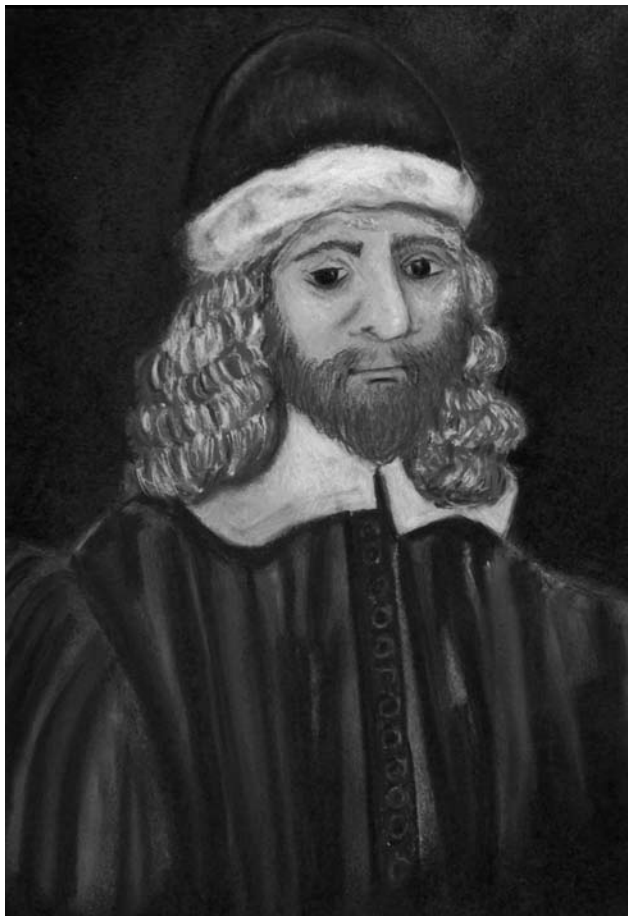


Thomas Goodwin



THOMAS GOODWIN (1600–1680)

(A portrait by Joel Heflin, 2009)

“A Habitual Sight of Him”:

The Christ-Centered Piety
of Thomas Goodwin

Introduced and Edited by
Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones



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Adrian and Claire Sloodmaker

models of Christ-centered piety; loyal,
God-fearing, enjoyable friends of three decades

*I thank my God upon every
remembrance of you* (Philippians 1:3).

— JRB

To my beloved friends at

Faith Vancouver PCA:

May these readings do for your souls
what they have done for my own,

*that in all things he might have the
preeminence* (Colossians 1:18).

—MJ

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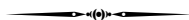
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Profiles in Reformed Spirituality



Charles Dickens' famous line in *A Tale of Two Cities*—"it was the best of times, it was the worst of times"—seems well suited to western Evangelicalism since the 1960s. On the one hand, these decades have seen much for which to praise God and to rejoice. In His goodness and grace, for instance, Reformed truth is no longer a house under siege. Growing numbers identify themselves theologically with what we hold to be biblical truth, namely, Reformed theology and piety. And yet, as an increasing number of Reformed authors have noted, there are many sectors of the surrounding western Evangelicalism that are characterized by great shallowness and a trivialization of the weighty things of God. So much of Evangelical worship seems barren. And when it comes to spirituality, there is little evidence of the riches of our heritage as Reformed Evangelicals.

As it was at the time of the Reformation, when the watchword was *ad fontes*—"back to the sources"—so it is now: the way forward is backward. We need to go back to the spiritual heritage of Reformed Evangelicalism to find the pathway forward. We cannot live in the past; to attempt to do so would be antiquarianism. But our Reformed forebearers in the faith can teach us much about Christianity, its doctrines, its passions, and its fruit.

And they can serve as our role models. As R. C. Sproul has noted of such giants as Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Jonathan Edwards: “These men all were conquered, overwhelmed, and spiritually intoxicated by their vision of the holiness of God. Their minds and imaginations were captured by the majesty of God the Father. Each of them possessed a profound affection for the sweetness and excellence of Christ. There was in each of them a singular and unswerving loyalty to Christ that spoke of a citizenship in heaven that was always more precious to them than the applause of men.”¹

To be sure, we would not dream of placing these men and their writings alongside the Word of God. John Jewel (1522–1571), the Anglican apologist, once stated: “What say we of the fathers, Augustine, Ambrose, Jerome, Cyprian?... They were learned men, and learned fathers; the instruments of the mercy of God, and vessels full of grace. We despise them not, we read them, we reverence them, and give thanks unto God for them. Yet...we may not make them the foundation and warrant of our conscience: we may not put our trust in them. Our trust is in the name of the Lord.”²

Seeking then both to honor the past and yet not idolize it, we are issuing these books in the series *Profiles in Reformed Spirituality*. The design is to introduce the spirituality and piety of the Reformed

1. “An Invaluable Heritage,” *Tabletalk*, 23, no. 10 (October 1999): 5–6.

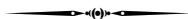
2. Cited in Barrington R. White, “Why Bother with History?” *Baptist History and Heritage*, 4, no. 2 (July 1969): 85.

tradition by presenting descriptions of the lives of notable Christians with select passages from their works. This combination of biographical sketches and collected portions from primary sources gives a taste of the subjects' contributions to our spiritual heritage and some direction as to how the reader can find further edification through their works. It is the hope of the publishers that this series will provide riches for those areas where we are poor and light of day where we are stumbling in the deepening twilight.

—Joel R. Beeke

Michael A. G. Haykin

Acknowledgments



Thirty-six selections of Thomas Goodwin's Christ-centered writings that promote piety are presented here in purist form. Only the smallest of changes have been made for consistency's sake, such as capitalization of a few words and the writing out in full of Bible books when not in parentheses. On a few occasions, lengthy paragraphs have been broken up into smaller paragraphs for the sake of readability. On rare occasions, a few words have been added in brackets to supply clarity. For the rest, the selections are precisely what are found in Goodwin's *Works*.

We owe thanks to Greg Bailey and Martha Fisher for editing this book; to Michael Haykin, co-editor of the series, for proofreading the work; to Derek Naves for hunting down illustrations; to Jay T. Collier for seeing this book through the press; and to Gary and Linda den Hollander, our effective proofing/typesetting team, for doing their normal high-quality work.

* * * * *

Most of all, I owe heartfelt thanks to my special wife, Mary, for her patience and love in supporting my writing ministry. No man could have a better helpmeet than the one with whom God has graciously

chosen to bless me; daily, I thank the Lord for her. I also thank my children, Calvin, Esther, and Lydia. Without their great attitude and cooperation, I could never be involved in writing and editing.

Finally, I am so grateful for Thomas Goodwin, who, for more than a decade, has been my favorite Puritan to read. His profound way of experientially probing the depths of our depravity, then exalting the suitability, beauty, and glory of Christ in His mediatorial work, is unsurpassed. What a gift the church has in Goodwin! Read him for your soul's profit here, then buy his *Works* (www.heritagebooks.com) and read on for years. You won't be sorry.

—JRB

* * * * *

I owe thanks to my wife, Barb, who has been incredibly patient with me, especially during evenings as I've returned to the computer to finish up a number of projects such as this one. I am also grateful to my Ph.D. supervisor, Dr. Michael Haykin, who put my name forward for this small book. Finally, I, too, am grateful for Thomas Goodwin; his writings have been a constant companion of mine over the past two years. And because Christ figures so centrally in his *Works*, I have been blessed to read frequently of the one who is “chief among ten thousand.”

—MJ

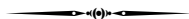
The Indwelling of Christ by faith...is to have Jesus Christ continually in one's eye, a habitual sight of Him. I call it so because a man actually does not always think of Christ; but as a man does not look up to the sun continually, yet he sees the light of it.... So you should carry along and bear along in your eye the sight and knowledge of Christ, so that at least a presence of Him accompanies you, which faith makes.

—Thomas Goodwin,
Works, 2:411



Thomas Goodwin

The Piety of Thomas Goodwin (1600–1680)



Considering Thomas Goodwin's theological and political influence in seventeenth-century England, it is remarkable that he is little known today, even within conservative Reformed evangelical circles. The reasons for Goodwin's relative obscurity today are several. For example, Goodwin was a Puritan and champion of ecclesiastical Independency (i.e. Congregationalism). Therefore, as a result of the political and religious upheaval in England during the 1640s and 1650s, culminating in the Great Ejection of 1662, Goodwin found himself on the "losing side." And, as Carl Trueman has noted, "non-conformists were not simply expelled from the Church of England, but excluded from the establishment, political, cultural, and intellectual, with all of the later impotence with regard to influence and the writing of history which that implies."¹ Furthermore, in connection to the Great Ejection, the paucity of secondary literature on Goodwin can be explained in part because of the Anglican monopoly of higher education that has continued into the twentieth century. The Puritans, especially Goodwin, "suffered the neglect which their separation from the Church

1. Carl Trueman, *John Owen* (Farnham, U.K.: Ashgate, 2007), 1.

made inevitable.”² The legacy of Goodwin—or lack thereof—is not, then, the result of any intrinsic mediocrity in his thought, but rather the result of disadvantageous historical circumstances that relegated one of England’s finest theologians to the halls of obscurity. Those, however, who have read Goodwin are capacious in their praise!

Renowned for intelligent piety at its Puritan best, Goodwin, known as “the Atlas of Independency,” stands on a par with John Owen, “the prince of Puritans,” as a theologian and an exegete, and often surpasses him in experimental depth. Any lover of the biblical and experimental emphases of the Puritans will find Goodwin both readable and spiritually rewarding. He represents the cream of Puritanism, capturing the intellect, will, and heart of his readers. His collected *Works* join the vigor of earlier Puritans such as William Perkins and Richard Sibbes to the matured thought of later Puritan divines, represented supremely by Owen.

Those influenced by Goodwin’s writings include John Cotton, Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, and John Gill. Alexander Whyte confessed: “I have read no other author so much and so often. And I continue to read him to this day, as if I had never read him before.” He calls Goodwin’s sermon, “Christ Dwelling in Our Hearts by Faith,” one of the “two very greatest sermons in the English language.” Whyte aptly concludes:

Goodwin is always an interpreter, and one of a

2. Carl Trueman, *Claims of Truth* (Carlisle, U.K.: Paternoster, 1998), 2.

thousand.... All his work, throughout his twelve volumes, is just so much pulpit exposition and pulpit application of the Word of God.... Full as Goodwin always is of the ripest scriptural and Reformation scholarship; full as he always is of the best theological and philosophical learning of his own day and of all foregoing days; full, also, as he always is of the deepest spiritual experience—all the same, he is always so simple, so clear, so direct, so un-technical, so personal, and so pastoral.³

In our generation, Puritan scholar J. I. Packer concurs: “Whyte called Goodwin ‘the greatest pulpit exegete of Paul that has ever lived,’ and perhaps justly; Goodwin’s Biblical expositions are quite unique, even among the Puritans, in the degree to which they combine theological breadth with experimental depth. John Owen saw into the mind of Paul as clearly as Goodwin—sometimes, on points of detail, more clearly—but not even Owen ever saw so deep into Paul’s heart.”⁴

3. Alexander Whyte, *Thirteen Appreciations* (London: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1913), 158ff.

4. J. I. Packer, “The Witness of the Spirit: The Puritan Teaching,” in *The Wisdom of Our Fathers* (London: Puritan Conference, 1956), 14; cf. J. C. Philpot, *Reviews by the late Mr. J. C. Philpot* (London: Frederick Kirby, 1901), 2:479ff., who comments, “Being a man of choice experience, Goodwin so blends with [his sound expositions of doctrine] the work of the Spirit, in all its various branches, as to enrich his exposition with a heavenly savour and unction which carries with it great force, and commends itself in a very sensible and profitable manner to the conscience.”

Education and Conversion

Thomas Goodwin was born on October 5, 1600, in Rollesby, Norfolk, to Richard (*d.* 1632) and Katherine Goodwin (1577–1645).⁵ Richard was a churchwarden of St. Nicholas from 1615, who, in 1627, was reprimanded by Samuel Harsnett, bishop of Norwich, for allowing nonconformists to preach without the surplice. His parents’ nonconformist sympathies

5. For biographical material on Goodwin, see *The Works of Thomas Goodwin*, 5 vols. (London: J. D. and S. R., 1704), 1:v–xix, by Thomas Goodwin Jr. (hereafter, “Life”); *The Works of Thomas Goodwin*, 12 vols. (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2006), 1:1–23 by Joel R. Beeke (from which much of this introduction is drawn) and 2:ix–xlviii, by Robert Halley (hereafter, Halley, “Memoir”); Edmund Calamy, *The Nonconformist’s Memorial*, ed. Samuel Palmer (London: Alex. Hogg, 1778), 1:183–87; James Reid, “Life of Thomas Goodwin,” in *Memoirs of the Westminster Divines* (1811; reprint Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1982), 319–43; Sir Leslie Stephen and Sir Sidney Lee, eds., *The Dictionary of National Biography* [DNB] (1890; reprint Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1922), 22:148–50; Whyte, *Thirteen Appreciations*, 157–76; Stanley P. Fienberg, “Thomas Goodwin, Puritan Pastor and Independent Divine” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1974); Brian Freer, “Thomas Goodwin, the Peaceable Puritan,” and Graham Harrison, “Thomas Goodwin and Independency,” in *Diversities of Gifts*, Westminster Conference Reports, 1980 (London: The Westminster Conference, 1981), 7–44; Tom Webster, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England: The Caroline Puritan Movement, c. 1620–1643* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 149–338; Michael Horton, “Thomas Goodwin and the Puritan Doctrine of Assurance: Continuity and Discontinuity in the Reformed Tradition, 1600–1680” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Coventry and Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, 1998); T. M. Lawrence, “Transmission and transformation” (Ph.D. dissertation, Cambridge University, 2002); T. M. Lawrence, “Goodwin, Thomas (1600–1680),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn., 2008), 22:823–28.



St. Nicholas Parish Church,
where Goodwin's father was churchwarden

(Photo courtesy of Paul Davies)

geared Goodwin's education toward ecclesiastical involvement. On August 25, 1613, Goodwin entered Christ's College, Cambridge, which at that time was a "nest of Puritans."⁶ At this time, the legacies of William Perkins (1558–1602) and William Ames (1576–1633) were "still fresh in most Men's Memories."⁷ Upon his arrival at Christ's College, "there remain'd still in the College six Fellows that were

6. Benjamin Brook, *The Lives of the Puritans: Containing a Biographical Account of Those Divines Who Distinguished Themselves in the Cause of Religious Liberty, from the Reformation Under Queen Elizabeth, to the Act of Uniformity in 1662* (London: for J. Black, 1813), 113.

7. "Life," ix. Patrick Collinson argues that Perkins was "the prince of puritan theologians and the most eagerly read" (*The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967], 125). For a good discussion of Ames and Perkins's influence at Cambridge, see Paul R. Schaeffer Jr., "The Spiritual Brotherhood on the Habits of the Heart: Cambridge Protestants and the Doctrine

great Tutors, who professed Religion after the strictest sort, then called Puritans.”⁸ At Cambridge, Goodwin would have had a thorough training in humanism and scholasticism; logic, rhetoric, metaphysics, mathematics, physics, and linguistics formed the substance of his undergraduate curriculum.⁹

At Cambridge, Goodwin became acquainted with Zacharias Ursinus’s (1534–1583) *Heidelberg Catechism* and followed the Arminian–Calvinist debates at Dort closely. Goodwin “judged [the Calvinists] to be in the right... and the Arminians in the wrong.”¹⁰ Moreover, as a student of theology, Goodwin came under the “plain and wholesome” preaching of Richard Sibbes (1577–1635) at Holy Trinity, Cambridge. Sibbes’s preaching and the reading of John Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion* were decisive in both the spiritual and theological formation of Goodwin. Speaking of Calvin’s *Institutes*, Goodwin writes: “O how sweet was the reading of some Parts of that Book to me! How pleasing was the Delivery of Truths in a solid manner then to me!”¹¹

In their preaching, Sibbes and John Preston (1587–1628) sought, according to Paul Schaeffer Jr., “a revitalization and reformation of piety in the lives of

of Sanctification from William Perkins to Thomas Shepard” (Ph.D. dissertation, Oxford University, 1994).

8. “Life,” ix.

9. John Morgan, *Godly Learning: Puritan Attitudes towards Reason, Learning, and Education, 1560–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 36–106.

10. “Life,” x.

11. *Ibid.*, vi.

those within a Protestant established church.”¹² Moreover, they favored a decidedly Reformed approach to theology and urged their hearers to “live according to the Reformation principles which they had already achieved legally.”¹³ Jonathan Moore argues that Preston’s preaching was “on occasions militantly anti-Papist and anti-Arminian.”¹⁴ Not only did the content impact Preston’s hearers, so too did the style. Goodwin credits Preston as the individual who transformed his own preaching style to what is known as the “plain style.”¹⁵ Goodwin’s chief influences, then, were Christ-centered preachers who advocated a distinctly Reformed position on theology, the Scriptures, and the church’s creeds and confessions, men who were also overtly anti-Papist and anti-Arminian.

While Goodwin was still a student at Cambridge, he prepared to receive Communion for the first time, but his hopes of participation were dashed by his only tutor at Cambridge, William Power, who refused to allow him to receive the sacrament. There is little information on Power. He did not publish any books that give clues about his theological leanings, but both extreme Puritanism and popery seem unlikely.¹⁶ However, Power did take his duties seriously, enough so that his reason for forbidding Holy Communion to

12. Schaeffer, “The Spiritual Brotherhood,” 34.

13. Ibid. For an interesting study of Preston’s view on the atonement—a position that Goodwin would not adopt—see Jonathan D. Moore, *English Hypothetical Universalism: John Preston and the Softening of Reformed Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

14. Moore, *English Hypothetical Universalism*, 20.

15. See “Life,” xiii.

16. Lawrence, “Transmission and transformation,” 70.

Goodwin was most likely Goodwin's age.¹⁷ Discouraged by this, Goodwin “left off private Prayer...and went constantly to St. Maries” to hear the “flaunting Sermons” of Richard Senhouse (*d.* 1626), whose “eloquent tongue and honest heart were capable to *over-awe a Court*.”¹⁸ Goodwin, under the influence of Senhouse, began to lean toward Arminianism and resolved to preach against the nonconformists.

In 1617, Goodwin graduated BA, and on March 21, 1620, having received his MA from St. Catharine's College, he was elected fellow and college lecturer. Other fellows who served at St. Catharine's were John Arrowsmith, William Spurstowe, and William Strong. All would serve one day with Goodwin at the Westminster Assembly. Several of these Puritans tried to persuade Goodwin that rhetoric and Arminianism were not edifying and did not serve the truth. In addition, Goodwin could not shake the influence of Sibbes's preaching and the sermons of Preston in the college chapel.

On October 2, 1620, while listening to a funeral sermon by Thomas Bainbridge (*bap.* 1574, *d.* 1646), Goodwin underwent a conversion experience that he described as “a true work of Grace.”¹⁹ On that afternoon, he had met with some friends to have a good time. One of the friends convinced the group to attend a funeral. Bainbridge preached at that service

17. *Ibid.*, 68.

18. J. Gauden, *Ecclesia Anglicana suspiria* (London, 1659), 614. Goodwin, speaking after his conversion, provides a fascinating comparison between the preaching of Senhouse and John Preston. See “Life,” xiii.

19. *Ibid.*, xi.

on Luke 19:41–42, focusing on the need for personal repentance. God used the message to show Goodwin his dreadful sins, the essential depravity of his heart, his averseness to all spiritual good, and his desperate condition, which left him exposed to the wrath of God. A few hours later, “before God, who after we are regenerate is so faithful and mindful of his word,” Goodwin received a “speedy word” of deliverance from Ezekiel 16. He writes:

And no Eye pitied me or could help me, but as God there (in Ezek. 16) on the sudden (for 'tis spoken as a speedy Word, as well as a vehement earnest Word, for 'tis doubled twice) yea I said unto you Live: So God was pleased on the sudden, and as it were in an instant, to alter the whole Course of his former Dispensation towards me, and so of and to my Soul, Yea live, yea live I say, said God: and as he created the World and the Matter of all things by a Word, so he created and put a new Life and Spirit into my Soul, and so great an Alteration was strange to me.

God took me aside, and...privately said unto me, do you now turn to me, and I will pardon all your Sins tho never so many.... I about a Year after did expressly tell Mr Price, in declaring to him my Conversion...and I have since repeated them to others I know not how often, for they have ever stuck in my Mind.²⁰

20. Ibid., xi. Goodwin refers to Mr. Nicholas Price as “the greatest and most famous Convert...and who was the holiest Man that ever I knew” (ibid., xii). Referring to Goodwin’s conversion, William Haller described it as one of “the most notable revelations of the

Goodwin gives four reasons why he believed that “these instructions and suggestions [of deliverance and pardon] were immediately from God”: (1) the condition of his heart prior to receiving the word of God’s willingness to pardon—“the posture and condition of my spirit, and that this suggestion took me when my heart was fixed, and that unmoveably, in the contrary persuasions”; (2) the appropriateness of this divine word when it came—“it was a word in its proper season”; (3) that this word was “not an ungrounded fancy, but the pure word of God, which is the ground of faith and hope”; and (4) that this divine intimation had “consequents and effects after God’s speaking to me,” including an altered disposition of soul; a dissolution of the works of Satan; an enlightened understanding; a melted will disposed to turn to God; a new nature “inclining me to good”; the Spirit of God as “a new indweller”; and “an actual turning from all known sins, and my entertaining the truth of all godliness.”²¹

Upon conversion, Goodwin aligned himself unequivocally for the remainder of his life with the theological tradition of Perkins, Sibbes, and Preston. He resolved never to seek personal fame, but “to part with all for Christ and make the glory of God the measure of all time to come.”²² Consequently, he abandoned the polished style of preaching then common among Anglican divines, since it promoted

Puritan soul” (*The Rise of Puritanism* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1957], 75).

21. “Life,” xi–xiii.

22. *Ibid.*, xii.

the preacher, and adopted the Puritan plain style of preaching, which, in its self-conscious disuse of human embellishment, sought to give all glory to God. His preaching became earnest, didactic, experimental, and pastoral.

From 1620 to 1627, Goodwin sought personal assurance of faith. Through letters and conversations with a godly minister, Rev. Nicholas Price of King's Lynn (who Goodwin said was "the greatest man for experimental acquaintance with Christ that ever he met"), he was led to see his need to "live by faith in Christ, and to derive from him life and strength for sanctification, and all comfort and joy through believing."²³ Later, he said about this time of spiritual struggle: "I was diverted from Christ for several years, to search only into the signs of grace in me. It was almost seven years ere I was taken off to live by faith on Christ, and God's free love, which are alike the object of faith."²⁴

Goodwin's soul finally found rest in Christ alone. His preaching became more Christ-centered. He could agree with Sibbes's advice: "Young man, if you ever would do good, you must preach the gospel and the free grace of God in Christ Jesus."²⁵

Goodwin's conversion at Cambridge marked the beginning of what is surely one of the most interesting—and longest—ecclesiastical careers in the history of English Puritanism, rivalled only by that of his fellow Independent and friend, Owen.

23. *Ibid.*, xiii.

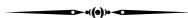
24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*



John Cotton (1585–1652)

Puritan, ministered in New England. Cotton convinced Goodwin of congregational polity, entrusted him with publishing one of his books, and had even encouraged him to move to New England.



Christ Excels Joseph¹

Now when Christ comes first out of the other world, from the dead, clothed with that heart and body which He was to wear in heaven, what message does He send first to them? We would all think that as they would not know Him in His sufferings, so He would now be as strange to them in His glory; or at least that His first words would be to berate them for their faithlessness and falsehood. But here is no such matter, for His first word concerning them is, “Go tell my brethren...” (John 20:17). You read elsewhere how it is a great point of love and condescension in Christ so to entitle them. Hebrews 2:11 says, “He is not ashamed to call them brethren,” though surely His brethren had been ashamed of Him. For Him to call them so when He is first entering into His glory argues the more love in Him toward them. He carries it as Joseph did in the height of his advancement, when he first opened his mind to his brethren; “I am Joseph your brother,” he said (Gen. 45:4). So Christ says here, “Tell them you have seen Jesus their brother; I own them as brethren still.” But what is the message that He would first have delivered to them?

1. From *The Heart of Christ in Heaven Towards Sinners on Earth*; *Works* 4:104–105.

“That I,” says He, “ascend to my Father, and *your* Father” (John 20:17).

This is a more friendly speech by far, and argues infinitely more love than that of Joseph (though his was full of compassion), for Joseph, after he had told them he was their brother, added, “whom you sold into Egypt”; he reminded them of their unkindness. Not so Christ. He says not a word of that; He reminds them not of what they had done against Him. Poor sinners, who are full of the thoughts of their own sins, know not how they shall be able at the latter day to look Christ in the face when they shall first meet with Him. But they may relieve their spirits against this care and fear by Christ’s conduct toward His disciples, who had so sinned against Him. Be not afraid, your sins He will remember no more.

Yea, further, you may observe that He reminds them not so much of what He had been doing for them. He says not, “Tell them I have been dying for them” or “They little think what I have suffered for them”; not a word of that either. His heart and His care are set upon doing more: He looks not backward to what is passed, but forgets His sufferings, as a woman her travail, for joy that a man-child is born. Having now dispatched that great work on earth for them, He hastens to heaven as fast as He can to do another. And though He knows He has business yet to do upon earth that will hold Him forty days longer, yet to show that His heart is longing and eagerly desirous to be at work for them in heaven, He speaks in the present tense and tells them, “I ascend”; and He expresses His joy that, not only does He go to *His* Father, but that He goes to *their* Father, to be an


advocate with Him for them, of which I spoke before.
And is indeed Jesus our brother alive? And does He
call us brethren? And does He talk thus lovingly of us?
Whose heart would not this overcome?





William Perkins (1558–1602)

Influential Puritan, taught at Cambridge University. Goodwin wrote that when he entered Cambridge, six of his instructors who had sat under Perkins were still passing on his teaching.



Christ Longs for His Own Return¹

It is the manner of bridegrooms, when they have made all ready in their fathers' houses, then to come themselves and fetch their brides, and not to send for them by others, because it is a time of love. Love descends better than it ascends, and so does the love of Christ, who indeed is love itself, and therefore comes down to us Himself. "I will come again and receive you unto myself," says Christ, "that so where I am, you may be also." That last part of His speech gives the reason of it and shows His entire affection. It is as if He had said, "The truth is, I cannot live without you and I shall never be quiet till I have you where I am, that we may never part again; that is the reason of it. Heaven shall not hold Me, nor My Father's company, if I do not have you with Me, My heart is so set upon you; and if I have any glory, you shall have part of it."

So, John 4:19 says, "Because I live, ye shall live also." It is a reason, and it is half an oath besides. *As I live* is God's oath; *because I live*, says Christ. He pawns His life upon it and desires to live upon no other terms; "He shall live to see his seed," etc. (Isa. 53).

1. From *The Heart of Christ in Heaven Towards Sinners on Earth*; Works 4:100.

And yet farther, the more to express the workings and longings of His heart after them all that while, He tells them it shall not be long before He comes again to them. So, “Again a little while and ye shall see me; a little while and ye shall not see me,” says He (John 16:16). Not seeing Him refers not to that small space of absence while He was dead and in the grave, but to that after His last ascending, forty days after His resurrection, when He should go away, not to be seen on earth again until the day of judgment; and yet from that ascension, but “a little while,” says He, “and you shall see me again,” namely, at the day of judgment. It is said, “Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry” (Heb. 10:37). The words in the Greek mean, “As little little as may be.” Though the time is long in itself, yet it is as little while as may be in respect of His desire, without the least delaying to come. He will stay not a moment longer than till He has dispatched all our business there for us.

The doubling of the phrase, “coming he will come” (John 14:18), implies vehemency of desire to come, and that His mind is always upon it; He is still a-coming; He can hardly be kept away. Thus, the Hebrew phrase likewise signifies an urgency, vehemency, and intenseness of some act, as expecting I have expected, desiring I have desired, so coming He will come. And not content with these expressions of desire, He adds over and above all these, “and will not tarry”; and all to signify the infinite ardency of His mind toward His elect below, and to have all His elect in heaven about Him. He will not stay a minute longer than He must; He tarries only till He has throughout the ages by His

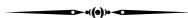
intercession prepared every room for each saint, that He may entertain them all at once together and have them all about Him.





Zacharias Ursinus (1534–1583)

German Reformer, known as an author of the Heidelberg Catechism. Goodwin was introduced to Ursinus's work at Cambridge.



Sitting in Heaven¹

Observe now, He is said to sit there (in heaven) over all things, not in His own pure personal right simply—it is His inheritance, as He is the Son of God (as Heb. 1:3, 4, 5, it is affirmed of Him)—but as a head to the church (Eph. 1:22). The phrase “over all things” comes between His being a head and “to the church” to show that He is set over all in relation to His church. So we see that our relation is involved and our right included in this exaltation of His. He sits not simply as a Son but as a head, and He sits not as a head without a body, so He therefore must have His members up to Him. For this reason, in the next verse it is added, “which is his body, yea, his fulness” (Eph. 1:23). So Christ is not complete without all His members and would leave heaven if any one were missing. It would be a lame, maimed body if it lacked but a toe. Christ is our element, and because He has ascended, we are sparks that fly upward to Him. He took our flesh and carried it into heaven, and left us His Spirit on earth, both being pawns and earnestes that we should follow.

Furthermore, He is not only said to sit as our head, but we are said to “sit together with him.” That is made the upshot of all in the next chapter

1. From *Christ Set Forth; Works* 4:53–54.

(Eph. 2:6). So just as we arose with Him, He being considered as a common person, and ascended with Him, as was said, so we sit together with Him in the highest heavens, that is, “in His exalted estate above the heavens.” Not that Christ’s being at God’s right hand (if taken for that sublimity of power) is communicable to us; that is Christ’s prerogative only.

So, “to which of all the angels did he ever say, Sit thou at my right hand?” (Heb. 1:5). Yet since His sitting in heaven, as it is indefinitely expressed, is understood to be in our right and stead, and as a common person, and so is to assure us of our sitting there with Him, in our proportion, so it is expressly rendered as the mind and intendment of it: “Him that overcometh, I will grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also am set down with my Father in his throne” (Rev. 3:21). There is a proportion observed, though with an inequality; we sit on Christ’s throne, but He alone on His Father’s throne; that is, Christ alone sits at God’s right hand, but we on Christ’s right hand, and so the church is said to be at Christ’s “right hand” (Ps. 45:9).

Furthermore (and it may afford a further comfort to us on this point), this shows that at the latter day we shall sit as assessors on His judgment seat, to judge the world with Him. “When the Son of man shall sit in his glory, ye shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the tribes of Israel” (Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:30). Since our sitting with Him is spoken of in respect to judgment and to giving the sentence of it, not a sentence shall pass without your votes. So you may by faith not only look on yourselves as already in heaven, sitting with Christ as a common person in your right,

you may look on yourselves as judges also; if any sin should arise to accuse or condemn, it must be with your votes. What greater security can you have than this? For you must condemn yourselves if you be condemned; you may very well say, "Who shall accuse? Who shall condemn?" for you will never pronounce a fatal sentence upon yourselves.

Just as Paul triumphed here, so may we, for at the present we sit in heaven with Christ and have all our enemies under our feet. As Joshua made his servants set their feet on the necks of those five kings, so God would have us by faith to do the same to all of ours, for one day we shall do it. And if you say, We see it not, I answer that the apostle says of Christ Himself, "Now we see not yet all things put under him" (Heb. 2:8). All things are not yet under Him, for He now sits in heaven and *expects* by faith that the day will come when His enemies shall be made His footstool (Heb. 10:12–13). "But we see" for the present "Jesus crowned with glory and honour" (v. 9), and so may be sure that the thing is as good as done. And in seeing Him thus crowned, we may see ourselves sitting with Him, and quietly wait and expect, as Christ Himself does, for all things to be accomplished, when our salvation will be finished and fully perfected.

