



## **The Glory of God is a Human Fully Alive!**

The JWHC's motto is "the glory of God is a human fully alive." We have borrowed this adage from a second-century Christian teacher (Irenaeus) who wrote against an early form of Christian heresy called gnosticism. Irenaeus was particularly keen to oppose the gnostic belief that physical things and spiritual things are incompatible: the former being evil and the latter being good. Among other things, this meant that gnostics refused to believe the Son of God had genuinely taken on the creatureliness of human existence. They settled instead for a spiritual Jesus who only *appeared* to become human and they believed that the salvation he offered consisted of escaping from the physical world.

Over and against such views, Irenaeus affirmed the gospel narration of reality that most Christian traditions have handed down through the centuries. His articulation of the gospel story can be summarized with the following convictions:

- (1) God created humanity in His image so we can share in the life and love of the Trinity; and God made the physical world as the tangible context within which this creative intention could be fulfilled.
- (2) Rather than being evil or incidental, the creation is inherently good because it is animated by God's glory (i.e., His presence, power, and will). In other words, God did not merely create the physical world and step away; but rather, His transcendent goodness pervades His creation giving it its existence and life. Historically, Christians have thus viewed the physical world as a sanctuary of God's *glory*.
- (3) In the wake of humanity's fall, the goodness of the physical world has become twisted and malformed. Humans, weighed down by sin, persistently settle for mere shadows of life. Though we yearn for the life of God, we fill our days with fleeting amusements that merely distract us from a fear of death.
- (4) God persists in His desire to see humanity participate in the life and love of God and for His creation to grow into a thriving sanctuary of His glory. This is why the divine Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Jesus became the fulfillment of what God created humanity to become and His life, death, and resurrection serves as the first fruits of God's redemption of the physical world.
- (5) The life of Jesus Christ was the most concrete manifestation of God's glory (i.e., God's presence, power, and will) within creation. Because of Christ's redemptive work, Christians may now participate in the fullness of life God intends for us. The Holy Spirit

empowers the Body of Christ (the Church) to share in the life-giving glory of Christ's new humanity and His restoration of the world.

- (6) In and through Christ, we share in God's eternal life as a reality that shapes both our present and future. Christians share in a Spirit-empowered transformation of intellects, desires, relationships, and daily pursuits according to the redemptive work God is doing to bring His creation into the fulness of His intentions for it. Ultimately, we will eventually flourish together in the depths of God's life and love in a new earth finally fit for the full expression of such things.

Irenaeus' assertion, "the glory of God is a human fully alive," can be understood as a concise affirmation of the logic at work in this narration of reality. It sums up the origins and nature of human flourishing. First, to say "the glory of God is a human fully alive" is to highlight God's creative intention for us: we were created to share together in the life and love of our Triune Creator, which is what Irenaeus means when he talks here of being fully—or genuinely—alive. This adage is likewise affirming that such life is only possible because God has created the physical world as a sanctuary through which humans can share in the life-giving power of His transcendent glory. And accordingly, Irenaeus is declaring, above all, that the full flourishing of human life, dependent as it is on the glory of God, is most fully displayed in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Christians thus become fully alive as the Spirit empowers their participation in the abundant glory of Christ's life and love.

A community chooses a motto as a shorthand way to remind itself of the heart of its mission. As the JWHC grapples with life's big questions in hopes of becoming liberated to pursue good lives of truth and beauty, our motto serves to remind us that the gospel is about much more than going to heaven someday. Rather, the gospel—and thus Christian liberal arts leaning—is about God creating and redeeming human beings to become fully alive both now and in the age to come. No less important, our motto also reminds us that God's glory is the source, the transforming means, and the ultimate goal of the human thriving and happiness we seek.

We invite you to join our efforts to glorify God by studying and growing into liberal arts learners who are fully alive!