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*The Glory
of God*

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The Glory of God

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**Christopher W. Morgan
and Robert A. Peterson**

EDITORS

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The Glory of God

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Introduction

Ichabod” is one of the saddest words in all of Scripture. It means “Where is the glory?” It is the name given by the daughter-in-law of Eli, Israel’s head priest, to her newborn baby in the time of Samuel. Here is the story:

Now his daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was pregnant, about to give birth. And when she heard the news that the ark of God was captured, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she bowed and gave birth, for her pains came upon her. And about the time of her death the women attending her said to her, “Do not be afraid, for you have borne a son.” But she did not answer or pay attention. And she named the child Ichabod, saying, “The glory has departed from Israel!” because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband. And she said, “The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured.” (1 Sam. 4:19–22)

The Philistines have captured Israel’s ark; Eli’s sons Hophni and Phinehas have been killed in battle; Eli drops dead when he hears the terrible news; his daughter-in-law, Phinehas’s wife, dies in childbirth and names her infant Ichabod. Indeed, the glory has departed from God’s Old Testament people Israel (for a season).

Similarly, many proclaim “Ichabod” today. They claim, and with good reason, that the glory of God has departed from the minds and hearts of many evangelical Christians.¹ But a recent book maintains that alongside this downward trend, another one is emerging. Journalist Collin Hansen

¹ So David F. Wells, *God in the Wasteland: The Reality of Truth in a World of Fading Dreams* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994).

took a two-year journey to conferences, seminaries, and churches and was startled to learn of a rapidly-spreading majestic view of God. To write his book he interviewed many people, among them Joshua Harris:

I do wonder if some of the appeal . . . and the trend isn't a reaction to the watered-down vision of God that's been portrayed in the evangelical seeker-oriented churches. . . . I just think that there's such a hunger for the transcendent and for a God who is not just sitting around waiting for us to show up so that the party can get started.²

Hansen also listened to Timothy George, dean of Beeson Divinity School:

We live in a transcendence-starved culture and in a transcendence-starved evangelicalism. . . . We've so dumbed down the gospel and dumbed down worship in a good effort to reach as many people as we can that there's almost a backlash. It comes from this great hunger for a genuinely God-centered, transcendence-focused understanding of who God is and what God wants us to do and what God has given us in Jesus Christ.³

Hansen concludes, "Indeed, [the renewed view of God] puts much stock in transcendence, which draws out biblical themes such as God's holiness, glory, and majesty."⁴ It would be foolish to think that a reemphasis on God's glory has swept the nation. But, as Hansen and others document, many are being captured by a renewed vision of God as almighty, gracious, and glorious.

It seems undeniable that a number of ministries are communicating effectively (especially to young people) that the purpose of their lives is to glorify God so that all they do is to be done for his glory.⁵ We regard this as a positive development but must ask: Do all the young people involved really understand the words they are saying? Or will "the glory of God" become a cliché, much like "the love of God" to the previous generation, for whom too often love was reduced to sentimentality?

We sincerely hope and pray that the current good trends will be fanned into flame and produce a mighty fire that will blaze for God's glory. And we offer this volume as fuel for the fire. To that end we ask: What does the Bible actually teach about the glory of God?

²Collin Hansen, *Young, Restless, Reformed: A Journalist's Journey with the New Calvinists* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 21.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Including those of John Piper, Timothy Keller, Gospel Coalition, and Mark Dever.

Few figures in church history have grasped the biblical teaching on God's glory as well as Jonathan Edwards, the great eighteenth-century American theologian of the glory of God. Edwards's words summarize the burden of this book: "God is glorified not only by His glory's being seen, but by its being rejoiced in."⁶ Edwards is right—God's glory is promoted both in our minds and in our affections. This book is structured accordingly. While the entire volume aims to meet these two purposes, chapters 1 through 6 are particularly designed to help us glorify God in our minds by focusing on biblical and theological truths related to his glory. Chapters 7 and 8 help us rejoice in our hearts as they illuminate how these truths about God's glory shape our view and approach to the church, pastoral ministry, and missions.

The Glory of God begins with Stephen Nichols, who highlights important contemporary thinkers who address God's glory and points to their historic roots. Then Tremper Longman examines this pervasive theme in the Old Testament, expounding its major terms, passages, and ideas. Three New Testament chapters follow. Richard Melick covers the main passages on glory in the Synoptic Gospels, Acts, and General Epistles. Andreas Köstenberger studies John's Gospel and Revelation to uncover John's distinctive teachings related to glory. Richard Gaffin opens up Paul's theology of glory and shows how it is linked to key themes such as the gospel, the image of God, and Jesus' resurrection. Christopher Morgan synthesizes and builds on the truths of the previous chapters and presents an overall theology of the glory of God. Bryan Chapell calls pastors to view their role in light of God's glory, showing how they function as representatives of Christ himself, especially in his three offices. Nelson Jennings concludes with a missional theology of God's glory, stripping away some of our Western myths about glory and clarifying our role in God's glorious mission of cosmic restoration.

To edit a book on the glory of God is daunting. But we make this modest attempt to fill a real need. In a nutshell, *The Glory of God* examines this oft discussed but rarely understood biblical theme and develops a theology of God's glory that is historic and contemporary, explores Old and New Testaments, treats biblical and systematic theology, and adopts pastoral and missional perspectives.

Soli Deo Gloria

Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson

⁶ Jonathan Edwards, "The Glory of God," in *Our Great and Glorious God*, ed. Don Kistler (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 2003), 86.

The Glory of God in Paul's Epistles

RICHARD B. GAFFIN JR.

The concept of glory—divine preeminently and human derivatively—is prominent in the letters of Paul. In fact, glory terminology provides a window on virtually the whole of his theology. Nowhere are its Old Testament roots more apparent. His gospel, as much as anything, is “the gospel of the glory of Christ” (2 Cor. 4:4) and as such may be viewed as the good news of forfeited human glory restored and consummated.

There are basically two ways of handling our theme in this chapter. We could work through Paul's letters one by one, in either canonical or chronological order, surveying all the references to glory in each and then drawing some conclusions. Alternatively, we might proceed by identifying and reflecting on those aspects that are most basic and determinative in shaping his understanding of glory. These approaches are not at odds with each other; the findings of the one ought to overlap and complement those of the other. However, in this chapter, on guard to avoid missing anything significant that would be brought to light by the former approach, I will follow the latter. It is more helpful, it seems to me, to highlight and explore the controlling elements in Paul's teaching on glory in order to provide an overall perspective on that teaching.

Our approach, in other words, will be to ask, what is the center of Paul's teaching on glory? This is akin to a larger question: what is the center of his theology as a whole? But does Paul's theology even have a center? Some readers will be aware that this is a question debated by New Testament scholars. In my view, without entering into that debate here and despite the reservations of some, it seems difficult to deny such a center, particularly if that notion is not maintained rigidly or too narrowly, as if there is a single key concept or "doctrine," such as election or salvation or even God, from which everything can be shown to be deduced.

That is not the case. By the metaphor of a "center" I mean rather that in Paul's letters an overall set of concerns is identifiable in which some matters are plainly more important for him than others. Certainly, Paul may be approached from a variety of perspectives, and there is undeniable value in doing so. At the same time, however, each of his various concerns is not equally important or controlling. This fact points to a circle of interests in which each is more or less central, with room for debate in some instances as to relative centrality.

Assuming a center to Paul's theology in this soft sense, then, the question before us concerns the center of his teaching on glory and, in turn, how that center relates to the central concerns of his teaching as a whole. As we will see, answering the first part of this question is in large part to be answering the second.

Before addressing that question, however, it will be worth mentioning briefly another matter by way of introduction. Studying Paul presents a perennial challenge. Whoever considers his letters with any care is bound to recognize in them an impressive, even profound thinker. His is "the genius of the greatest constructive mind ever at work on that data of Christianity."¹ Similarly, though from a radically different outlook, he has been dubbed "the patron saint of thought in Christianity."² Yet his writings are not theological treatises; they have a nonsystematic or, perhaps better, nontopical format. For instance, we obviously do not have a single place in Paul's epistles where we find a discussion developed under the heading "glory." Rather, his writings are "occasional," genuine letters directed to concrete conditions and problems in specific church situations. A notably "practical" or pastoral concern is always present, even in those sections of Romans where doctrinal reflection is most apparent.

¹ Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (1930; repr. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979), 149.

² Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (English translation, New York: H. Holt, 1931), 377.

So, a real difficulty in interpreting Paul is that he is a theologian accessible only through his letters and records of his sermons. His letters are not theological treatises, yet in them we undeniably encounter Paul the theologian. In his writings we meet a thinker of reflective and constructive genius, with a decidedly doctrinal disposition, but only as he writes in a largely nonformalized theological, often doxological idiom, using a nonsystematic or nontopical format. A helpful analogy for this situation is to compare his letters to the visible portion of an iceberg. What is above the surface is but a small fraction of the total mass, which remains largely submerged, so that what is taken in, particularly at a first glance, may prove deceptive.³

A less pictorial way of putting this point is the principle, so important for sound interpretation, expressed in chapter 1, section 6 of the *Westminster Confession Faith*: the teaching of Scripture is not only its express statements but also what follows “by good and necessary consequence.” Particularly in the case of Paul, if we are going to make full sense of his letters as a whole, we must be prepared to wrestle with matters of “good and necessary consequence,” of underlying structure, and with the sometimes nettlesome questions that emerge. This state of affairs, in large part, makes the extensive interpretation of Paul inherently arduous, even the precarious enterprise that 2 Peter 3:16 alerts us to. Pointing up this difficulty, however, needs to be balanced with the essential caveat that we not lose sight of the more basic and pervasive clarity of his teaching as God's Word (cf. esp. 1 Thess. 2:13). After all, Peter does not say that in Paul “all things” but “some things” are “hard to understand.” With these preliminary matters in mind, we turn to examining his theology of glory.

The Gospel-glory of Christ

As good an entree point as any is the reference in 2 Corinthians 4:4, already noted at the outset, to “the gospel of the glory of Christ.” In the immediate context Paul is concerned in a fundamental way with his ministry and message as focused on Christ, as the sweeping summary statement that follows directly in verse 5 shows: “For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.” “Christ's glory” is evidently a basic description of the gospel's content. Correlatively, that content is “the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (v. 6).

Verse 5 sees this gospel-glory focused in who Christ is as Lord. Earlier in writing to the Corinthians, also in a context where he is concerned

³ Cf. Richard Gaffin Jr., *Resurrection and Redemption. A Study in Paul's Soteriology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1979; 1987), 28. James Dunn also makes a brief use of this analogy in his *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 15.

at length in a fundamental way with his apostolic ministry of the gospel (1 Cor. 1:18–4:20), Paul calls Christ “the Lord of glory” (2:8), a description we will consider further below. So, divine glory manifested in Christ as Lord is, as much as anything, the substance of the gospel message Paul preaches.

Further, this glory-quality of the gospel invests it with an inherently light-bringing character; it is more fully described as “the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.” That glory-light is seen (v. 4) and known (v. 6) by believers. The same God who called light into existence at creation has in salvation brought believers to a shining awareness of Christ’s new creation glory (v. 6; note the use of Gen. 1:3). As Paul will say a little later, those “in Christ” are of the “new creation” (5:17);⁴ already they share in its glory, which is his. At the same time this glory is “veiled to those who are perishing”; as the “god of this age,” Satan has “blinded the minds of unbelievers” to it (4:3–4 NIV).

This passage, with its explicit reference to Genesis 1:3, points up the Old Testament roots of Paul’s understanding of glory.⁵ In a brief overview, there *glory* and *honor*, including related verbs and adjectives, translate several words, primarily a group that stems from the Semitic root *kbd*. This word group, particularly the noun *kā\Obô\Od*, has various senses—concrete (“abundance,” “wealth,” Gen. 31:1; Isa. 61:6; “splendor,” whether of persons, e.g., Gen. 45:13, NASB; 1 Chron. 29:28, or things, e.g., Isa. 22:18, NASB; Ezek. 31:18, MESSAGE; Hag. 2:3, 9, NLT) as well as abstract (“dignity,” Ps. 112:9; Prov. 29:23; Jer. 48:18; “respect” or “reverence,” 2 Chron. 32:33; Isa. 42:12; Mal. 1:6, NASB).

The often silent but plainly controlling presupposition of these different senses, with their varied applications, is that glory is preeminently a divine quality; ultimately considered, only God has glory. In view of his sovereignty as the creator of heaven and earth (Isa. 42:5; cf. 40:12–28), brought to bear for Israel’s deliverance through his anointed servant (42:1–5), and excluding all idol worship, the Lord declares, “My glory I give to no other” (v. 8). Still, he grants glory. In a derivative fashion, glory exists on the creaturely plane. In the words of David’s prayer, “Yours, O LORD, is . . . the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth

⁴Here *ktisis* is almost certainly cosmic (“creation”) not personal (“creature”); see Vos, *Pauline Eschatology*, 46–49; Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (English translation, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 45–46.

⁵This and the following four paragraphs adapt material from my article “Glory,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Alexander and B. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 507–9; C. Newman, *Paul’s Glory-Christology: Tradition and Rhetoric* (Leiden: Brill, 1992) provides a full exploration of the background and function of glory language in Paul.

is yours." At the same time, "riches and honor come from you" (1 Chron. 29:11–12).

Not surprisingly, then, the "glory of the Lord" (*k^ebôd y^ehôwâh*) is a fixed and widely occurring expression (e.g., Ex. 16:7; 1 Kings 8:11; Ps. 63:2). Specifically, God's glory is the signal manifestation of his visible and active presence. Divine glory fills the entire creation (Ps. 19:1; Isa. 6:3) and is apparent among the nations (Ps. 97:6). But, especially and most prominently, and closely associated with his name (Ex. 33:18–19; Ps. 115:1), God's glory is his presence in the midst of his covenant people Israel (Ex. 16:7 is the first such instance). Related to his grandeur and power as creator and redeemer, glory is often associated specifically with the phenomenon of light or fire, sometimes overwhelming, of such awe-inspiring and fear-evoking brilliance and unendurable intensity that it is shrouded in a cloud or otherwise veiled (Ex. 16:10; 24:17; cf. 33:22–23 and 34:29–35).

The Septuagint's decision to translate the Old Testament *\Okā\Obô\Od* with *doxa* initiated a process of substantial semantic change in the latter (in secular Greek it meant "opinion," "reputation," "praise"). That change carries through into the New Testament usage of glory vocabulary, especially in John and Paul, with well over half of its occurrences in the latter.

In the Old Testament, then, glory is preeminently the manifestation-mode of who God is in the fullness of his self-revelation as creator and savior. Against that broad background and with reference to the creation of light in Genesis 1 and to God's glory that Paul finds implicit there, 2 Corinthians 4:4–6 affirms that divine glory has found its focused manifestation and, as we will see ever more clearly from the immediate and broader context of his teaching, its full and final manifestation in Jesus Christ as Lord. Further, the glory-manifestation that Christ is specifies the content of Paul's gospel.

How or in what sense, more specifically, is the substance of the gospel Paul preaches Christ in his glory or, as we will see it may be put in an important rephrasing, Christ as glorified? These verses provide a partial answer in the way they indicate the outcome of his preaching. Negatively, as already noted, Christ's gospel-glory is veiled to blinded unbelievers and so they perish (vv. 3–4a). Positively, believers are those enlightened by that glory and so are saved.

This antithetical outcome echoes the thought earlier in 2:14–16 where Paul compares the knowledge of Christ spread abroad by his gospel preaching to a fragrance: "the aroma of Christ" is a fragrance of death to those

who are perishing but a fragrance of life to those who are being saved.⁶ The gospel as Christ's glory-light also brings to mind what he later writes to the Colossians (1:13), that believers in being "transferred" into Christ's kingdom have been "delivered from the domain of darkness." Christ's glory is gospel-glory because it is saving glory; his glory is his primarily because he is Savior.

We note further that Paul surely intends that the 2 Corinthians 4 passage be read in the light of what he wrote earlier about his gospel at the beginning of 1 Corinthians 15. In verses 3 and 4 perhaps, though not certainly, he utilizes an already existing confessional fragment: "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures." Within the immediate and overall context of Paul's teaching, this statement prompts several observations pertinent to our interest.⁷

First, in the prepositional phrase, literally "among first things" (*en prōtois*), "first" almost certainly has, as virtually all commentators take it, a qualitative, not a temporal, sense. Most English translations properly render it "of first importance." So, Paul speaks here of paramount concerns that have their focus in Christ's death and resurrection.

Second, in light of verses 1 and 2 ("Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you . . ."), this focus or center is plainly the center of his gospel. This, in turn, prompts an even broader observation. At verse 1, Paul is best read as reflecting on his ministry as a whole among the Corinthians. In view is not just a part of his proclamation, not just an aspect of his teaching, but his message in its entirety. That disposes us to say that Paul's theology is his gospel; his is a "gospel-theology." Or, viewed in terms of expanding concentric circles, the center of Paul's theology is the gospel, and at the center of that gospel are the death and resurrection. The focus of the whole, its gospel-center, is Christ's death and resurrection.

Third, the death and resurrection are not in view as bare, isolated, uninterpreted facts. Two things are stipulated. First, their occurrence is "according to the Scriptures." That is, they have their meaning as they fulfill the Jewish Scriptures, as they involve fulfillment of the Old Testa-

⁶ These verses make the important point that while surely the proper purpose of proclaiming the gospel for Paul is to save, an inevitable attendant consequence is that some who hear that preaching and reject it in unbelief perish. This echoes statements of Jesus such as in Luke 12:51 ("Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division."). God's glory, as we will see, also has this dividing effect; see esp. 2 Thess. 1:8–10.

⁷ For a fuller discussion see Richard Gaffin Jr., *By Faith, Not by Sight: Paul and the Order of Salvation* (London: Paternoster, 2006), 22–30.

ment. Second, the death is said to be “for our sins.” At the center of Paul’s gospel-theology, then, Christ’s death, together with his resurrection, as the fulfillment of Scripture, has its significance in relation to human (“our”) sin and its consequences.

This brings us to the baseline conclusion, reinforced by a number of other passages (e.g., 1 Cor. 2:2; Gal. 6:14; 2 Tim. 2:8), that at the center of Paul’s theology, constituting that center as much as anything, are Christ’s death and resurrection, or, more broadly, messianic suffering and subsequent glory, his humiliation and consequent exaltation or glorification.

Relating this conclusion to what we have seen in 2 Corinthians 4, we may draw a further conclusion: glory has a central place in Paul’s theology as a whole, specifically as the glory of Christ, crucified and resurrected, who saves from sin. Further consideration of his teaching on glory may be appropriately oriented, as a controlling point of reference, to this gospel-glory of Christ.

Christ: The Glory-image of God

Readers may have already noted in 2 Corinthians 4:4 that the glory-light of the gospel is not simply Christ but “Christ, who is the image of God.” This addition points to the close association in Paul between glory and the divine image, an association that is most important for his overall teaching on glory. This can be seen in several passages.

1 Corinthians 11:7

This connection is most explicit, even pronounced, in 1 Corinthians 11:7: man is “the image and glory of God” and woman is “the glory of man.” As made in God’s image, man possesses and reflects, derivatively and in a creaturely fashion, the glory inherent in that divine image. Without entering into the details of this passage, which has been at the center among those in the ongoing debate in recent decades over women’s role in marriage and the church, verse 7 hardly intends to deny that a woman is God’s image or somehow less so than a man. Paul’s teaching here is not in conflict with Genesis 1:27, namely, that man considered generically and differentiated as male and female is God’s image. Rather, with Genesis 1 and 2 in the background here, that image-bearing equality underlies the mutual dependence he affirms of man and woman particularly as husband and wife (vv. 11–12).

At the same time this interdependent relationship is an irreversibly structured one. In it man is not “from woman” but woman “from man,” nor is man created “for woman” but woman “for man” (vv. 8–9). That irreversible structure, entailing headship, is expressed in verse 7 by saying that

“woman is the glory of man.” But the eliding of “image” and the replacing of “God” with “man” in this description of woman’s glory to highlight the relative headship of man is not to deny that on other grounds she, too, is “the image and glory of God.”⁸ To speak of the divine image as Paul does here and elsewhere, as we will see, carries with it implicitly the notion of glory, so closely does he associate the two.

1 Corinthians 15:42–49

The link between glory and divine image-bearing, for Christ specifically in 2 Corinthians 4:4 and generically for man (male and female) in 1 Corinthians 11:7, may be explored further in 1 Corinthians 15:42–49. In fact, this passage warrants extended examination, for the comprehensive outlook that it provides carries far-reaching ramifications for Paul’s overall understanding of glory.

Verse 35 raises two questions: “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?” Though these questions were apparently put to Paul in a derisive fashion by the opponents he has to deal with in Corinth,⁹ he nonetheless takes them seriously, for they trigger in large part his argument to the end of the chapter. This argument, which begins at verse 12, is concerned with elaborating and defending the resurrection-hope of the church.¹⁰

Verses 42 through 49 are remarkable both for the comprehensive outlook they provide and for the way they do so. Asked important and fairly specific questions about the mode of the resurrection and the nature of the resurrection body, Paul’s response may at first glance seem like theological “overkill.” That is because his response provides a perspective that is cosmic in its scope and encompasses the whole of history from its beginning to its consummation. It is fair to say that nowhere in Paul (or the rest of Scripture)

⁸ I say “relative headship” because more is in view regarding headship than the relationship of man and woman (husband and wife); cf. v. 3, “. . . the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.” “Paul does not hereby deny that woman was created in God’s image, or that she, too, is God’s glory.” Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 516.

⁹ Note the sharpness of Paul’s immediate response, “Fool!” (v. 36, softened in most English translations). This opposition comes into view already at v. 12 and is clearly centered in denying the resurrection of the body. Without entering here into the considerable scholarly discussion concerning the specific background of that denial, it appears safe to say that controlling was an outlook stemming from the prevalent pagan Hellenistic mindset of the day with its depreciation of things material, including the body; see, e.g., the discussions of Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 715–17 and Anthony Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 1172–76.

¹⁰ The resurrection of unbelievers, though affirmed by Paul elsewhere (Acts 24:15), is outside his purview in this chapter (as is also the case in 1 Thess. 4:13–18).

do we get a more all-encompassing outlook on the work of Christ than in verses 44b through 49.¹¹ In fact, considerations fundamental not only to the apostle's eschatology and Christology but also to his anthropology, soteriology, and pneumatology are present in this passage, considerations that together have an important bearing on his understanding of glory.

This comprehensive outlook happens by means of the developed parallelism that structures this passage. It opens (vv. 42–44) by contrasting the pre-resurrection body, the body as it bears the consequences of the fall and human sin (see esp. vv. 21–22 and Rom. 5:12–19), and the resurrection body, both marked by their respectively antithetical qualities. The one is perishable,¹² marked by dishonor and weakness; the other is imperishable, invested with glory and power. In one word, the pre-resurrection body is “natural” (literally, “soulish”¹³), the resurrection body is “spiritual.” Glory in verse 43, then, is a function of the resurrection body as “spiritual.” Clarifying this association of glory with the resurrection will be of primary interest as our discussion of the passage unfolds.

Adam and Christ as the “last Adam.” A notable feature is the broadening that takes place beginning with verse 45. Now the contrast is no longer between bodies but whole persons, Adam on the one side, Christ as the “last Adam” on the other. This broadening has two dimensions. First, as the verses that follow show, especially 48 and 49, both are plainly in view not merely as isolated individuals but as principal representatives or heads. Further, as such they bring into view contrasting orders of life; each rep-

¹¹ John Murray (*The Imputation of Adam's Sin* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1959], 39) does not overstate, “In 1 Corinthians 15:22, 45–49 Paul provides us with what is one of the most striking and significant rubrics in all of Scripture.”

¹² This quality (*phthora*) is not merely the capacity or liability for corruption that can result in mortality but actual mortality (cf. the word's use elsewhere in Paul, v. 50; Rom. 8:21; Gal. 6:8; Col. 2:22). After all, this body is “sown,” a graphic reference to burial. Since for Paul human death is the result of sin (see esp. Rom. 5:12ff. with its closely related antithetical parallelism), the pre-resurrection body in vv. 42–44a is the post-fall, sin-cursed body. In v. 44b the pre-fall body comes into view. In this regard note the paragraph break at v. 44b in the NIV, appropriate in my judgment, to mark this shift.

¹³ A satisfactory English translation of the adjective *psychikon* is notoriously difficult here. An apparently insurmountable challenge is how to bring out the tie in the Greek text with its cognate noun *psychē* in v. 45 (“soul,” referring, as it does in Gen. 2:7 cited here, not to a constituent part but Adam as a whole, so “being,” “person”). Both “natural,” the most frequent proposal, and “physical” (RSV, NRSV) are deficient. The latter is thoroughly misleading because paired here antithetically with “spiritual,” it leaves the seriously erroneous impression that the resurrection body, in contrast, is nonphysical or immaterial. “Natural” is ambiguous. From the normative vantage point of the original creation, brought into view as we will presently note in v. 45, the actually sin-ravaged and mortal pre-resurrection body is decidedly abnormal, “unnatural”; only in terms of creation as now under the effects of the fall is it all too “natural” (so Paul's only other use of the adjective in 2:14).

resents an environment or order of existence, the earthly order and the heavenly order, respectively. Adam is preeminently “the earthly one” and so has associated with him all human beings as “the earthly ones”; Christ, the last Adam and second man, is preeminently “the heavenly one” and has associated with him believers as “the heavenly ones.” This environmental scope of the broadening is clear from the way the contrast is framed in explicitly cosmological language (“earth,” “earthly”—“heaven,” “heavenly”) in verses 47 through 49.¹⁴

Second, the broadening to whole persons beginning with verse 45 is not only corporate and cosmic but also temporal. On the one side of the contrast Adam is introduced with an appeal to Genesis 2:7 and the creation narrative. Adam, in other words, is in view as he is by virtue of creation, not as fallen but as he was before the fall.¹⁵ This expansion has the effect of providing, *in nuce*, a “philosophy” of history, Paul’s outlook on history from its beginning up to and including its consummation.

The comprehensive sweep of that outlook is notable from the way Adam and Christ are identified and function in the argument. Adam is “first” (*prōtos*, v. 45); there is no one *before* him. Christ in his adamic identity is “second” (*deuteros*, v. 47); there is no one *between* Adam and Christ.¹⁶ Christ as “second” is also “last” (*eschatos*, v. 45); there is none *after* him; he is, literally, *the* eschatological man. The order of Adam is first and has become subject to corruption and death through human sin (vv. 21–22; Rom. 5:12–19). The order of Christ is second and last; it is incorruptible and eschatological (see as well vv. 52–54). All told, then, in view are creation and its consummation, creation and new creation. In terms of the two-aeon construct taken over from Second Temple Judaism and rooted in the Old

¹⁴ In v. 46 the neuter singular substantive expressions, *to psychikon* and *to pneumatikon* (“the natural,” “the spiritual”), are most likely to be taken as generalizing expressions, after which an implied “body” (*soma*) ought not to be read, as do some translations and commentaries. To do so misses the environmental broadening that Paul has already clearly intimated in v. 45 and works out in vv. 47–49. *To psychikon* is the “natural” order, *to pneumatikon*, the “spiritual” order.

¹⁵ The pre-fall situation is already in view on the one side in v. 44b (“If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body”), which the appeal to Gen. 2:7 in v. 45 functions to support. As Vos has observed (*Pauline Eschatology*, 169, n. 19), “From the abnormal body of sin no inference could be drawn to that effect [the resurrection body]. The abnormal and the eschatological are not so logically correlated that the one can be postulated from the other.”

¹⁶ As Paul is viewing things here, no one else in covenant history comes into consideration. No one else “counts” but Adam and Christ—not Noah, not Abraham and the promise, not Moses the lawgiver, not David as the Lord’s anointed. Israel’s unfolding “story,” as important and integral as that undoubtedly is elsewhere in Paul’s theology and for his reflections on redemptive history, is below the storyline or, better, below the narrative line of covenant history. Israel’s history, though certainly included implicitly, is eclipsed and remains below the horizon encompassing the whole of history, as Paul sketches that horizon here.

Testament, in view are this present and provisional world-age and the coming eschatological world-age, each beginning with its own Adam.

Why does Paul proceed as he does in this passage? He broadens the sweep of the Adam-Christ contrast in two ways. First, he introduces Adam, as he was created, before the fall. Second, with that Paul broadens the contrast to include the normal, pre-fall creation, before, in Adam, it became abnormal, subject to the corrupting and death-dealing effects of sin noted in verses 42 and 43. Why? The answer appears to be that Paul is intent here on showing that already at creation, prior to and apart from the fall, God's purpose anticipates and provides for a higher kind of bodily and personal existence, including the environment for that existence.¹⁷

This divine purpose, with the other considerations in the passage already noted that point to it, leads to the culminating statement of verse 49: "Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven." The *imago Dei* in which Adam was created, what Adam and those in him are by virtue of creation, is eschatologically oriented. That image comes to its intended and full realization not in Adam but instead now, because of his fall, in the last Adam, Christ, and in those in union with him.¹⁸

So, we may conclude, that the gospel-glory of "Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Cor. 4:4) is specifically the glory he possesses as the "heavenly" image-bearer seen within the comprehensive dimensions of the Adam-Christ parallelism that Paul utilizes in comparing the pre-resurrection and resurrection bodies. The glory predicated of the resurrection body in verse 43, then, belongs to this eschatological image-bearing. But what, more specifically, does that glory aspect include and entail? Answering that question requires taking account of a facet of the passage not yet considered, one that is also of paramount importance not only for its overall sense but for Paul's understanding of glory.

Christ "became a life-giving spirit." As the last Adam, verse 45 states, Christ "became a life-giving spirit" (*pneuma zōoioioun*). What is the sense of this assertion? First, it should be noted, "life-giving spirit" is not a timeless description of Christ but who he "*became*" (*egeneto*). When did that happen? What is the time point of this "becoming"? There is little, if any,

¹⁷ So Vos, *Pauline Eschatology*, 169, n. 19.

¹⁸ Put in more formal theological idiom, this passage shows that for Paul protology (first things), apart from soteriology (matters pertaining to salvation), anticipates an eschatology (last things); there is an eschatology in view for the creation even before the fall. Correlatively, given human sin and the fall, the soteriology made necessary by that sin and secured in Christ is the means for realizing that eschatological goal.

room for doubt that the answer is at his resurrection or, more broadly, together with the ascension, his exaltation. The flow of reasoning in chapter 15 makes that virtually certain.

The controlling thesis of the entire argumentation beginning at verse 12 to the end of the chapter is the use of the term “firstfruits” (*aparchē*) applied to Christ as resurrected, in verses 20 and 23. This agricultural image captures the unity, the unbreakable bond, that there is between his resurrection and the future bodily resurrection of believers. To extend the metaphor as Paul surely intends, Christ’s resurrection is the “firstfruits”—the beginning of the resurrection—“harvest” that will include theirs at his return.¹⁹ His resurrection is not merely an event, however stupendous, isolated in the past. In its past historicity it initiates and makes visible the harvest of resurrection belonging at the end of history as it has already entered history.

This “firstfruits” bond or solidarity is implicit in the hypothetical pattern of argument in the immediately preceding section (vv. 12–19). The two resurrections, Christ’s and the future bodily resurrection of believers, are in view not as two separate events but as two episodes of one event. So much are the two of one piece that Paul can argue in both directions, not only from the resurrection of Christ to the resurrection of believers (v. 12), but also, conversely, to deny their resurrection is to deny his (vv. 13, 15, 16).

It would make no sense for Paul to argue for the resurrection of believers in this way, staking everything on the inseparable harvest-bond between Christ’s resurrection and theirs, if Christ were “life giving” by virtue, say, of his preexistence or incarnation, or any consideration other than his resurrection. This is not to suggest that his preexistence and incarnation are unimportant or nonessential for Paul, but they lie outside his purview here. Expressed in key terms of the chapter, as “firstfruits” of the resurrection-harvest Christ is “a life-giving spirit”; conversely, as “a life-giving spirit” he is “the firstfruits.”

Further, according to verse 47, the last Adam, as “the second man,” is now, by virtue of his ascension, “from heaven.”²⁰ In this sense, as resurrected and ascended, he is, preeminently, “the man of heaven” (v. 48). So, as he has become “a life-giving spirit” in his resurrection, the last Adam is the primary, “firstfruits” instance of the heavenly image (v. 49) with its glory

¹⁹ As noted earlier, it should be kept in mind that the resurrection of unbelievers is not within Paul’s purview in this chapter; see above, n. 10.

²⁰ In view of the immediate context, this prepositional phrase is almost certainly an exaltation predicate (“heaven” is where Christ now belongs), not a description of origin, say, out of preexistence at the incarnation.

(v. 43). Christ's glory, as he has become life-giving Spirit, is climactically manifested as he is the bearer of the heavenly glory-image.

Second, if "a life-giving spirit" is who Christ became in his resurrection and who he now is as exalted, what is the meaning in this description of "spirit" (*pneuma*)? This question is disputed, and a satisfactorily detailed treatment is beyond the scope of this chapter, so I will merely state my view with a brief indication of supporting grounds.²¹

The reference is to the person of the Holy Spirit. In support of that understanding is the link between *pneuma* ("spirit") in verse 45 and *pneumatikon* ("spiritual") in verses 44 and 46. Each has its sense as they are plainly related as cognate noun and adjective. Elsewhere in Paul the adjective, which occurs repeatedly, regularly refers, with only one clear exception (Eph. 6:12), to various matters associated with the activity of the Holy Spirit (e.g., Rom. 7:14; Gal. 6:1; Eph. 1:3; Col. 1:9). As the adjective has that reference, so the noun in verse 45, refers, correlatively, to the person of the Spirit, as it does frequently and almost always elsewhere in Paul. This consideration is reinforced by the only other occurrence in Paul (or the New Testament) of the *psychikon/pneumatikon* contrast earlier in 1 Corinthians (2:14), where in the immediate context (vv. 10ff.) the adjective refers to the believer (*ho pneumatikos*) as enlightened and led by the Spirit.²²

A consideration reinforcing this conclusion is that the last Adam did not simply become "spirit" but "life-giving" (*zōopoious*) spirit. This participial modifier is an instance of a verb that Paul most often uses with the Holy Spirit as its subject (1 Cor. 15:22; Rom. 8:11; 2 Cor. 3:6; by implication, Gal. 3:21). So, in verses 44 through 46 as the adjective *pneumatikon* refers to what is marked by the activity of the Spirit, the noun *pneuma* refers to his person (and its English translation ought to be capitalized, "Spirit").

The last half of verse 45 states, then, that in being raised from the dead Christ, as the last Adam, became life-giving Spirit in the sense of the Holy Spirit. The terms of this equating or identifying of the resurrected Christ with the Spirit need to be noted. It is not ontological as if Paul is here expressing a purely functional Christology that is indifferent to or denies the personal distinction between Christ and the Spirit. Eternal, inner-Trinitarian

²¹ For a full argumentation see Richard Gaffin Jr., "The last Adam, the Life-giving Spirit," in ed. S. Clark, *The Forgotten Christ* (Nottingham: Apollos; Inter-Varsity, 2007), 211–25 and the literature, pro and con, cited there.

²² Note also Jude 19, "worldly people (*psychikoi*), not having the Spirit." I take it that the long-standing effort to enlist 1 Cor. 2:14–15 in its immediate context in support of an anthropological trichotomy (with *pneumatikos* here referring to the human *pneuma* come to its revived ascendancy) is not successful and ought to be abandoned; see, e.g., J. Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray*, 2 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977) 23–33, esp. 23–29.

relationships and distinctions are outside his purview. Rather, Paul has in view what has happened in *history* and as Christ is the last *Adam*, the second *man*. He has in view what is true in terms of his genuine humanity, not his essential deity.²³ With these qualifications maintained uncompromised, the equation affirmed in verse 45 may be termed “functional” or “eschatological” or, in older theological idiom, “economic” (in distinction from “ontological”). Verse 45 affirms that the resurrected Christ and the Spirit are one in the specific respect of giving life—eschatological, resurrection life with its inherent glory (v. 43).

Subsequently in writing to the Corinthians Paul will say, “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Cor. 3:17). We will consider this statement in its context below but on the understanding noted here that, though commentators are divided, the more plausible case to be made is that “Lord” refers to the exalted Christ and the statement is closely related to 1 Corinthians 15:45.²⁴ The “is” of 2 Corinthians 3:17, we may say, rests on the “became” of 1 Corinthians 15:45. Also, the “freedom” in view is eschatological, the close concomitant of Spirit-worked resurrection life with its glory (e.g., in Rom. 8:2, 21: “For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus”; “the freedom of the glory of the children of God”).

Third, within 1 Corinthians 15 and the contrast of the immediate context (vv. 42–49) two closely related considerations appear to coalesce in the affirmation of verse 45c. At his resurrection the incarnate Christ (a) was thoroughly transformed *by* the Spirit and (b) came into complete and permanent possession *of* the Spirit. The resulting relationship between the incarnate Christ and the Spirit is so unprecedented and climactic that it is properly and appropriately captured by saying that Christ became the life-giving Spirit.

So far as the relationship between the resurrected Christ and believers is concerned, (a) the preceding paragraph accents the continuity between them and (b) his uniqueness and the difference between them. Regarding (a), as the life-giving Spirit Christ is the first instance of the resurrection body, the “firstfruits” (v. 20) manifestation of the same body that believers will possess at his return (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13–17). What, through the Spirit,

²³ A recent and convincing demonstration of Paul’s clearly Trinitarian understanding of God is in Gordon Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 825–45, esp. 839–42. The personal, parallel distinction between God (the Father), Christ as Lord, and the (Holy) Spirit—underlying subsequent doctrinal formulation—is clear enough in, e.g., 1 Cor. 12:4–6; 2 Cor. 13:13; Eph. 4:4–6.

²⁴ See Gaffin, “The Life-giving Spirit,” 222–24 for argumentation as well as literature, pro and con, cited there.

God has done in raising Jesus from the dead he will also do for believers (the most likely meaning of Rom. 8:11). As the life-giving Spirit and by virtue of the transformation he has experienced in his resurrection he now bears the heavenly image with its glory that believers, too, will one day bear bodily (v. 49).

It continues to be necessary to point out in the face of widespread and persistent misunderstanding that “spiritual” does not refer to the makeup of the resurrection body, to the immaterial substance of which it is composed. Rather, that adjective is Paul’s single label of choice for the resurrection body with its glory because it most adequately and appropriately describes the body that has been perfected with the effects of sin entirely eradicated by the activity of the Holy Spirit. In view is the transmuted but genuinely physical character of the believer’s resurrection body, the eschatologically transformed physicality of the believer’s person by the Spirit.²⁵ The work of the Spirit with and in the individual believer reaches its culmination in the resurrection of the body. As we will see in more detail below, God’s “good work” begun in believers finds its “completion at the day of Jesus Christ” in the change that will take place in their bodily resurrection with its manifest glory (Phil. 1:6 with 3:21).

Glory, then, is one of the three characteristics, together with imperishability and power, that Paul predicates of the Spirit-renovated and perfected resurrection body, the Spirit-consummated heavenly image. These characteristics are not merely mentioned as several from a larger list; they are essential. Because of what has transpired in Christ’s resurrection and ascension and who he now is as exalted, there is the closest association throughout Paul between the Spirit, eschatological life, glory, and power. Within this conceptual complex the Spirit clearly has priority in the sense that life, glory, and power are related to the Spirit as “products to the Producer.”²⁶

So, from the vantage point of glory the body of the resurrected Christ, the “life-giving Spirit,” is “the body of his glory” (Phil. 3:21 NASB). And in the parallelism of 1 Timothy 3:16 Christ’s justification “in the Spirit” correlates with his ascension “in glory” (NASB). The tie between glory and eschatological life is also seen in Romans 2:7 (“glory and honor and immortality . . . eternal life”; cf. v. 10) and Colossians 3:4 (“When Christ who is your life

²⁵ With an eye to this transformation the resurrection body is also aptly labeled “transphysical,” as N. T. Wright, coining a term, has recently proposed—“the ‘trans’ is intended as a shortening of ‘transformed.’” *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 477 see also 606–7, 612, 661.

²⁶ Vos, *Pauline Eschatology*, 302.

appears, then you also will appear with him in glory”), as well as, correlatively, the link between glory and power in Ephesians 1:18–19 (“the riches of the glory of His inheritance” (NASB) of the ascended Christ among the saints is on the order of “the immeasurable greatness of his power” toward them) and elsewhere (Eph. 3:16; Col. 1:11; 2 Thess. 1:9).

The close linking of the Spirit, life, glory, and power also appears in the indications of agency in Christ’s resurrection. While that agency is attributed to the Spirit (Rom. 1:4; 8:11; 1 Tim. 3:16) and to God’s power (1 Cor. 6:14), according to Romans 6:4, he “was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father.” All told, we may say that life and power are related to the inner, hidden side and glory to the outer, visible side of the eschatological transformation wrought by the Spirit.²⁷

The resurrection body with its qualities that Christ has by becoming the life-giving Spirit is the first instance of the resurrection body each believer will have. Only he, however, is the life-giving Spirit. That cannot be said of “the heavenly ones,” only of “the heavenly one.” Believers do not themselves become givers of the Spirit. They have the Spirit only as they have received the Spirit. Christ, not the church together with Christ, is the source of the Spirit. The pattern of expression in Romans 8:9–10 is instructive on this point. Because Christ has become the life-giving Spirit, the Spirit is now “the Spirit of Christ.” Consequently, only as Christ by the Spirit is “in” those who “belong to him” (who are “in him,” as Paul frequently says elsewhere) is the Spirit “in” them and are they “in the Spirit.”²⁸ Christians, then, are not themselves sources of glory. Their glory is theirs only as it is derivative of Christ’s in his role as the life-giving Spirit.

Conclusion. We have given considerable attention to 1 Corinthians 15:42–49 with its single reference to glory for the perspective it provides, more comprehensive than any other single passage in Paul, on glory. That is so particularly as his gospel is at the center of his theology as a whole and concerns, as much as anything, the glory of Christ as the image of God. Drawing together the threads of our discussion of the passage, glory is preeminently the glory of the exalted Christ, the consummate glory he both possesses and, as we will consider further, shares with believers, as he has been constituted the life-giving Spirit by being resurrected bodily and,

²⁷ This is the conclusion of *ibid.*, 314. See his penetrating discussion of this relationship (302–15).

²⁸ 1 Cor. 15:45c may be seen as a one-sentence commentary on Pentecost and its significance. What Peter delineates in Acts 2:32–33 (resurrection—ascension and heavenly session—reception of the Spirit—outpouring of the Spirit), Paul telescopes by saying, “The last Adam became life-giving spirit.”

as ascended, is the heavenly image-bearer. The glory-image of the last Adam in its finality and permanence answers to and is the realization of God's purposes in the beginning in the creation of Adam as his image-bearer. In passing here, but not unimportantly, this eschatological divine image-bearing of Christ by virtue of his resurrection is reinforced in Colossians 1:15–20. This passage has a sweeping outlook spanning his role in creation and redemption: as “the firstborn from the dead” (v. 18) he is “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation” (v. 15).²⁹

For Paul, glory is associated primarily with the Spirit and his power in giving resurrection life and effecting eschatological transformation, first in Christ himself, “the man of heaven” (v. 48), and then in “those who belong to Christ” (v. 23), “those who are of heaven” (v. 48). Virtually everything that Paul teaches about glory traces back in one way or another to the resurrection-based matrix of the Spirit, life, power, and glory present in this passage.

This basic conclusion, that, for Paul, Christ's gospel-glory is a predicate rooted in his exaltation, may seem unduly limiting. In particular, it may appear to fail to account adequately for his statement that if “the rulers of this age” had grasped the hidden mystery of “God's wisdom” revealed in the cross, “they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Cor. 2:7–8 NASB). Does not Paul here attribute glory to Christ prior to his resurrection? Certainly, but in what sense?

In 1 Corinthians 1:18–29 Paul is emphatic: “the word of the cross” (v. 18) and “Christ crucified” (v. 23), deemed foolish, weak, and despicable by the “world” of unbelief (v. 20), are “the power of God and the wisdom of God” (v. 24). So, though not explicitly stated, by extension, particularly in view of the reference to power,³⁰ Christ's cross also exhibits the glory of God. This, however, does not mean that Paul invests the cross with an isolated glory of its own as if, in dialectical fashion, the suffering and ignominy of the cross are in themselves a matter of glory.³¹

Without his subsequent resurrection from the dead, Christ's cross lacks any efficacy and is completely devoid of power and glory, and the unbelieving world's assessment of the cross would be irrefutable. Paul could hardly make that clearer than he does later in chapter 15:14, 17–19. So, when in

²⁹ I must dispense with a detailed discussion of this passage, including questions concerning its literary structure and possibly pre-Pauline origin.

³⁰ Cf. the link between glory and power in 1 Cor. 15:43, already discussed.

³¹ There is surely, however, “the divine irony” noted by Fee (*Corinthians*, 106). Just those who in “the wisdom of this age” (v. 6) crucify Christ bring about the eternally purposed “wisdom of God” (v. 7) revealed in Christ (1:24, 30).

2:2 he says, “For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified,” this fundamental epistemic commitment is not made to the exclusion of the resurrection. Worth noting at this point, because it is particularly applicable to Paul, is the observation, made at least as early as Calvin,³² that in Scripture references to Christ’s death alone or to his resurrection alone are a synecdoche. To speak of the one always has in view the other in its significance. They are unintelligible apart from each other; each conditions the meaning of the other. The glory of Christ secured and revealed in his resurrection casts an anticipatory aura on his cross.

An important key to what Paul intends by “the Lord of glory” in 1 Corinthians 2:8 is present just prior in verse 7: the cross concerns the wisdom that “God decreed before the ages for our glory.” As we have seen Paul makes clear later in chapter 15, this eternal divine purpose is realized in the glory associated with the resurrection body. So, commensurately, Christ is “the Lord of glory” with a view to the glory that he would and now does possess as resurrected.

In Galatians 6:14 Paul declares, “But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Here “boasting” (*kauchasthai*), semantically related to glory, is associated with the cross in an exclusive manner reminiscent of 1 Corinthians 2:2. Yet the qualification immediately follows that for him (and, representatively, for every believer) the cross effects a mutual crucifixion to “the world” that results, in turn, in belonging to a “new creation” (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17), the consummate eschatological order that dawns with Christ’s firstfruits resurrection with its attendant glory (1 Cor. 15:20, 23).

2 Corinthians 3:6–11

This passage has the highest concentration of glory language in Paul, a total of ten occurrences of the noun and related verb (*doxazō*) in verses 7 through 11. At verse 6, in the course of defending and reflecting on his apostolic ministry (2:14–4:6), Paul contrasts the old (cf. 3:14) and new covenants in terms of a fundamental, life-and-death antithesis: “the letter kills” marks the former,³³ “the Spirit gives life,” the latter. Interestingly here, glory is the common denominator of this antithesis. The old covenant was by no

³² John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. F. L. Battles, ed. J. T. McNeill, The Library of Christian Classics, 20 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 1:521 [2:16:13].

³³ This is true by metonymy. Strictly speaking, Paul is clear elsewhere (e.g., esp. Rom. 7:7–13) that it is not the letter or law but sin that kills (cf. vv. 14–15). The law with its imperatives but without the antecedent indicative of grace confirms and intensifies death as the consequence of sin (Rom. 6:23). 2 Cor. 3:6 should be read in the light of Gal. 3:21, the “law is not able to make alive” from sin and death; only the Spirit has that capability.

means lacking in glory; it had its own glory (v. 7). However, even with the unbearable intensity of the light phenomenon associated with the glory of the old (v. 7), the glory of the new covenant is greater (vv. 8, 9). In fact, the surpassing glory of the new is so transcending that it is as if the old had none by comparison (v. 10). All told (v. 11), the essential difference is the “fading” (cf. v. 7 *NASB*) and transient glory of the old in relation to the “permanent” and abiding glory of the new. Since this consummate new covenant glory is preeminently “of the Spirit” (v. 6), verses 6 through 11 reinforce the link between glory and the Spirit, in particular his eschatological life-giving activity, prominent in 1 Corinthians 15:42–49.

A noteworthy feature in this passage is that the new covenant with its glory is “the ministry of righteousness” (v. 9). Since this characterization is in antithesis to the old covenant as “the ministry of condemnation,” it is best taken as referring specifically to the righteousness that justifies. This brings into view a wide and important terrain in Paul’s teaching that we will not explore but make only the following observation. The justifying righteousness established in Christ’s “becoming obedient to the point of death” (Phil. 2:8) and his resurrection (e.g., Rom. 4:25; 2 Cor. 5:21) is invested with eschatological glory. Accordingly, the justification of “the ungodly” (Rom. 4:5) in their being united to Christ by faith (e.g., Gal. 2:16–17; Phil. 3:9) and based exclusively on that righteousness likewise shares in that final glory.

In verses 7 through 11 Moses stands for the old covenant, the Spirit for the new. In verses 12 through 15, however, a shift in persons occurs on the one side. Moses continues to represent the old covenant but, instead of the Spirit, Christ (v. 14) represents the new. This has the effect of raising the question of the relationship between Christ and the Spirit under the new covenant. As if in answer, verse 16 relates the unveiling of Moses in the glory-presence of the Lord in Exodus 34:34 to Christ as Lord, and verse 17a states, “Now the Lord is the Spirit” (“the Lord who is the Spirit,” v. 18).³⁴

This affirmation is related to what Paul wrote earlier: “the last Adam became a life-giving spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45); the “is” of the one statement flows from the “became” of the other. The equation or unity expressed in both is not ontological but economic or functional. By his exaltation the incarnate Christ and the Spirit are one; in 2 Corinthians 3:17 they are one in granting eschatological freedom, and the Lord-Christ is now the eschatological glory-image (v. 18, cf. “the image of the heavenly one,” invested by the Spirit with resurrection and ascension glory, 1 Cor. 15:49).

³⁴ See above, n. 21.

Conformity to the Glory-image of Christ

The focus of this chapter so far has been on Christ and his glory. The glory of Christians, however, has also come into view in a number of ways because his glory and theirs are not really susceptible to separate treatment in Paul. By the nature of the case Christ's glorification is not only for himself but also for them. His glory, as we have seen, is preeminently his gospel-glory, that is, his glory as the savior of sinners. The glory he has as "the heavenly one" is not an isolated glory or for himself alone. Rather, it is the glory that he shares together with believers, "the heavenly ones," who are destined with him to bear that exalted glory-image. It remains for us to detail some further aspects of this sharing in Christ's glory.

Romans 3:23 provides the most appropriate point of departure: "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." The variation in tense here is instructive. The reference to sin is in the aorist tense (*hēmarton*) and speaks to the settled reality that all human beings are sinners. Most likely in view are both having actually sinned, just described so unsparingly in verses 10 through 18, as well as original sin, addressed subsequently in 5:12–19. The reference to falling short or lacking glory is in the present tense (*hysterountai*), to the ongoing consequence of sin.³⁵

How is this persisting universal human lack of divine glory to be understood? The answer lies in the close connection, prominent in Paul, between glory and divine image-bearing, not only for Christ but also for human beings generally.³⁶

Romans 3:23 is, in effect, a pointed summary of the preceding lengthy indictment of human sin as universal in 1:18–3:20. The passage opens (1:18–20) condemning the inexcusable suppression of the truth about God, specifically the truth of "his eternal power and divine nature" as creation itself clearly reveals these "invisible attributes." These characteristics, as openly manifested, are primarily in view in 1:23 as "the glory of the immortal God." There the point is made that this glory has been "exchanged . . . for an *image* in the form of corruptible *man* and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures" (NASB). This exchange stems from the "futile" and "foolish" thinking that did not "honor (*endoxasan*) him as God," that is, thinking that did not glorify him or acknowledge his revealed glory as God

³⁵ "The sinning is represented as past; the present and abiding consequence of sin is the want of the *glory of God*." Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1955), 90.

³⁶ See the comments above (pp. 141–42) on 1 Cor. 11:7. Some commentators (e.g., Hodge) take "glory" in Rom. 3:23 in the sense of "praise" and as referring to the divine approbation that sinners are lacking or, in other words, their guilt. The guilt that sin incurs is certainly a prominent consideration in the immediate context (e.g., v. 19) but is not likely the point here.

(1:21). Climactically, all that is involved in this suppression of the truth is summed up as having sinfully “exchanged the truth about God for a lie,” an exchange that ultimately consists in having “worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator” (1:25).

For Paul the essence of human sin is the rebellion of the creature against the Creator in whose image he has been made, a renouncing of the truth of the creaturely dependence that divine image-bearing entails, for the lie of human self-sufficiency and independence from God. This deeply rooted revolt is such that human beings refuse to acknowledge God's glory evident in the entire creation and evident particularly in and to themselves because they, uniquely as creatures, are God's image. The creaturely capacities given with being that image, capacities to be for God, for doing his will and obeying his law, are instead directed against him in devoting to self or some other creature the worship and service due to him alone. The result of sin is not the loss of the divine image but its defacement or distortion, the loss of image-bearing integrity. In this sense all human beings are sinners who “fall short of the glory of God” (3:23).

This forfeited privilege of reflecting God's glory, however, is not Paul's final word about that glory for sinful image-bearers. Rather, at work is the operative principle, “where sin increased, grace abounded all the more” (Rom. 5:20). The glory-image, universally defaced and perverted in Adam, is restored and perfected first in Christ and then in those in union with him. As we have seen, 1 Corinthians 15:44b–49 especially shows that (cf. vv. 21–22; Rom. 5:12–19). In response to human sinfulness and the loss of image-bearing glory, God displays his glory specifically in his saving grace. His evident glory as creator is now enhanced by the revelation of his glory as redeemer, by his gospel-glory, preeminently and especially “the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6).

To that end God has predestined salvation through the cross “before the ages for our glory” (1 Cor. 2:7; cf. 1:18, 23). In Ephesians 1 his more ultimate purpose for those “he chose . . . in [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him,” correlatively, for those “he predestined . . . for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ,” is “the praise of the glory of his grace” (vv. 4–6 ΝΚΙΥ). The glory of his grace (vv. 12, 14) is such that he is, as “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory,” who provides for the saints in all of its richness “his glorious inheritance” (or “the glory of his inheritance,” *tēs doxēs tēs klēronomias autou*, Eph. 1:17–18).

This linking of glory with saving grace in Ephesians 1 and specifically with adoption (God as Father, inheritance) and holiness, is present as well,

with the additional inclusion of image-bearing, in the overall perspective on God's predestinating purposes in Romans 8:29–30. Verse 29 states, in a telescoping fashion, the ultimate goal, the omega-point, of God's effective and discriminating foreknowledge issuing in the predestination of its objects: it is for them to be "conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers." This image is specifically the Son's as he has been glorified; he is "the firstborn among many brothers" because he is "the firstborn from the dead" (Col. 1:18). As verse 30 then delineates, this brotherly or familial image-conformity, with Christ as preeminent ("that in everything he might be preeminent," Col. 1:18), is, in a word, their being "glorified."³⁷ To that ultimate end they have been called and justified. Their justification is the essential precondition for their glorification. Because they "have been justified by faith" they "have peace with God" and so in this settled state of "grace," they "rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:1–2). Their confident justification-based expectation is that because of the way God's glory has been manifested in Christ, they will share in that glory in their own glorification.

This future glorification, as 1 Corinthians 15:49 in its immediate context (vv. 42ff.) makes clear, will be realized in their bodily resurrection at Christ's return. Then and only then will they bear bodily "the image of the heavenly one" and experience the psycho-physical change that resurrection will entail (cf. v. 51). Only then will their bodily image-bearing be rid of perishability, dishonor, and weakness and invested instead with glory along with its close correlatives, imperishability and power (vv. 42–43). Then, by his power as resurrected Christ, he "will transform our lowly body" (literally, "the body of our humiliation") "to be like his glorious body" ("the body of his glory," Phil. 3:21). Then, in their possession of this "spiritual" body, with their bodily existence now transformed by the Spirit, the conformity to Christ's image in view in Romans 8:29 will be complete. In this sense, "when Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory" (Col. 3:4).

This appearance in resurrection-glory at Christ's return will not happen in a vacuum but involves an "ecology." As we have already noted in 1 Corinthians 15:45–49, the bodily resurrection of believers has a cosmic setting. That cosmic scope comes out even more clearly and remarkably in Romans 8:18–23. There Paul writes of the incomparable "glory that is

³⁷ This past tense almost certainly does not describe glorification as already completed since in view from v. 18 on is "the glory to be revealed" at the time of the resurrection of the body (v. 23). The aorist tense (*edoxasen*) is best taken as proleptic, "intimating the certainty of its accomplishment." John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1959), 1:321.

to be revealed to us" (v. 18). That future glory has in view "the redemption of our bodies," that is, the bodily resurrection that believers eagerly await as their "adoption" (v. 23).³⁸

At the same time, the creation as a whole has a stake in this adoptive bodily resurrection-redemption of believers.³⁹ Presently it exists in a state of "eager longing" for their "revealing [as] the sons of God" (v. 19). This longing is, more specifically, an expectant, even hope-filled groaning, "a grand symphony of sighs,"⁴⁰ itself to be unburdened, along with believers, from the "futility" that now permeates it because of the curse on human sin. It will be freed with them from this "bondage to corruption" so that it shares in their coming into full possession of "the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (vv. 20–21). With sin and all its consequences removed, the adoptive glory revealed in the resurrection of the body will be coincident with the "glorification" of creation, a transformation so resplendent that the entire creation will radiate eschatological glory.⁴¹

The glorification of believers is not only future, in the change that will be effected in the resurrection of the body, but is also present in a renewal already initiated and underway. Specifically, in terms of a basic anthropological distinction for Paul, "though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16).⁴² In the deepest recesses of who they now are, at the core of their being—what Paul elsewhere and more frequently calls the "heart" (e.g., Rom. 1:24; 2:29; 8:27; 1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Cor. 3:2–3)—believers are no longer turned away from God's glory but are drawn toward it and even into it in a transforming way.

As "Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father," he is the source of "newness of life," life that finds its expression in their "walk," their ongoing, daily conduct (Rom. 6:4). This new life is specifically his resurrection life, the life he possesses as the "life-giving Spirit" and even now, with its inherent glory, shares with believers in union with them. In that vital sense, not only a representative sense, they are already "raised with Christ" (e.g., Eph. 2:5–6; Col. 2:12–13; 3:1). All told, though still "in [the]

³⁸ Clearly they are already God's adopted children and have received "the Spirit of adoption" (vv. 14–16). In v. 23 (cf. v. 21) their bodily resurrection openly reveals that adoption. For a fuller discussion see my *By Faith, Not by Sight*, 92–94.

³⁹ In view is the entire nonimage-bearing creation, inanimate as well as animate, with the evident exclusion of Satan and all who serve him, unrepentant human, and angelic beings (cf. Eph. 6:12).

⁴⁰ Murray, *Romans*, 1:305 (quoting Philippi).

⁴¹ Vv. 20–22 are fairly seen as Paul's commentary, in effect, on the account of the fall in Genesis 3.

⁴² Cf. Gaffin, *By Faith, Not by Sight*, 53–58; Ridderbos, *Paul*, 115–21.

mortal body” they are nonetheless “alive from the dead” (Rom. 6:12–13 NASB). Along with this present sharing in resurrection-glory believers are given a new identity. No longer are they slaves of sin but of God and righteousness, which they are now free to serve (vv. 13, 16–22).

The sanctifying of the church for which Christ has cleansed it by lovingly giving himself is already underway, with the end in view that at his return (cf. Phil. 1:6), “without spot or wrinkle or any such thing . . . holy and without blemish,” it, too, like him, might be “in splendor” or “glorious” (*endoxon*, Eph. 5: 25–27). So, all they now do, down to the details of their everyday living, is to be “to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31). As an important instance, in their sexual conduct they are to know that their “body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you” (cf. 1 Thess. 4:8), so that in view of the glory inherent in that indwelling of the Spirit, as God’s own bought possession they are to “glorify God in [their] body” (6:19–20).

Paul’s most pointed assertion of present glorification, also explicitly associated with image-bearing, is 2 Corinthians 3:18: “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.” At verse 6 Paul begins contrasting old- and new-covenant glory in order to highlight the surpassing glory of the new (v. 11) as “the ministry of the Spirit” (v. 8).⁴³ The Spirit-efficacy of new-covenant glory is seen in particular as the veil of unbelief is removed when one turns to Christ as Lord (vv. 14, 16). In fact, “the Lord is the Spirit” (v. 17a) and Christ, glorified as Lord, and the Spirit are one in their activity of granting eschatological “freedom” (v. 17b; cf. the resurrected Christ as “a life-giving spirit,” 1 Cor. 15:45).

That freedom is such that “with unveiled face,” that is, by faith in Christ and the gospel (cf. “the gospel of the glory of Christ,” 4:4), Christians “behold” (or less likely, “reflect”) his glory as Lord or, as Paul says a few verses later, “the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (4:6). This faith beholding (cf. 5:7) is such that they are presently being transformed into “the same image,” the glory-image of the exalted Christ. Already, in their “inner self” (4:16; cf. “Christ . . . formed in you,” Gal. 4:19) they are undergoing the transformation for which, as we have seen, they have been predestined (Rom. 8:29) and which will be completed in their “outer self,” by bodily resurrection (1 Cor. 15:49; Phil. 3:21). This transformation into his image, as it comes “from” Christ, “the Lord who is the Spirit,” is already underway “from glory to glory” (*apo doxēs eis doxan*). This is true whether this means a process “from one degree of glory to another” or, as seems more likely,

⁴³ See the discussion of this passage above, 153–55.

has in view the glory-transformation from its already realized initiation to its still future consummation.⁴⁴

This present glorification of the church parallels the experience of its “Lord of glory” prior to his resurrection (1 Cor. 2:8). In an important aspect of Paul’s teaching that we can touch on only briefly here, the Spirit-worked, open-faced transformation brought about by faith in the gospel is for now veiled by suffering and adversity.⁴⁵ A fundamental condition of the Christian life is that “we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him” (Rom. 8:17b; cf. 2 Cor. 1:5). In fact, until our future bodily resurrection, conformity to Christ’s glory-image takes place as much as in any other way, just as his resurrection power finds expression—in “becoming like him in his death” and as we “share his sufferings” (Phil. 3:10–11; cf. 2 Cor. 4:10–11).⁴⁶ Accordingly, for Paul, too, as Peter puts it, believers are to rejoice as they share in Christ’s suffering not only as they look for the future revelation of his glory but also because in the midst of that suffering “the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon [them]” (1 Pet. 4:13–14). In his resurrection glory Christ, the life-giving Spirit, is ever with the church in its present trials and suffering.

In view of this pervasive duress Paul’s prayer is that believers might be powerfully strengthened by God “according to his glorious might (*to kratos tēs doxēs autou*), for all endurance and patience with joy” (Col. 1:11). And he assures them that the “light momentary affliction” associated with their present “outer self” existence is producing “an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison” (2 Cor. 4:17; cf. v. 16). Taking everything into consideration, “the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Rom. 8:18). On that “day,” at Christ’s return as Lord, not only will those who have rejected the gospel be punished with “eternal destruction,” consisting of separation from his presence and from “the glory of his power,” but he, climactically, will “be glorified in his saints” (2 Thess. 1:8–10). To that end Paul prays for the church that until then in every way, “the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him” (v. 12).

⁴⁴ Cf. Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 208.

⁴⁵ For a discussion of relevant passages, primarily in Paul, see my “The Usefulness of the Cross,” *WTJ* 41 (1978–1979): 228–46.

⁴⁶ In my view the two uses of “and” in v. 10 are best taken not as coordinating but explanatory: to “know Christ” is to know “the power of his resurrection” which, in turn, is to know “the fellowship of his suffering,” an experiential knowing that, all told, is glossed as “being conformed to his death.”

Conclusion

We have considered God's glory as a central theme in Paul's gospel because that gospel is at the center of his theology as a whole. In Colossians 1:23, in a context where at a later point in his gospel ministry he is reflecting on that ministry in its entirety, he speaks of "the hope of the gospel." Unsurprisingly but impressively, this gospel-hope is focused on who Christ is and what he has achieved, particularly in his death and resurrection. Through Christ's death on the cross God has reconciled all things to himself (vv. 20, 22) and Christ is now "the firstborn from the dead" (v. 18). As crucified and resurrected, he is "the firstborn of all creation" (v. 15) and "in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell" (v. 19; cf. 2:9).

As such, Christ further is "the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed" (v. 26)⁴⁷—the realization, at last, of the salvation purposed by God from eternity for all nations, not just one, for Gentiles as well as Jews. The magnitude of this universal salvation in its full dimensions is such that it prompts Paul to speak of it in terms of its glory, in fact "the riches of the glory of this mystery." And then, as if to bring to a focus again all that he has been saying about Christ in the preceding verses, he adds that the mystery revealed is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (v. 27; cf. 2:2–3). For Paul this as much as anything centers the hope of the gospel—the exalted Christ present with the church and indwelling every believer. "Christ in you, the hope of glory"—it would be difficult to find a more appropriate note on which to end a study of the glory of God in Paul.

⁴⁷ On the use of "mystery" here and elsewhere in Paul, see especially Ridderbos, *Paul*, 46–49.

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