

Full Redemption: The Puritan Doctrine of Glorification

By B. E. Franks

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified (Romans 8:29–30).

These words from Paul have provided theologians with the skeletal structure for the *ordo salutis*. Each element of the order of salvation which Paul lays out has been carefully studied and discussed by generations of theologians. Elements such as justification remain controversial topics that generate much discussion today.¹ Other elements of the *ordo salutis* are, however,

THE AUTHOR: B.E. Franks is an MDiv student at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, MI. A native son of the PCA, he has done mission work in England with the EPCEW and served in internships with churches in the PCA and OPC. After studying at Patrick Henry College in beautiful Virginia, he completed a B.A. in Classical Christian Education through Whitefield College. His writings have been published in the *Puritan Reformed Journal* and the *Banner of Truth Magazine*.

1. For a helpful contemporary assessment and overview of the doctrine from a Reformed perspective, see J.V. Fesko, *Justification: Understanding the Classic Reformed Doctrine* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008).

2. For a general overview of the Puritan doctrine of glorification, see Andrew Hynes, *Puritans and Salvation: The 17th Century Puritan Approach to Man's Salvation* (Mustang, OK: Tate Publishing & Enterprises, 2015), 147–164.

3. The rationale for including à Brakel in a discussion of Puritan theology is given later in the paper. For a brief biography of à Brakel and thematic overview of *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, see Bartel Elshout, *The Pastoral and Practical Theology of Wilhelmus à Brakel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 1997).

4. While some might claim that the absence of a distinct chapter on the subject shows that the Westminster Divines did not value the doctrine of glorification, this is not the case. To understand the problems with this approach, see J.V. Fesko, *The Spirit of the Age: The 19th Century Debate over the Holy Spirit and the Westminster Confession* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017), 28–30.

5. References to the doctrine of glorification can be found in

often overlooked or underdeveloped. The last link in the “chain” which Paul develops serves as a fitting case in point: glorification. The doctrine of glorification is rarely discussed today outside of systematic theologies, but it plays an important role in the church’s understanding of key areas of theology including soteriology and eschatology. What does a healthy and biblical doctrine of glorification look like? How can the church properly articulate and apply this doctrine in a way that is biblically faithful and pastorally helpful? The Puritan tradition provides answers to these questions.² The Puritans provide a model for how the doctrine of glorification can be both articulated and applied.

To demonstrate this thesis, we will consider three examples of Puritan discussions of glorification. Following the Puritan pattern, we will consider the doctrine, followed by the uses of the doctrine. First, we will examine the doctrine of glorification as articulated in *The Westminster Standards*, after which we will consider several Puritan funeral sermons to see how the doctrine of glorification was applied in a practical and pastoral context. Finally, we will survey the discussion of glorification found in volume four of Wilhelmus à Brakel’s classic work *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*.³

THE DOCTRINE OF GLORIFICATION IN THE WESTMINSTER STANDARDS

The Westminster Standards is the classic consensus summary of Puritan theology. To understand what the *Standards* say about the subject of glorification, however, requires care and attention. While there is no separate chapter on glorification in the Confession of Faith, the doctrine is discussed at a number of points in the *Standards*.⁴ Within the confession itself, the doctrine is referenced in at least half a dozen different chapters and it is covered in both the larger and shorter catechisms as well.⁵ The fullest

discussion of the doctrine can be found in chapter 32 of the confession and in questions 82–90 of the Larger Catechism. Questions 37–38 of the shorter catechism offer what is perhaps the best summary of the Puritan doctrine of glorification ever written.

Chapter 32 of the Confession of Faith is entitled “Of the State of Men After Death, and of the Resurrection of the Dead.” This chapter deals with what is sometimes called “personal eschatology” and is worth quoting in full:

1. The bodies of men, after death, return to dust, and see corruption: but their souls, which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them: the souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God, in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies. And the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. Besides these two places, for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none.
2. At the last day, such as are found alive shall not die, but be changed: and all the dead shall be raised up, with the selfsame bodies, and none other (although with different qualities), which shall be united again to their souls forever.
3. The bodies of the unjust shall, by the power of Christ, be raised to dishonor: the bodies of the just, by his Spirit, unto honor; and be made conformable to his own glorious body.

Paragraph one discusses the fate of men’s bodies and souls after death and rejects both the Anabaptist notion of “soul sleep” and the Romaniist doctrine of purgatory.⁶ Throughout their discussion, the Westminster Divines were careful to distinguish between believers and unbelievers. While both the believer and the unbeliever will experience a separation between body and soul upon death (and both will also experience a permanent reunion between body and soul at the Last Judgment), the destination for these two parties could not be more different. The believers are to be, “made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God, in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies,” whereas the souls of the wicked will be condemned to, “torments and utter darkness” until the judgment day.

Thematically, there is a natural movement from the first paragraph to the final paragraphs. The events which are described in paragraph one have been taking place since the very first man drew his very last breath, but paragraphs two and three describe what will take place on the last day for all of humanity. Paragraph one describes how death changes men’s state while paragraphs two and three describe how the resurrection will confirm men’s state for all eternity. While the first paragraph meditates on the separation that will take place between men’s bodies and souls, these latter paragraphs explore the permanent reunion of bodies and souls that will take place at the last day.

One theme that is emphasized in the confession’s discussion of personal eschatology is the ongoing importance of the body. Contrary to the teachings of Platonism and the heresies of Gnosticism, the Divines maintain that the body and the soul will dwell together for all eternity.⁷ The focus of the chapter is not on trying to imagine what all the details of a glorified life might look like. Instead, the Divines draw the attention of believers and unbelievers to the realities of death, life after death, and the eternity that awaits them.

While the confession emphasizes the connections between the doctrine of glorification and eschatology, the larger catechism draws out the connections between the doctrine of glorification and union with Christ. This difference in approach is not a deviation from the doctrine of the confession but is, instead, a development of it in new ways. Robert Letham notes that while the various aspects of redemption are often separated by time, they are nonetheless logically and spiritually brought together in the doctrine of union with Christ. Letham

Confession of Faith (hereafter WCF) 3.5, 8.1, 9.5, 18.1–2, 26.1, and 32.1–3, along with Westminster Shorter Catechism (hereafter WSC) 37–38, and Westminster Larger Catechism (hereafter WLC) 65, 74, and 82–90. See *The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms* (Lawrenceville, GA: Committee for Christian Education and Publications, 2007).

6. See the discussion in J.V. Fesko, *The Theology of the Westminster Standards* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Publishers, 2017), 368–371.

7. As one author put it: “The Scriptures assure us that at the resurrection of the dead we shall be raised ‘imperishable,’ with bodies characterized by ‘glory’ and ‘power.’ These will be real physical bodies even though they are ‘spiritual bodies’—that is, bodies characterized by the glory and power of the spiritual realm (1 Cor. 15:42–44). And lest we forget, the confession reminds us that this reunion of soul and body is permanent. It is a union that will last ‘forever.’ All people will in some sense live forever, although for those who are isolated from God their eternal existence will be experienced as an eternal death.” Chad Van Dixhoorn, *Confessing the Faith: A Reader’s Guide to the Westminster Confession of Faith* (Edinburgh, UK: Banner of Truth Trust, 2014), 432.

draws out the connection between union with Christ and the doctrine of glorification when he says, “What the Larger Catechism brings to the fore is that all these are aspects of union and communion with Christ in grace and glory. At no point should they be isolated from union with Christ. The Assembly displayed, not two different views of the way of salvation, but one view seen from complementary vantage points.”⁸ This is in keeping with Paul’s statements in Romans 8:29–30, which lists glorification as the last link in the great and glorious chain of redemption.

The larger catechism introduces its discussion of glorification with question 82: “*What is the communion in glory which the members of the invisible church have with Christ?* A. The communion in glory which the members of the invisible church have with Christ, is in this life, immediately after death, and at last perfected at the resurrection and day of judgment.”⁹ These three stages

provide the believer with a framework to understand and anticipate the communion in glory which he has with Christ and because of Christ.¹⁰

The first stage of the believer’s communion in glory with Christ is one of anticipation. The tastes of glory which a believer gets in this life are perhaps better thought of as foretastes of glory.¹¹ Ever mindful to draw out the differences between the privileges of the believer and the punishments of the unbeliever, the Divines note that believers, “enjoy the sense of God’s love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, and hope of glory” while to the wicked, a “sense of God’s revenging wrath, horror of conscience, and a fearful expectation of judgment, are . . . the beginning of their torments which they shall endure after death” (WLC Q&A 83).

The second stage of the believer’s communion in glory with Christ is marked by joyful rest mixed with eager longing. There is a tension between the “already” and the “not-yet” for those who have died, just as there is for those who still live (although the believer in glory has far more of the “already” than any believer does on earth). For while death brings the believer into the “highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory” and their souls are “made perfect in holiness,” they are, nevertheless, still waiting for “the full redemption of their bodies.”¹² But this is not an anxious waiting. The WLC puts it beautifully when it says that the bodies of believers, “rest in their graves as in their beds, till at the Last Day they be again united to their souls.”¹³

The third, and final, stage of the believer’s communion in glory with Christ is what Vos calls, “the perfection of glory at the resurrection.”¹⁴ The resurrection marks the beginning of the end for the believer—yet this is an end without end! At the resurrection, all men will be reunited with their bodies and judged by Christ, but the believer will be acquitted by Christ and ushered into everlasting glory while the unbeliever will be condemned by Christ and ushered into everlasting sorrow.¹⁵

What, then, is the Puritan doctrine of glorification? For the members of the Westminster Assembly (and the Puritan consensus that they represented), glorification was a rich and wonderful doctrine that was closely connected with both soteriology (through the doctrine of union with Christ and the *ordo salutis*) and eschatology (through its connection with the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead and the final judgment). The doctrine of glorification highlights the difference between the eternal state of the believer and the unbeliever and serves as a motive to encourage the righteous and convict the rebellious.¹⁶ The question that remains to be answered is: how did the Puritans use this doctrine?

8. Robert Letham, *The Westminster Assembly: Reading its Theology in Historical Context* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 246.

9. The background to this question is found in WLC Q. 65: “*What special benefits do the members of the invisible church enjoy by Christ?* A. The members of the invisible church by Christ enjoy union and communion with him in grace and glory.” Questions 66–81 describe what union and communion in grace look like, while questions 82–90 discuss union and communion in glory.

10. In his commentary on the confession, J.G. Vos asks the question: “What are the three stages in which God’s people receive glory? (a) They receive the first fruits of glory during the present life; (b) they enter the state of glory at their death; (c) they receive the perfection of glory at the resurrection.” Johannes G. Vos, *The Westminster Larger Catechism: A Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002), 193.

11. Question 83 of the WLC describes this stage as an experience of “the first-fruits of glory with Christ, as they are members of him their head, and so in him are interested in that glory which he is fully possessed of.” Vos explains that to be “interested” in glory, “does not mean that they are eager to learn about it, but rather that they are entitled to a share in the glory which Christ now enjoys in heaven.” Elsewhere, Vos explains that the believer gets a taste of glory as, “a deposit, a token payment, or a payment on account, which is made as evidence of good faith in promising that the balance shall be paid in due time.” Vos, *The Westminster Larger Catechism: A Commentary*, 194.

12. Each of these phrases is quoted from WLC Q. 86.

13. WLC. Q. 86. Robert Letham draws out the vivid contrast which is made here between the righteous and the wicked: “The souls of the wicked, however, are cast into hell immediately upon death. There they are in torments and utter darkness. They are kept there, awaiting not the life of the world to come, but the final judgment. Their bodies will be ‘kept in their graves, as in their prisons’ (LC 86). The contrast between the righteous resting in their beds and the wicked kept in their prisons is striking.” Letham, *The Westminster Assembly: Reading its Theology in Historical Context*, 361–362.

14. Vos, *The Westminster Larger Catechism: A Commentary*, 194.

15. WLC Q. 87–90.

16. Perhaps the best summary of the doctrine is found in questions 37–38 of the WSC: “Q. 37. *What benefits do believers receive from Christ*

THE USE OF GLORIFICATION IN PURITAN FUNERAL SERMONS

Puritan funeral sermons provide a fascinating lens through which we can see how the Puritans communicated confessional theology in a pastoral context. Puritan funeral sermons are a genre in their own right and represent a significant body of literature.¹⁷ The scope of this paper will only permit a survey of two brief sermons, but even a small sampling from this corpus is enough to demonstrate the pastoral warmth and wisdom that the Puritans used in applying the doctrine of glorification at funerals.

In 1639, a London printer published a funeral sermon preached by the great Puritan Richard Sibbes (1577–1635) entitled *The Redemption of Bodies*.¹⁸ Sibbes was famously referred to as “the heavenly Doctor”, a moniker which is borne out by the sermon under consideration.¹⁹ In *The Redemption of Bodies*, Sibbes expounds the text of Philippians 3:21, “Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.” A fitting companion to this sermon is Thomas Brooks’ (1608–1680) well-known message *A Believer’s Last Day is His Best Day*.²⁰ This sermon was preached by Brooks on June 28th, 1651 at the funeral of a woman named Martha Randall and is an exposition of Ecclesiastes 7:1, “A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of one’s birth.”

In keeping with the practice of Puritan funeral sermons at the time, neither Brooks nor Sibbes make much reference to the lives of the people whose funerals they were preaching.²¹ Though there are a number of differences in their sermons, both messages focus the attention of their hearers on one great theme: the change which death brings. Sibbes (in developing Paul’s statement that the believer’s vile body will be changed to be like Christ’s glorious body) emphasizes the change which death brings to a man’s body, while Brooks (in defending his proposition that a believer’s “dying-day is better than his birthday”²²) emphasizes the change which death brings to a man’s situation. Both see death as an agent of change. Sibbes unpacks Paul’s description of man’s body as “vile” with this claim that, “The best men’s bodies in this world are vile.”²³ They are vile because they are taken from the earth, base in this life, and vile both in death and after death.²⁴ Sibbes makes use of this doctrine by arguing that a recognition of the vileness of one’s body abates pride and demonstrates the foolishness of structuring one’s life around the body. As

the congregation sat before the casket, Sibbes pleaded with his hearers saying, “If our bodies be vile, base bodies, while we live here, let us not offend God for anything to gratify our vile bodies.”²⁵ In place of a vile fallen frame, Sibbes declares to the believer that, “He that made us will make us again.... His first coming was to change our souls, to deliver them from the bondage of Satan. His second coming shall be to deliver our bodies from the bondage of corruption.... Our bodies shall be like his glorious body, even as our souls are like Christ’s soul. For this is certain. We are renewed in grace, not to the image of the first Adam, but to the image of the second Adam.”²⁶

As was stated above, while Sibbes focused on the

at death? A. The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection. Q. 38. What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection? A. At the resurrection, believers being raised up in glory, shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.”

17. For a helpful and thorough analysis of the development, structure, and themes of Puritan funeral sermons, see Selmer Neville Westby, *The Puritan Funeral Sermon in Seventeenth Century England* (PhD. Diss., University of Southern California, 1970). Also of interest is Emory Elliott, “The Development of the Puritan Funeral Sermon and Elegy: 1660–1750,” *Early American Literature* 15, no. 2 (1980): 151–64. For a useful collection of Puritan funeral sermons, see Daniel Featley et al., *Threnoikos: The House of Mourning, Furnished with Directions for Preparations to Meditations of Consolations at the Hour of Death: Delivered in LVI. Sermons, Preached at the Funerals of Divers Faithful Servants of Christ* (London, 1672).

18. Found in Richard Sibbes, *The Works of Richard Sibbes*, Vol. 5 (Edinburg, UK: Banner of Truth, 1977), 155–173.

19. One biography says that Sibbes earned this name by, “his godly preaching and heavenly manner of life. Izaak Walton wrote of Sibbes: Of this blest man, let this just praise be given, Heaven was in him, before he was in heaven.” Joel R. Beeke & Randall J. Pederson, *Meet the Puritans: With a Guide to Modern Reprints* (Grand Rapids MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2006), 535.

20. Found in Thomas Brooks, *The Works of Thomas Brooks*, Vol. 6 (Edinburg, UK: Banner of Truth, 1980), 387–408. For a brief guide to Brooks’ life and writings, see Beeke & Pederson, *Meet the Puritans: With a Guide to Modern Reprints*, 96–100.

21. Westby traces the shifting attitudes towards eulogizing in Puritan funeral sermons in chapter two of his dissertation. See Westby, *The Puritan Funeral Sermon in Seventeenth Century England*, 18–44.

22. Brooks, *The Works of Thomas Brooks*, Vol. 6, 394.

23. Sibbes, *The Works of Richard Sibbes*, Vol. 5, 162.

24. Sibbes summarizes his argument by saying, “In this respect it is a vile body. And in all passages of our life, in respect of labour, and pain, and sicknesses, and diseases, and likewise for indisposing the soul, that it is an instrument to ill. And in death itself more vile than in life; and after death most of all vile. So you see they are vile bodies every way.” Sibbes, *The Works of Richard Sibbes*, Vol. 5, 163–164.

25. Sibbes, *The Works of Richard Sibbes*, Vol. 5, 164.

26. Sibbes, *The Works of Richard Sibbes*, Vol. 5, 165.

change death brings to a man's body, Brooks focused on the change death brings to a man's situation. His sermon falls into two basic parts. In the first part, he outlines six ways in which death, for those who believe, is a change for the better.²⁷ In the second part, he outlines four uses for this doctrine (although if one counts Brooks' sub-points, there are actually seventeen uses that he draws from the doctrine).²⁸ As one might expect from Brooks, he develops each of these points in bold and beautiful language. Speaking of the change which death will bring to the believer's enjoyments of God, he notes that our enjoyment of God will be clear, complete, consistent, and changeless.²⁹ Brooks calls on his hearers to consider that glory that believers should anticipate when he says, "Here they receive grace for grace, but in heaven they shall receive glory for glory. God keeps the best wine till last; the best of God, Christ, and heaven is behind. Here we have but some sips, some tastes of God; fulness is reserved for a glorious state."³⁰

Both preachers develop their doctrine of glorification in keeping with the teaching of the *Westminster Standards* as developed above.³¹ They saw their sermons as occasions to draw their hearers to a solemn

consideration of their own standing before God. Commenting on the themes of Puritan funeral sermons, Westby notes that:

Death was the great watershed between two states of being, and the preachers devoted great care to picturing the area which lay just before and just beyond the exquisite boundary. They dwelt on the last moments of life, because it was in these, finally, that the decision between heaven and hell was made by all who had not lived closely in Christ or who had by a recurrence of sin fallen away from sanctity. In the Puritan view, all eternity and the nature of the sinner's punishment could hang in the balance at the moment of death.³²

The funeral sermons of Puritans drew out the doctrines of glorification in a way that pressed home the need for their hearers to repent. They did not develop themes of glorification in way that was merely doctrinal or intellectual, nor did they seek to eulogize the body that lay before them. Rather, they saw the funeral sermon as a critical opportunity to draw their living hearers into eternity and to press home the significance of their death and their personal standing before God. The goal of Puritan funeral sermons, as stated in the *Westminster Directory for Public Worship*, was to "put [men] in remembrance of their duties."³³ Both Sibbes and Brooks provide rich examples of the way in which Puritan pastors fulfilled this aim. Both men followed the Puritan pattern of applying the doctrine of glorification to the personal redemption of their hearers. To use theological terminology, Puritan funeral sermons located the doctrine of glorification under the heading of soteriology more than eschatology. While they did not ignore the eschatological implications of the doctrine, their goal was to show their hearers their need for personal redemption and the blessings that come to those who have been redeemed.

THE DOCTRINE AND USE OF GLORIFICATION IN À BRAKEL'S: *THE CHRISTIAN'S REASONABLE SERVICE*

In à Brakel's well-loved work, *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, glorification is dealt with under the heading of eschatology rather than soteriology.³⁴ Before we explore à Brakel's work on this subject, it is necessary to explain why à Brakel should be included with a discussion of Puritan theology. Wilhelmus à Brakel was a leading figure in the *Nadere Reformatie*, the Dutch Further Reformation. Although à Brakel wrote in a different country, context, and language than that of the

27. Brooks' reasons are: (1) death is a change of place, (2) death is a change of company, (3) death is a change of employment, (4) death is a change of enjoyments, (5) death is the last change, (6) death is a change that brings unchangeable rest. Brooks, *The Works of Thomas Brooks*, Vol. 6, 394–400.

28. Brooks' four main uses are: (1) we should not mourn immoderately at the death of any believer, (2) we should not fear death, (3) the prospect of death should stir us up to prepare for our dying-day, (4) if a believer's dying day is his best day, then a wicked man's last day must be his worst day. Brooks, *The Works of Thomas Brooks*, Vol. 6, 400–408.

29. To read the fully developed subpoints, see Brooks, *The Works of Thomas Brooks*, Vol. 6, 396–398.

30. Brooks, *The Works of Thomas Brooks*, Vol. 6, 397.

31. Though the *Westminster Standards* had not yet been written when Sibbes preached *The Redemption of Bodies*, his theology is nonetheless consistent with what would become the later Puritan consensus.

32. Westby, *The Puritan Funeral Sermon in Seventeenth Century England*, 172.

33. In the chapter "Concerning Burial of the Dead", the *Westminster Directory for Public Worship* says, "we judge it very convenient, that the Christian friends, which accompany the dead body to the place appointed for publick burial, do apply themselves to meditations and conferences suitable to the occasion and that the minister, as upon other occasions, so at this time, if he be present, may put them in remembrance of their duty." Westminster Assembly, *Westminster Directory of Public Worship* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Heritage, 2008), 120.

34. Wilhelmus à Brakel, *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, Vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 1995), 303–372.

English Puritans, his theology was cut from the same cloth. As one scholar put it, “à Brakel’s work bridges English Puritanism and the equally rich heritage of the *Nadere Reformatie*.... Those who have acquired a taste for the spiritual delicacies found in Puritan writings will find their spiritual appetite amply satisfied by the rich treasures found in *The Christian’s Reasonable Service* of Wilhelmus à Brakel.”³⁵ The benefits of including à Brakel in the discussion are numerous. Because à Brakel writes at the turn of the 18th century, he provides a case study in the continuity which exists between the Puritan tradition and the Dutch “Puritans” on the subject of glorification. Also, as a Dutch theologian, à Brakel shows the abiding value of the Puritan doctrine outside of the immediate English context.

Given this context, it should be unsurprising to find that there is significant overlap between the theology of glorification laid out in the *Westminster Standards* and à Brakel’s discussion in his *Christian’s Reasonable Service*. À Brakel covers four main headings under the category of Eschatology: (1) concerning death and the state of the soul after death,³⁶ (2) the resurrection of the dead,³⁷ (3) concerning the last judgment and the end of the world,³⁸ and (4) concerning eternal glory.³⁹ The first two sections of à Brakel cover the same ground as chapter 32 of the Westminster Confession of Faith (and his titles are nearly identical to that of the confession on this point). À Brakel follows chapter 32, paragraph 1 of the confession in rejecting the twin errors of soul sleep and purgatory.⁴⁰ He also maintains the Westminster view of the relationship between the souls and bodies of men. He argues that death brings men’s bodies to the ground and their souls into either heaven (if they are believers) or hell (if they are unbelievers).⁴¹ The bodies of both believers and unbelievers await the resurrection on the last day, when they will be reunited with their souls for all eternity. Again, echoing the view of the confession, à Brakel defends the view that both believers and unbelievers will receive resurrection bodies and that men’s resurrection bodies will be the same bodies that they had on earth.⁴² There is not a single point at which à Brakel’s doctrine of glorification contradicts the view laid out in the Westminster Confession of Faith.

Not only is à Brakel’s doctrine consistent with that of the English Puritans, there is also overlap in the how both use and apply that doctrine. À Brakel brings together the doctrinal clarity of the *Standards* with the experiential warmth and application of the Puritan funeral sermons that have already been discussed. He intersperses his doctrinal discussion with pointed

applications, and in keeping with the general approach of the Puritans, he is careful to always address both the believer and the unbeliever.

In his discussion of the change which death brings, à Brakel comforts the believer by echoing Brooks’ argument that death is a friend of believers. He does this by arguing that the death of believers is not a punishment, but a blessing.⁴³ When writing about the resurrection of the dead, he echoes Sibbes’ argument that the coming resurrection of the body should move believers to use their bodies now for the glory of God.⁴⁴ In his discussion of the state of the soul after death, à Brakel has an extended exhortation, “to Set One’s House in Order,” urging both believers and unbelievers to pay careful attention to the state of their souls.⁴⁵ He reminds his readers that all men must die and that this fact must change the way they interact with both the godly and the ungodly.⁴⁶ Though à Brakel is writing a systematic theology, he continually presses his readers to attend to their souls in light of the doctrines that are being developed. Just as the English Puritans did in their funeral sermons, à Brakel seeks to put men in remembrance of their duties.

It would be a mistake, however, to suggest that à Brakel does nothing more than repeat what the English Puritans had said before him. For example, when one compares à Brakel’s discussion of glorification with that of the Westminster Confession of Faith, it becomes clear that while the basic structure of their doctrine is the same, they develop that doctrine in different ways. There are a number of areas where à Brakel’s discussion goes beyond what is covered in the *Standards*. One example would be in the practical applications which he makes to his readers that are mentioned above. Further examples are found particularly in the final section of his discussion of eschatology, “Concerning Eternal Glory.”⁴⁷

35. Elshout, *The Pastoral and Practical Theology of Wilhelmus à Brakel*, 13–14.

36. à Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, Vol. 4, 303–326.

37. à Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, Vol. 4, 327–338.

38. à Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, Vol. 4, 339–356.

39. à Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, Vol. 4, 357–372.

40. à Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, Vol. 4, 316–326.

41. à Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, Vol. 4, 303–315.

42. à Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, Vol. 4, 329–335.

43. Compare: Brooks, *The Works of Thomas Brooks*, Vol. 6, 394–400; and à Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, Vol. 4, 304–307.

44. Compare: Sibbes, *The Works of Richard Sibbes*, Vol. 5, 164, 172–173; and à Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, Vol. 4, 337–338.

45. à Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, Vol. 4, 311–316.

46. à Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, Vol. 4, 307–311.

47. à Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, Vol. 4, 357–372.

The Westminster Confession says very little about the actual state of believers in glory.⁴⁸ À Brakel takes up several questions that the *Standards* either do not address, or address only briefly. For example, he addresses the question of whether believers will have different measures of glory in heaven.⁴⁹ He also addresses the common question: will believers be able to recognize one another in heaven?⁵⁰ Perhaps his greatest contribution comes in the form of his warm-hearted exhortation for believers to meditate on the theme of eternal glory in their walk here on earth. À Brakel encourages his readers to press on, saying, “let this glory be your goal, and pursue it so that you may enter heaven while being in a full run.”⁵¹

Even a relatively brief survey of the Puritan doctrine of glorification makes several things clear. First, through writings spanning more than a century (written by men who represent diverse contexts and cultures), the Puritan doctrine of glorification was consistently maintained and articulated. Second, in various contexts and works, the Puritans labored to connect this doctrine with the spiritual situation and needs of their hearers. They were not content to merely develop a doctrine of glorification

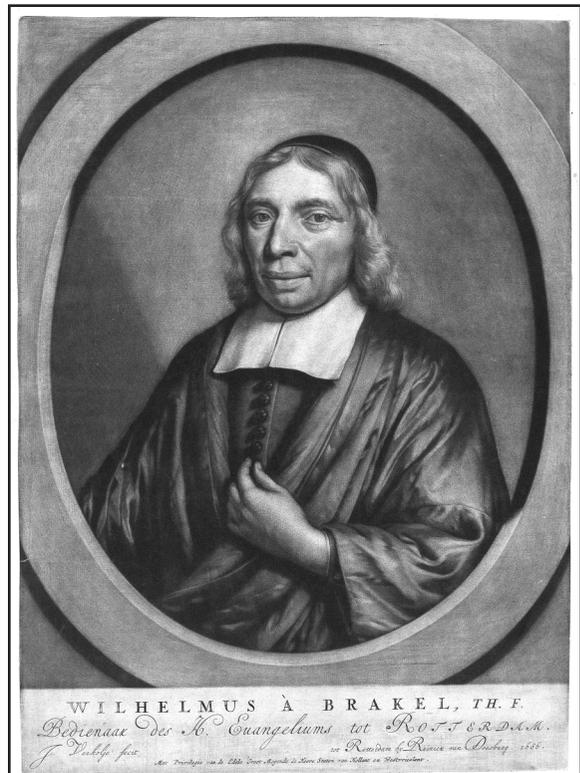
which stayed at the level of the abstract but were careful to connect this doctrine with other doctrines. They infused their discussion of soteriology, union with Christ, death, the resurrection, and eternity with themes of glory. They used this doctrine as a source of great encouragement to believers as well as a source of sober warning to unbelievers. In the writings of the Puritans, the doctrine of glorification is both clearly articulated and compellingly applied. These writings can serve as a model for the contemporary church as it prepares for the glory that is to come. ■

48. WCF 32.3 merely states that, “the bodies of the just, by his Spirit, [shall be raised] unto honor; and be made conformable to his own glorious body.” Questions 86 and 90 of the larger catechism are more specific than the confession but still do not cover the subject in as much depth as à Brakel does.

49. À Brakel offers a qualified “yes.” He maintains that those who have suffered and done more for Christ in this life will have a fuller measure of glory than others, however, “all they who are glorified will be filled with felicity to overflowing; that is, as much as they can endure. Thus, there neither will be a desire for more, nor will this be possible[.... As one vessel can, however, contain more than another vessel, while yet all being full, we believe that also the one will excel the other in glory.” à Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, Vol. 4, 358–360.

50. Again, à Brakel answers this question in the affirmative. Our enjoyment will be found in fellowship with the godly as well as in fellowship with God. As he puts it, “They shall thus not be occupied with the immediate beholding of God only, without thinking of each other. Rather, as glorified men they shall fellowship together, unitedly glorifying God.” à Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, Vol. 4, 361.

51. À Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, Vol. 4, 369. As he draws his discussion of eternal glory to a close, à Brakel offers a final exhortation, “Believers, you may therefore anticipate that such glory will shortly be your portion. Thus, hasten to complete your task, and be an example of godliness, faith, and courage; and hope upon glory. Make this glory, and the way which leads to it, known to others and lead them along unto felicity, so that you may join the Lord Jesus in saying, ‘I have glorified Thee on earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do... I have manifested Thy name unto ... men. And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me!’ (John 17:4–6). HALLELUJAH!” à Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, Vol. 4, 370.



Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635–1711), minister in Exmorra, Stavoren, Harlingen, Leeuwarden and Rotterdam. Through his *De Redelijke Godsdienst* (*The Christian’s Reasonable Service*), written during his twenty-eight year ministry in Rotterdam, à Brakel became the most acclaimed of the theologians of the *Nadere Reformatie* (Dutch Further Reformation).