considering of those common and few and easy grounds, makes them both burdensome to the memory, and dark to the understanding. As there is nothing so easy but it becomes difficult if you do it against your will,--*Nihil est tam facile, quin difficile fiat, si inuitus feceris*,--so there is nothing so plain, so common, but it becomes dark and hard if you do not indeed consider it and lay it to heart.

That which is, in the first place, to be considered is, Our end. As in all other arts, and every petty business, it hath the first place of consideration, so especially in the Christian religion. It is the first cause of all human actions, and the first principle of all deliberate motions. Except you would walk at random, not knowing whither you go, or what you do, you must once establish this and fix it in your intention--What is the great end and purpose wherefore I am created, and sent into the world? If this be not either questioned, or not rightly constituted, you cannot but spend your time, *Vel nihil agendo, vel aliud agendo, vel male agendo*; you must either do nothing, or nothing to purpose, or, that which is worse, that which will undo you. It is certainly the wrong establishing of this one thing that makes the most part of our motions either altogether irregular, or unprofitable, or destructive and hurtful. Therefore, as this point hath the first place in your catechism, so it ought to be first of all laid to heart, and pondered as the one necessary thing. 'One thing is needful,' says Christ, Luke x. 42; and if any thing be in a superlative degree needful, this is it. O that you would choose to consider it, as the necessity and weight of it require!

We have read two scriptures, which speak to the ultimate and chief end of man, which is the glorifying of God by all our actions and words and thoughts. In which we have these things of importance: 1. That God's glory is the end of our being. 2. That God's glory should be the end of our doing. And, 3. The ground of both these; because both being and doing are from him, therefore they ought to be both for him. He is the first cause of both, and therefore he ought to be the last end of both. 'Of him, and through him, are all things;' and therefore all things are also for him, and therefore all things should be done to him.

God is independent altogether, and self-sufficient. This is his royal prerogative, wherein he infinitely transcends all created perfection. He is of himself, and for himself; from no other, and for no other, 'but of him, and for him, are all things.' He is the fountain-head; you ought to follow the streams up to it, and

Christ, that such 'had never been born.' You who are created again in Jesus Christ, it most of all concerns you to ask, Why am I made? And why am I redeemed? And to what purpose? It is certainly that ye may glorify your heavenly Father, Mat. v. 16; Ps. lvi. 13. And you shall glorify him if you bring forth much fruit, and continue in his love, John xv. 8, 9. And this you are chosen and ordained unto, ver. 16; and therefore abide in him, that ye may bring forth fruit, ver. 4. And if you abide in him by believing, you do indeed honour him; and he that honoureth the Son honoureth the Father, John v. 23. Here is a compendious way to glorify God. Receive salvation of him freely, righteousness and eternal life; this sets to a seal to God's truth and grace and mercy: and whoso counts the Son worthy to be a Saviour to them, and sets to their seal of approbation to him whom God the Father hath sent and sealed, he also honours the Father; and then he that honoureth the Father, hath it not for nothing, 'for them that honour me I will honour,' 1 Sam. ii. 30, says the Lord; and 'he that serves me, him will my Father honour,' John xii. 26. As the believing soul cares for no other, and respects no other but God, so he respects no other but such a soul. 'I will dwell in the humble, and look unto the contrite;' there are mutual respects and honours. God is the delight of such a soul, and such a soul is God's delight. That soul sets God in a high place, in a throne in its heart; and God sets that soul in a heavenly place with Christ, Eph. ii. 6; yea he comes down to sit with us, and dwells in us, off his throne of majesty, Isa. lxvi. 1, 2; and lvii. 15.

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dispensation? You are sent into the world only for this business,--to serve the Lord. Now what will many of you answer? If you speak the truth (as then you must do it,--you cannot lie then!) you must say, "Lord, I spent my time in serving my own lusts; I was taken up with other businesses, and had no leisure; I was occupied in my calling," &c. Even as if an ambassador of a king should return him this account of his negotiation: "I was busy at cards and dice; I spent my money, and did wear my clothes." Though you think your ploughing and borrowing and trafficking and reaping very necessary, yet certainly these are but as trifles and toys to the main business. O what a dreadful account will souls make! They come here for no purpose but to serve their bodies and senses, to be slaves to all the creatures which were once put under man's feet: Now man is under the feet of all, and he has put himself so. If you were of these creatures, then you might be for them. You seek them as if you were created for them, and not they for you; and you seek yourselves, as if you were of yourselves, and had not your descent of God. Know, my beloved, that you were not made for that purpose, nor yet redeemed either to serve yourselves, or other creatures, but that other creatures might serve you, and ye serve God. And this is really the best way to serve ourselves, and to save ourselves,--to serve God. Self-seeking is self-destroying; self-denying is self-saving, soul-saving. He that seeketh to save his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life shall find it, and he that denies himself and follows me, is my disciple.' Will ye once sit down in good earnest about this business? 'Tis lamentable to be yet to begin to learn to live, when ye must die! Ye will be out of the world almost, ere ye bethink yourself, Why came I into the world? *Quidam tunc vivere incipiunt, cum desinendum est; imo quidam ante vivere desierunt quam inciperent*; this is of all most lamentable,--many souls end their life, before they begin to live. For what is our life, but a living death, while we do not live to God, and while we live not in relation to the great end of our life and being,--the glory of God? It were better, says

then to rest, for you can go no farther. But the creature, even the most perfect work, besides God, it hath these two ingredients of limitation and imperfection in its bosom: it is from another, and for another. It hath its rise out of the fountain of God's immense power and goodness, and it must run towards that again, till it empty all its faculties and excellencies into that same sea of goodness. Dependence is the proper notion of a created being,--dependence upon that infinite independent Being, as the first immediate cause, and the last immediate end. You see then that this principle is engraven in the very nature of man. It is as certain and evident that man is made for God's glory, and for no other end, as that he is from God's power, and from no other cause. Except men do violate their own conscience, and put out their own eyes--as the Gentiles did, Rom. i. 19, &c.--that which may be known of man's chief end, 'is manifest in them,' so that all men are 'without excuse.' As God's being is independent, so that he cannot be expressed by any name more suitable than such as he takes to himself, 'I am that I am,'--importing a boundless, ineffable, absolute, and transcendent being, beside which, no creature deserves so much as to have the name of being, or to be made mention of in one day with his name, because his glorious light makes the poor derived shadow of light in other creatures to disappear, and to vanish out of the world of beings,--so it is the glorious perfection of his nature, that he doth 'all things for himself,' Prov. xvi. 4, for his own name; and his glory is as dear to him as himself. 'I am the Lord, that is my name, and [therefore] my glory will I not give to another,' Isa. xlii. 8; and xlvi. 11. This is no ambition. Indeed, for a man to seek his own glory, or search into it, 'is not glory,' (Prov. xxv. 27.) but rather a man's shame. Self-seeking in creatures is a monstrous and incongruous thing; it is as absurd, and unbecoming a creature, to seek its own glory, as to attribute to itself its own being. Shall the thing formed say to the potter, Thou hast not made me? That were ridiculous. And shall the thing formed say, 'Tis made for itself? That were as ridiculous.

Self-denial is the ornament and beauty of a creature, and therefore humility is an ornament and clothing, I Pet. v.5; and honour upholds the humble spirit, Prov. xxix. 23. But God's self-seeking, and seeking of his own glory, is his eminent excellency. It is indeed his glory, because he is, and there is none else; there is nothing, besides him, but that which hath issued forth from his incomprehensible fulness. And therefore it is all the reason of the world, that as he is the beginning, so he should be the end of all things, Rev. i. 8. And there is the more reason of it, that his majesty's seeking of his own glory is not prejudicial to the creature's good, but the very communication of his fulness goes along with it: so that in glorifying himself, he is most beneficial to his own creatures. Poor creatures, indigent at home, are yet proud of nothing, and endeavour, in seeking of themselves, to engross all perfections into their own bosoms! Ambition and vain-glory robs and spoils others' excellencies to clothe itself withal; and then boasts itself in these borrowed feathers! But our blessed Lord is then doing most for our advantage when he does all for his own glory. He needs not go abroad to seek perfection, but to manifest what he is in himself; he communicates of himself to us. O blessed self-seeking that gave us a being and well-being; that makes no advantage by it, but gives advantage! He hath the honour of all, but we have the profit of all.

'All things are of him, and for him,' but man in a peculiar and proper way. As God, in making of man, was pleased of his goodness to stamp him with a character of his own image--and in this he puts a difference between man and other creatures, that he should have more plain and distinct engravings of divine majesty upon him, which might show the glory of the workman--so it appears that he is in a singular way made for God, as his last end. As he is set nearer God, as the beginning and cause, than other creatures; so he is placed nearer God as the end. All creatures are made *ultimo*, lastly, for God, yet they are all made *proxime*; nextly, for man. Therefore David falls out a wondering, 'Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of

from that,--he is meet for nothing, but to be cast into the fire of hell, and burnt for ever; he is for no use in the creation, but to be fuel to the fire of the Lord's indignation.

But behold! the goodness of the Lord and his kindness and love hath appeared toward man. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us,' through Jesus Christ,' Tit. iii. 4, 5, 6. Our Lord Jesus, by whom all things were created, and for whom, would not let this excellent workman-ship perish so, therefore he goes about the work of redemption,--a second creation more laborious and also more glorious than the first, that so he might glorify his Father and our Father. Thus the breach is made up; thus the unsavoury salt is seasoned; thus the withered branch is quickened again for that same fruit of praises and glorifying of God. This is the end of his second creation, as it was of the first: 'We are his workmanship created to good works in Christ Jesus,' Eph. ii. 10. 'This is the work of God, to believe on him whom he hath sent,' 'to set to our seal,' and to give our testimony to all his attributes, John vi. 29, and iii. 33. We are 'bought with a price,' and therefore we ought to glorify him with our souls and bodies. He made us with a word, and that bound us; but now he has made us again? and paid a price for us, and so we are twice bound not to be our own but his, 'and so to glorify him in our bodies and spirits,' I Cor. vi. ult. I beseech you, gather your spirits, call them home about the business. We once came short of our end,--God's glory and our happiness; but know, that it is attainable again. We lost both, but both are found in Christ. Awake then and stir up your spirits, else it shall be double condemnation--when we have the offer of being restored to our former blessed condition--to love our present misery better. Once establish this point within your souls, and therefore ask, Why came I hither? To what purpose am I come into the world? If you do not ask it, what will you answer, when he asks you at your appearance before his tribunal? I beseech you, what will many of you say in that day when the Master returns and takes an account of your

soul should, by the cords of affection to him and admiration of him, be bound to serve him. Creation puts on the obligation to glorify him in our body and spirits which are his; but affection only puts that to exercise. All other bonds leave our natures at liberty, but this constrains, 2 Cor. v. 14; it binds on all bonds, it ties on us all divine obligations. Then a soul will glorify God, when love so unites it to God, and makes it one spirit with him, that his glory becomes its honour, and becomes the principle of all our inward affections and outward actions. It is not always possible to have and express particular thoughts of God and his glory, in every action and meditation; but, for the most part it ought to be so: And if souls were accustomed to meditation on God, it would become their very nature,--*altera natura*,--pleasant and delightful. However, if there be not always an express intention of God's glory, yet there ought to be kept always such a disposition and temper of spirit as it may be construed to proceed from the intention of God's glory; and then it remains in the seed and fruit, if not in itself.

Now when we are speaking of the great end and purpose of our creation, we call to mind our lamentable and tragical fall from that blessed station we were constitute into. 'All men have sinned and come short of the glory of God,' Rom. iii. 23. His being in the world was for that glory, and he is come short of that glory. O strange shortcoming! Short of all that he was ordained for! What is he now meet for? For what purpose is that chief of the works of God now! The salt, if it lose its saltness, is meet for nothing, for wherewithal shall it be seasoned? Mark ix. 50. Even so, when man is rendered unfit for his proper end, he is meet for nothing, but to be cast out and trode upon; he is like a withered branch that must be cast into the fire, John xv. 6. Some things, if they fail in one use, they are good for another; but the best things are not so,--*Corruptio optimi, pessima*. As the Lord speaks to the house of Israel, 'Shall wood be taken of the vine tree to do any work?' Even so the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Ezek. xv. 2-6. If it yield not wine, it is good for nothing. So, if man do not glorify God,--if he fall

him,' and hast made him to have dominion over the works of thy hands, and put all things under his feet!' Psalm. viii. 4, 6. The creature comes out in a direct line from God, as the beams from the body of the sun; and it is directed towards the use and service of mankind, from whom all the excellency and perfection that is in it should reflect towards God again. Man is both *proxime et ultimo* for God. We are to return immediately to the fountain of our being; and thus our happiness and well-being is perpetuated. There is nothing intervening between God and us that our use and service and honour should be directed towards: but all the songs and perfections of the creature, that are among the rest of the creatures, meet all in man as their centre, for this purpose that he may return with them all to the glorious fountain from whence they issued. Thus we stand next God, and in the middle between God and other creatures. This, I say, was the condition of our creation. We had our being immediately from God, as the beginning of all; and we were to have our happiness and well-being by returning immediately to God as the end of all. But sin coming in between God and us, hath displaced us, so that we cannot now stand next God, without the intervention of a Mediator; and we cannot stand between God and creatures, to offer up their praises to him; but 'there is one Mediator between God and man,' that offers up both man's praises and the creature's songs which meet in man. Now, seeing God hath made all things for himself, and especially man for his own glory, that he may show forth in him the glory and excellence of his power, goodness, holiness, justice, and mercy; it is not only most reasonable that man should do all things that he doth to the glory of God, but it is even the beauty and perfection of a man,--the greatest accession that can be to his being,--to glorify God by that being. We are not our own, therefore we ought not to live to ourselves, but to God whose we are.

But you may ask, What is it to glorify God? Doth our goodness extend to him? Or is it an advantage to the Almighty that we are righteous? No indeed! And herein is the vast

difference between God's glorifying of us and sanctifying of us, and our glorifying and sanctifying of him. God 'calls things that are not,' and makes them to be: but we can do no more but call things that are, and that far below what they are. God's glorifying is creative,--ours only declarative. He makes us such,--we do no more but declare him to be such. This then is the proper work that man is created for, to be a witness of God's glory, and to give testimony to the appearances and out-breakings of it in the ways of power and justice and mercy and truth. Other creatures are called to glorify God, but it is rather a proclamation to dull and senseless men, and a provocation of them to their duty. As Christ said to the Pharisees, 'If these children hold their peace, the stones would cry out,' so may the Lord turn himself from stupid and senseless man, to the stones and woods and seas and sun and moon, and exhort them to man's duty, the more to provoke and stir up our dullness, and to make us consider that it is a greater wonder that man, whom God hath made so glorious, can so little express God's glory, than if stupid and senseless creatures should break out in singing and praising of his majesty. The creatures are the books wherein the lines of the song of God's praises are written; and man is made a creature capable to read them, and to tune that song. They are appointed to bring in brick to our hand; and God has fashioned us for this employment, to make such a building of it. We are the mouth of the creation; but ere God want praises when our mouth is dumb, and our ears deaf, God will open the mouths of asses, 'of babes and sucklings' and in them perfect praises, Psalm. viii. 1, 2. Epictetus said well, *Si Luscinia essem, canerem ut Luscinia : cum autem homo sim, quid agam? Laudabo Deum, nec unquam cessabo*--If I were a lark, I would sing as a lark; but seeing I am a man, what should I do, but praise God with out ceasing? It is as proper to us to praise God, as for a bird to chaunt. All beasts have their own sounds and voices peculiar to their own nature; this is the natural sound of a man. Now as you would think it monstrous to hear a melodious bird croaking as a raven; so it is no less

monstrous and degenerate to learn the most part of the discourses of men savouring nothing of God. If we had known that innocent estate of man, O how would we think he had fallen from heaven! We would imagine that we were thrust down from heaven, where we heard the melodious songs of angels, into hell, to hear the howlings of damned spirits. This then is that we are bound unto, by the bond of our creation; this is our proper office and station God once set us into, when he assigned every creature its own use and exercise. This was our portion, (and O the noblest of all, because nearest the King's own person!) to acknowledge in our hearts inwardly, and to express in our words and actions outwardly, what a One he is, according as he hath revealed himself in his word and works. It is great honour to a creature to have the meanest employment in the court of this great King; but, O, what is it to be set over all the King's house, and over all his kingdom! But, then, what is that, in respect of this,--to be next to the King,--to wait on his own person, so to speak? Therefore the godly man is described as a waiting-maid, or servant, Psalm. cxxiii. 2.

Well then, without more discourse upon it, without multiplying of it into particular branches, to glorify God is in our souls to conceive of him, and meditate on his name, till they receive the impression and stamp of all the letters of his glorious name; and then to express this in our words and actions, in commending of him, and obeying of him. Our souls should be as wax to express the seal of his glorious attributes of justice, power, goodness, holiness, and mercy: and as the water that receives the beams of the sun reflects them back again, so should our spirits receive the sweet warming beams of his love and glorious excellency, and then reflect them towards his Majesty, with the desires and affections of our souls. All our thoughts of him, all our affections towards him, should have the stamp of singularity, such as may declare there is none like him, none besides him; our love, our meditation, our acknowledgment should have this character on their front,--'There is none besides thee: thou art, and none else.' And then a