

NSBT NEW STUDIES IN BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

# The Glory of God and Paul

Texts, themes  
and theology



Christopher W. Morgan  
and Robert A. Peterson

Series Editor: D. A. Carson



InterVarsity Press  
ivpress.com

Taken from *The Glory of God and Paul* by Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson. Copyright © Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson 2022. Published by InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL. [www.ivpress.com](http://www.ivpress.com).

# 1

## A panorama of God's glory<sup>1</sup>

*Soli Deo gloria* – to God alone be the glory! Sinclair Ferguson captures the spirit in which this book is written:

The truth is that we are prone to looking through the wrong end of the telescope. We move from man to God. But true thinking – thinking that recognizes the real distinction between the Creator and the creature, between the Infinite and the finite, must always begin with God. It is not so much that we describe God in *anthropomorphic* terms; it is that He has created us in a *theomorphic* way. We are the miniatures. In us – created, finite people – are embedded microcosmic reflections of realities that are true of God Himself in a macrocosmic, uncreated, infinite way.<sup>2</sup>

This book attempts the audacious task of setting forth the immense glory of the infinite Creator as it permeates Holy Scripture. God's glory appears in the following:

- In major sections of Scripture
- In relation to key doctrines
- At turning points in the biblical story
- In different senses in Scripture
- As intrinsic and extrinsic
- In biblical tensions
- In redemptive history

---

<sup>1</sup> This chapter is an adaptation of Morgan and Peterson 2010: 153–187.

<sup>2</sup> Ferguson 2014: 32; emphases original.

## God's glory appears in major sections of Scripture

In a way that is consistent but by no means uniform,<sup>3</sup> every major section of Scripture addresses the subject of the glory of God:

*Law:* 'I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD.' (Exod. 14:4)

*Prophets:* 'I am the LORD; that is my name; / my glory I give to no other, / nor my praise to carved idols.' (Isa. 42:8)

*Writings:* 'The LORD of hosts, / he is the King of glory!' (Ps. 24:10)

*Gospels:* 'And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.' (John 17:5)

*Acts:* '[Stephen], full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.' (Acts 7:55)

*Pauline Epistles:* 'waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ'. (Titus 2:13)

*General Epistles:* 'He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.' (Heb. 1:3)

*Revelation:* 'The city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.' (Rev. 21:23)

## God's glory appears in relation to key doctrines

Every major doctrine is also significantly related to the glory of God:

*Revelation:* 'All the promises of God find their Yes in [Christ]. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.' (2 Cor. 1:20)

*God:* 'To the only God, our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and for ever. Amen.' (Jude 25)

---

<sup>3</sup> Note the distinctions and subtleties to the presentations of God's glory when comparing e.g. Exodus to Isaiah, Psalms to Ezekiel, Luke to John or any of the above to Paul.

## A panorama of God's glory

*Humanity:* 'You have made [man] a little lower than the heavenly beings / and crowned him with glory and honour.' (Ps. 8:5)

*Sin:* 'Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.'  
(Mark 8:38)

*Christ:* 'My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.' (Jas 2:1)

*Salvation:* 'I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, "Hallelujah! / Salvation and glory and power belong to our God."' (Rev. 19:1)

*The Holy Spirit:* 'If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.'  
(1 Peter 4:14)

*The church:* 'Let us rejoice and exult / and give him the glory, / for the marriage of the Lamb has come, / and his Bride has made herself ready.'  
(Rev. 19:7)

*Last things:* 'After you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.'  
(1 Peter 5:10)

## God's glory appears at turning points in the biblical story

Key turning points in the biblical story emphasize God's glory and attest to its varied manifestations:<sup>4</sup>

- 1 God's glory is revealed through creation (Gen. 1 – 2; Ps. 19:1–2; Rom. 1:18–25).
- 2 God's glory is identified with humans created in the image of God, crowned with glory (Gen. 1:26–31; 2:4–24; Ps. 8:3–5; 1 Cor. 11:7).
- 3 God's glory is linked to the exodus (Exod. 16:10; 24:9–18; 34:29).
- 4 God's glory is linked to fire/bright light/shining (Exod. 3:2–6; Isa. 60:1–3; Rev. 21:11, 23).
- 5 God's glory is linked to a cloud (Exod. 24:16; 2 Chr. 5:13–14; Luke 9:26–36).

---

<sup>4</sup> Everett F. Harrison highlights several of these manifestations in Harrison 1982.

## The Glory of God and Paul

- 6 God's glory is linked to the Sabbath (Exod. 24:15–18).<sup>5</sup>
- 7 God's glory manifested to Moses (Exod. 33:18–23), when he described his experience of God's glory in something resembling physical form.
- 8 God's glory fills the tabernacle (Exod. 40:34; Lev. 9:6, 23; Num. 16:19, 42; 20:6).
- 9 God's glory fills the earth (Num. 14:20–23; Ps. 19:1–6; Isa. 6:3).
- 10 God's glory fills the temple (1 Kgs 8:10–11).
- 11 God's glory is above the heavens (Pss 8:1; 113:4).
- 12 God's glory is revealed in a vision to Isaiah (Isa. 6:1–5).
- 13 God's glory is revealed in visions to Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:28; 3:12; 10:4, 18; 11:22).
- 14 God's glory is identified with his people (Isa. 40:5; 43:6–7; 60:1).
- 15 God's glory is identified with Christ, including his incarnation (John 1:1–18); birth narratives (Luke 2:9, 14, 32); miracles (John 2:11; 11:38–44); transfiguration (Luke 9:28–36; 2 Peter 1:16–21); suffering and crucifixion (John 13:31–32; 17:1–5; Luke 24:26; 1 Peter 1:10–11); resurrection/exaltation (Acts 3:13–15; Rom. 6:4; Heb. 2:5–9); ascension (Acts 1:6–11; 1 Tim. 3:16); session/reign (Heb. 1:3; 1 Peter 3:21–22); and coming/victory/judgment (Matt. 24:30; Titus 2:13; 2 Thess. 1:6–9).
- 16 God's glory is identified with the Holy Spirit (John 16:14; Eph. 1:13–14; 1 Peter 4:14).
- 17 God's glory is identified with the church (Eph. 1:22–23; 3:20–21; 5:22–29).
- 18 God's glory is shown in the new creation (Isa. 66:15–24; Rom. 8:18–27; Rev. 21 – 22).<sup>6</sup>

## God's glory appears in different senses in Scripture

Because the glory of God is so woven into the fabric of the biblical story, Scripture speaks of the glory of God in different senses. This is partly why

---

<sup>5</sup> Kline 1980; cf. Horton 2008: 14: 'Creation and new creation are interdependent themes, especially with the unifying theme of the procession of creation into the "seventh-day" consummation led by the creature bearing the Creator's image and likeness.'

<sup>6</sup> Rev. 21 – 22 evinces many of these themes, including Eden, temple, ark, light, creation, Israel, church and Christ.

God's glory is, as John Frame acknowledges, one of the hardest Christian terms to define.<sup>7</sup> For this reason we must exercise care as we construct definitions that faithfully represent biblical usage.

At a basic level, we note that the glory of God is sometimes used in the Bible as an adjective, sometimes as a noun and sometimes as a verb. God is *glorious* (adjective), reveals his *glory* (noun) and *is to be glorified* (verb).

More particularly, 'glory' translates the Hebrew *kābôd* and the Greek *doxa*.<sup>8</sup> *Kābôd* stems from a root that means 'weight' or 'heaviness'. Depending on its form, it could have the sense of honourable, dignified, exalted or revered. C. John Collins explains that it became 'a technical term for God's manifest presence'. It is similar in many respects to the concept of God's name in the Old Testament.<sup>9</sup>

According to Sverre Aalen, *doxa* in secular Greek refers to an opinion, a conjecture, repute, praise or fame. He maintains that these concepts were transformed by the Septuagint. Aalen also maintains that *doxa* translated *kābôd* and took on its same meaning, referring to God's manifestation of his person, presence and/or works, especially his power, judgment and salvation.<sup>10</sup>

Using these terms, the Bible speaks of the glory of God in several distinct senses. First, *glory is used as a designation for God himself*. For example, Peter refers to God the Father as the 'Majestic Glory' (2 Peter 1:17). This rare phrase is apparently a Hebrew way of referring to God without stating his name (a circumlocution).

Second, *glory sometimes refers to an internal characteristic, an attribute or a summary of attributes of God*. This is similar to saying that glory is occasionally used as an adjective. God is intrinsically glorious in the sense of fullness, sufficiency, majesty, beauty and splendour. Examples of this usage abound. Psalms refer to God as 'the King of glory' (24:7–10) and 'the God of glory' (29:3). Stephen speaks of 'the God of glory' (Acts 7:2), and the apostle Paul prays to the 'Father of glory' (Eph. 1:17). Displaying a remarkably high Christology, James refers to Jesus as the 'Lord of glory' or the 'glorious Lord', depending on how one translates the phrase.<sup>11</sup> Either way, the point is the same: like the Father, Jesus is characterized by

---

<sup>7</sup> Frame 2002: 592.

<sup>8</sup> See Longman 2010: 47–78; Kittel 1967: 2.252–255.

<sup>9</sup> Collins 1997; cf. von Rad 1962: 1.238–241.

<sup>10</sup> Aalen 1971: 2.44–48; cf. Kittel 1967: 2.252–255.

<sup>11</sup> See Morgan 2010: 151.

glory. The Spirit, too, is identified with glory (1 Peter 4:14; cf. John 16:14; Eph. 1:13–14), especially through the language of presence, indwelling and temple (John 14:15–17, 26; 15:26; 16:7–15; Rom. 8:9–11; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19–20; Eph. 2:19–22).

Third, the Bible speaks of *glory as God's presence*. As we noted, Collins and Aalen both underscore this in their respective explanations of the Hebrew and Greek terms for glory. This understanding of glory is emphatic in the events surrounding the exodus. The glory cloud (Exod. 13 – 14; 16:7; 20; 24; cf. Rev. 15:8), the manifestations to Moses (Exod. 3 – 4; 32 – 34) and God's presence in the tabernacle (Exod. 29:43; 40:34–38) all highlight God's covenantal presence.<sup>12</sup> Walter Kaiser puts it simply: 'Glory, then, is a special term that depicts God's visible and active presence.'<sup>13</sup> This connotation of God's glory also emerges in passages related to the ark of the covenant (1 Sam. 4 – 5), the temple (1 Kgs 8:10–11; 2 Chr. 5 – 7), the eschatological temple in Ezekiel (43:1–5), the person of Christ (John 1:1–18; Col. 1:15–20, 27; 2:1–3, 13–15; Heb. 1), the Holy Spirit (John 14 – 16) and even heaven itself (Rev. 21 – 22).

Fourth, the Bible often depicts *glory as the display of God's attributes, perfections or person*. John's Gospel speaks of glory in this way, as Jesus performs 'signs' that manifest his glory (2:11). The Bible uses various terms for this concept, but the idea is clear: as God puts his works on display, he glorifies himself. He displays his mercy, grace, justice and wrath in salvation and judgment (cf. Rom. 9:20–23; Eph. 2:4–10).

A fifth connotation is of *glory as the ultimate goal of the display of God's attributes, perfections or person*. Exodus and Ezekiel are replete with passages that unfold God's actions for the sake of his name, or in order that people will know he is the Lord.<sup>14</sup> Jesus instructs that Lazarus' death and subsequent resurrection had an ultimate purpose: they were for the glory of God (John 11:4, 40). Peter's death also shared this purpose (21:19). Paul points out that God chooses, adopts, redeems and seals us 'to the praise of his glorious grace' (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14). That is, in saving us, God displays his grace; and in displaying his grace, he brings glory to himself. Further, the whole trinitarian plan of redemption displays this goal, as seen in the mutual glorification of each person of the Trinity. The glorious Father

<sup>12</sup> See Longman 2010.

<sup>13</sup> Kaiser 2007: 120.

<sup>14</sup> See Edwards 1998: 237–239. For texts that declare that people or other things will *know that I am Yahweh* (and related expressions) see Hamilton 2006a: 64.



sends the glorious Son, who voluntarily humbles himself and glorifies the Father through his incarnation, obedient life and substitutionary death (Phil. 2:5–11). In response the Father glorifies the Son, resurrecting him from the dead and exalting him to the highest place (Acts 3:13–15; Rom. 6:4; Phil. 2:9–11). The Father sends the glorious Spirit, who glorifies the Son (John 16:14). And this all redounds to the glory of the Father (Phil. 2:11).<sup>15</sup>

Sixth, *glory sometimes connotes heaven, the heavenly or the eschatological consummation of the full experience of the presence of God*. Hebrews 2:10 speaks of 'bringing many sons to glory'; Philippians 4:19 offers the covenant promise 'My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus' (cf. Eph. 3:16, 'according to the riches of his glory'). The people of God will ultimately receive glory, honour, immortality and eternal life, which are used somewhat synonymously (Rom. 2:7). Such glory was prepared for them in eternity (9:23). Jesus is also said to be 'taken up in glory' (1 Tim. 3:16), which could be understood as in heaven, gloriously or a combination of the two. The bodies of believers, too, will be raised 'in glory' (1 Cor. 15:43), and faithful elders will receive an unfading crown of glory (1 Peter 5:4).

Seventh, *giving glory to God may also refer to appropriate response to God in the form of worship, exaltation or exultation*.<sup>16</sup> Psalm 29:2 urges, 'Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name.' At Jesus' birth, after God's glory shines (Luke 2:9), the heavenly host resounds with 'glory to God in the highest' (Luke 2:14), and the shepherds are 'glorifying and praising God' (Luke 2:20). Further, the Bible is filled with doxologies, such as Romans 16:27, that accentuate our need to give glory to God: 'To the only wise God be glory for evermore through Jesus Christ!' (cf. Rom. 11:36; Gal. 1:5; Eph. 3:20–21; Phil. 4:20; 2 Tim. 4:18; Jude 24–25; Rev. 1:5–6). Some doxologies are directed toward Christ (2 Peter 3:18; Heb. 13:21). Similarly, other passages instruct God's people to glory in Christ (2 Cor. 10:17), in his cross (Gal. 6:14) and in our suffering by virtue of our union with Christ (2 Cor. 11 – 12). Glorifying God is an expected and appropriate response of God's people (Matt. 5:13–16; 15:31; Mark 2:12; Luke 4:15; John 15:8). We are even commanded to glorify God in our bodies (1 Cor. 6:20), in our food and drink choices along with their corresponding relationships (1 Cor. 10:31) and in the proper exercise of spiritual

---

<sup>15</sup> See Köstenberger 2010.

<sup>16</sup> For a more detailed list of passages see Newman 1997: 395–396.

## The Glory of God and Paul

gifts (1 Peter 4:11). Romans 14 – 15 underlines the importance of the church's glorifying God with a unified voice; as the church displays unity to the glory of God (15:6–7), the Gentiles will glorify God (vv. 8–9; cf. Rev. 4 – 5).

It is important to notice that these multiple meanings are distinct but related. We might think of it this way: *The triune God who is glorious displays his glory, largely through his creation, image-bearers, providence and redemptive acts. God's people respond by glorifying him. God receives glory and, through uniting his people to Christ, shares his glory with them – all to his glory.* The divinely initiated and sovereignly guided interaction spirals forward to the consummation and throughout eternity. Though a chart cannot fully capture these ideas, it may help:

Internal glory → external glory → response to glory → receives  
glory → shares glory → unto glory

Scripture, then, speaks of various nuances of God's glory, all central in the biblical story:

- Glory possessed
- Glory purposed
- Glory displayed
- Glory ascribed
- Glory received
- Glory shared

To restate, God, who is intrinsically glorious (glory possessed), graciously and joyfully displays his glory (glory displayed), largely through his creation, image-bearers, providence and redemptive acts. God's people respond by glorifying him (glory ascribed). God receives glory (glory received) and, through uniting his people to the glorious Christ, shares his glory with them (glory shared) – all to his glory (glory purposed, displayed, ascribed, received and graciously shared throughout eternity). The next chapter will attempt to show that the entire biblical plotline of creation, fall, redemption and consummation is the story of God's glory.

At the ground of all this is the fact that the intrinsically glorious God extrinsically displays his glory, a theme to which we now turn.

# God's glory appears as intrinsic and extrinsic

Fundamentally, the glory of the triune God is both intrinsic and extrinsic. God is intrinsically glorious, in the sense of fullness, sufficiency, majesty, honour, worth, beauty, weight and splendour. God's glory is then extrinsically set forth, as John Calvin memorably put it: 'The world was no doubt made, that it might be a theatre of the divine glory.'<sup>17</sup> Because of God's gracious communication, his glory is something that may be seen, marvelled at and rejoiced in.

Jonathan Edwards saw this and referred to God's glory as internal and also as a communication of himself.<sup>18</sup> More recently, David Huttar has observed that God's glory is intrinsic, 'prior to any external manifestation of it' and 'fundamentally independent of external manifestation'. He adds, 'Yet it is also true that God's glory is also manifest.'<sup>19</sup>

While most theologians grant that the glory of God is in some sense intrinsic and extrinsic, they vary in how they categorize it and especially in how they understand what we label here 'intrinsic'. For example, in his *New Testament Theology* Donald Guthrie lists glory first in his discussion of God's attributes.<sup>20</sup> Walter Elwell references 'God's glory as his being'.<sup>21</sup> R. Albert Mohler Jr asserts, 'God's glory is best understood as the intrinsic beauty and external manifestation of God's being and character.'<sup>22</sup> John Piper exults that 'the glory of God is the infinite beauty and greatness of his manifold perfections'.<sup>23</sup> J. I. Packer designates it as 'fundamental to God' and refers to God's glory as his 'excellence and praiseworthiness set forth in display'.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Calvin 2003: 266 (on Heb. 11:3).

<sup>18</sup> Edwards 1998: 230–241.

<sup>19</sup> Huttar 1996: 287–288.

<sup>20</sup> Guthrie 1981: 90–94; cf. George 2007: 222.

<sup>21</sup> Elwell 1991: 41.

<sup>22</sup> R. Albert Mohler Jr, 'In the Beginning: The Glory of God from Eternity', sermon preached at Ligonier Ministries' 2003 National Conference. In this sermon Mohler suggests a tension between God's internal glory, which is unchanging, and its external manifestation, which varies.

<sup>23</sup> John Piper, 'To Him Be Glory Forevermore (Romans 16:25–27)', sermon delivered 17 December 2006.

<sup>24</sup> Packer 1988: 271–272. Packer refers to this as 'glory shown' and distinguishes it from his other category, 'glory given', which is 'honor and adoration expressed in response to this display'.

## The Glory of God and Paul

In his treatment of the theology of Jonathan Edwards, John Gerstner places God's glory at the end of the natural attributes of God and at the beginning of the moral attributes because, according to Gerstner, Edwards viewed the glory of God as belonging to both and as expressing infinite knowledge, holiness and happiness.<sup>25</sup> Gerstner explains:

In the sermon on Psalm 89:6 Edwards had the glory of God consisting in God's greatness (natural attribute) and goodness (moral attribute). *So glory is another word used for the sum total of all divine excellencies. It refers to the internal as well as manifestative glory. The latter amounts to a setting forth of the attributes in their reality and fullness.*<sup>26</sup>

These helpful definitions and descriptions reveal an inherent challenge related to speaking of God's glory. Biblical and systematic theologians struggle to answer the question 'Is God's glory an attribute, a summary attribute, his being or the outward expression of his being?'

Old Testament scholars tend to come at all this differently. Some, such as John Collins, underscore God's glory as his manifest presence.<sup>27</sup> Raymond Ortlund speaks similarly, but also ties glory to God's nature and beauty:

What is the glory of the Lord? His glory is the fiery radiance of his very nature. It is his blazing beauty . . . The glory of the Lord . . . is God himself becoming visible, God bringing his presence down to us, God displaying his beauty before us.<sup>28</sup>

Others, such as John Hartley, view God's glory as the manifestation of his essence, which is often linked to God's holiness.<sup>29</sup> Hartley follows

---

<sup>25</sup> Gerstner 1993: 2.33–34.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 2:34; emphasis added.

<sup>27</sup> Collins 1997.

<sup>28</sup> Ortlund 2005: 237.

<sup>29</sup> More work is needed on the relationship between God's holiness and his glory. Hartley (2003: 420–422) is helpful: 'Holiness, being the quintessential character of God, is the center of divine motivation. It affects everything God does. Moreover, the adjectives attached to holiness, such as majestic, glorious, and awesome, inform us that the essence of beauty is holiness . . . Holiness is powerfully manifested in God's revelations: God's commission of Moses at the burning bush (Ex 3:1–4:17), God's deliverance of Israel at the sea (Ex 15:2–18), the theophany at Sinai (Ex 19:1–24:18) and Moses's special vision of God (Ex 33:18–34:9) . . .

C. Vriezen here, who defines glory as 'the radiant power of [God's] Being, as it were the external manifestation of [God's] mysterious holiness'.<sup>30</sup>

We make progress if we perceive what lies behind both approaches. Despite the initial differences, there is a shared understanding of the glory of God as the extrinsic manifestation of the intrinsic. While some highlight God's presence,<sup>31</sup> others see the intrinsic glory as an attribute, or as some sort of summary of his attributes, or even more broadly as God's essence, or nature. Some sort of holistic or macro approach to understanding the intrinsic nature of God's glory becomes necessary, however, because Scripture plainly links the extrinsic display of God's glory to a variety of his attributes and works, as well as to terms that stress his very person and nature.

Further, it seems best to understand God's extrinsic glory as the communication of his intrinsic fullness and sufficiency. In Romans 11:36, for example, Paul concludes, 'From him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory for ever.' God's self-sufficiency and glory are intricately linked: God is the Creator ('from him'), sustainer ('through him') and goal ('to him') of all things. The self-sufficient and independent God creates out of fullness, guides out of fullness and receives back glory according to his communicated fullness.<sup>32</sup>

Before we proceed, we should pause and recognize that if God's intrinsic glory were not displayed extrinsically, we would be unable to know any of this. All we know about God's intrinsic glory is through God's self-revelation, particularly Scripture, which records and interprets the extrinsic display of God's intrinsic glory. Further, since the infinite God does not communicate himself exhaustively to finite creatures, the extrinsic display is less than the intrinsic. As awe-inspiring as the extrinsic glory is, it never fully expresses the fullness of God's intrinsic glory that

---

The holy God often manifested his presence as a glowing brightness comparable to a fire . . . This glory-holiness juxtaposition is very similar to that found in Isaiah 6:3 . . . [Exod. 40:34–35] is the denouement of the book of Exodus. The glory that had led Israel out of Egypt and had appeared on Mount Sinai now came and occupied the newly built tabernacle. The holy God had come to dwell among the covenant people. This powerful manifestation of God's glory communicated to the Israelites the power, dignity, and splendor of God's holiness.'

<sup>30</sup> Vriezen 1966: 150; cited in Hartley (2003: 422).

<sup>31</sup> In such discussions it is important to remember God's unity/simplicity. See Berkhof 1941: 62; Grudem 2020: 211–214.

<sup>32</sup> Frame 2002: 607; Edwards 1998: 150–161. We thank Steve Wellum for his ideas related to this point.

it communicates. That being so, even to begin to understand God's intrinsic glory we must examine his extrinsic displays.

Scripture connects the display of the glory of God to a variety of his attributes: holiness (Lev. 11:44; Isa. 6:1–8; Rev. 4 – 5; 21 – 22), uniqueness (Isa. 42:8), power (Exod. 13:21–22; 16:10–11; John 11:40; Rom. 6:4; 2 Thess. 1:8–9), beauty, majesty and goodness.<sup>33</sup> God's glory is also tied to his works: creation (Gen. 1 – 2; Ps. 19:1–6), salvation (Exod. 13:21–22; Eph. 1:3–14), providence (Exod. 16:10–12; 40:36–38), judgment (Num. 14:10–23; 16:41–45; Ezek. 39:21–29; Matt. 16:27–28; 2 Thess. 1:8–9) and victory (Exod. 16:7–12; Ps. 57:5–11; Isa. 2:10–21). Even more astounding is that Scripture links our triune God's glory with more holistic ideas that stress his very nature: God's presence (Exod. 33:13–18; 40:34; 1 Sam. 4:21–22; Ps. 84:11; 2 Thess. 1:8–10; Jude 24; Rev. 21 – 22),<sup>34</sup> name,<sup>35</sup> holiness (which many Old Testament scholars see as his essence; Lev. 11:44; Isa. 6:1–8; Rev. 4 – 5; 21 – 22), face, Spirit, fullness and honour (1 Tim. 1:17; cf. 2 Peter 1:17).

Since God's glory is the extrinsic display of so many attributes, of a panorama of God's works and of holistic terms related to God's very nature, it is clear that God's intrinsic glory must be viewed holistically. Put differently, if the display of God's power is a display of his glory, and if his presence is a central meaning of his glory, then glory must be something broad enough to cover such wide-ranging depictions.

This also makes sense of other biblical data, those that relate to the ultimate end of all things. The Bible repeatedly affirms that God's activities of creation, providence, salvation and judgment are all for his glory. Yet the Bible offers various attributes that will be set forth in display to be marvelled at, and displays of those attributes are not subsumed under a primary attribute but are depicted as ultimate. For example, in Exodus God acts so that others will recognize his utter uniqueness and power. In Romans God's saving action is to display his righteousness, justice, wrath,

---

<sup>33</sup> A. H. McNeile (1908: 215) defines glory as 'a spectacle of outward beauty as a visible sign of His moral perfection'.

<sup>34</sup> Newman (1997: 396) suggests that, along with wisdom, spirit, image, word, name and power, glory 'formed part of the semantic-filled words that could sign God's revealed presence'.

<sup>35</sup> See Waltke (2007: 474), who suggests that the glory and name theologies complement each other: 'The glory of God is unapproachable and dangerous, but the name of God is something with which his worshippers are permitted to become familiar. God's glory is preferred when the context is that of the dramatic, exceptional manifestations of God, but "name" is used in contexts where the kind of revelation of and the people's response is more intimate.' Waltke bases some of this on McConville 1979: 156–157; cf. Edwards 1998: 239; Piper 1991.

power and mercy and the riches of his glory (Rom. 3:21–26; 9:20–23). In Ephesians God acts for the ultimate display of at least three attributes: grace (1:6, 12, 14), kindness (2:4–10) and wisdom (3:10–11).

Such biblical data suggest that God's intrinsic glory is broader than a single attribute. It corresponds to his very being and sometimes functions as a sort of summation of his attributes. Edwards is again helpful:

The thing signified by that name, the glory of God, when spoken of as the supreme and ultimate end of all God's works, is the emanation and true external expression of God's internal glory and fullness; . . . or, in other words, God's internal glory, in a true and just exhibition, or external existence of it.<sup>36</sup>

We turn now to see how various truths related to God's intrinsic and extrinsic glory emerge. Each pair initially appears to be in tension but actually coheres.

## God's glory appears in biblical tensions

The fundamental distinction between God's intrinsic and extrinsic glory manifests itself in various biblical expressions. Surprisingly, Scripture presents these expressions in tension:

- God's glory is transcendent and immanent
- God's glory is full and received
- God's glory is unique and shared

## God's glory is transcendent and immanent

Since God's glory is both intrinsic and extrinsic, it makes sense that it would also be both transcendent and immanent, which we consider in reverse order. God has chosen to display his glory among his people in various ways, and many of the more familiar ones are immanent. Such an instance is the familiar encounter of Moses with God and the glory cloud on Mount Sinai, in which it is said, 'The glory of the LORD dwelt on Mount Sinai' (Exod. 24:16; cf. Deut. 5:22–27). Such an immanent view of God's glory is found also in narratives concerning the ark of the covenant:

---

<sup>36</sup> Edwards 1998: 243.

## The Glory of God and Paul

There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone that Moses put there at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the people of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt. And when the priests came out of the Holy Place, a cloud filled the house of the LORD, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.

Then Solomon said, ‘The LORD has said that he would dwell in thick darkness. I have indeed built you an exalted house, a place for you to dwell in for ever.’

(1 Kgs 8:9–13; cf. 2 Chr. 5:13 – 6:2)

God’s glory is said to fill the temple and the earth, as Psalm 19 and Isaiah 6 attest. This immanence is seen most clearly in the incarnation of Jesus, as the eternal Son of God dwells among us and displays his unique glory (John 1:1–18).

However, all these passages assume that God’s glory is intrinsically transcendent. Paul House’s comments on Exodus show how God graciously displays his transcendent glory immanently:

At last Yahweh’s intention to dwell among the nations is fulfilled. Moses erects the edifice as he has been commanded (40:1–33). The result is stunning. God’s ‘glory,’ literally ‘God’s heaviness,’ fills the tabernacle (40:34). Such is the heaviness of God’s presence that not even Moses can enter (40:35). This glory eventually subsides, but not totally, since God does remain in the people’s midst. Evidence of this ongoing presence leads Israel to break camp and travel when necessary (40:36–38). Thus, Yahweh not only dwells with the people; Yahweh also keeps the promise to go with Israel and eventually give them the promised land (cf. 33:14; 34:1–14).<sup>37</sup>

That God’s glory is immanent and transcendent is also evident in the temple narratives of 1 Kings. We saw that 1 Kings 8:11 discloses this immanence here: ‘[T]he glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.’ And Solomon’s prayer of dedication of the temple, recorded in 1 Kings 8, acknowledges the transcendence of God’s glory: ‘[W]ill God indeed dwell

---

<sup>37</sup> House 1998: 125.



## A panorama of God's glory

on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!' (v. 27).

Isaiah 6 also makes this clear. Geoffrey Grogan explains:

The language of fullness . . . occurs three times in these verses (6:1, 3, 4), twice in application to the temple and once to the whole earth. So this passage, insisting as it does on the awesome transcendence of the sovereign God, also emphatically teaches his immanence. His transcendence is not remoteness or aloofness but is known through his presence in his created world and temple.<sup>38</sup>

Psalms frequently express God's glory as transcendent. It is 'above the heavens'. For example, Psalm 8:1 declares:

O LORD, our Lord,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!  
You have set your glory above the heavens.

Willem VanGemeren lauds how God's transcendent glory is also immanent:

The Redeemer-King of Israel is the creator! His name (Yahweh) is glorious over all the earth, by virtue of his creative activities (cf. Gen 1:1–31). What is marvelous is the Great King's revelation of his glory in, and thereby his self-involvement with, his creation. He, the glorious One, has endowed the earth with glory! . . . The 'majesty' of Yahweh's name radiates from his work on earth and heaven . . . All creation reveals the power and glory of God's name.<sup>39</sup>

Psalm 113:4 also resounds with exalted language to stress the transcendent glory of God:

The LORD is high above all nations,  
and his glory above the heavens!  
(Cf. 57:5, 11)

---

<sup>38</sup> Grogan 1986: 55–56.

<sup>39</sup> VanGemeren 1991: 110.

This idea of God's glory as above the heavens underlines his transcendence and gives a rhetorical effect, making the reality of his immanence even more striking.<sup>40</sup>

Observing the transcendent and immanent nature of God's glory, Walther Eichrodt concluded:

The sense that Yahweh's majesty was exalted far above all created things . . . asserted itself. This came about in various ways; either by stressing the absolute transcendence of the *kabod*, so that mortal man had always to be kept apart from it, or by reducing it to a spatially and temporarily limited medium of Yahweh's self-manifestation, a means by which the transcendent God made his personal presence visible to his own.<sup>41</sup>

## God's glory is full and received

Another expression of God's intrinsic and extrinsic glory is the dual reality of the fullness of his glory and his genuine reception of glory. To be sure, God is self-sufficient, independent, lacks nothing and does not need our faith, worship or ascription of honour (Isa. 42 – 66; Acts 17:16–34). Yet the God who is all-glorious displays his glory, his people respond by glorifying him and in turn God receives glory.

God's reception of glory does not imply that he does not already have intrinsic glory in all its fullness, as John Owen forcefully reminds us:

All things that are, make no addition to God, no change in his state. His blessedness, happiness, self-satisfaction, as well as all other his infinite perfections, were absolutely the same before the creation of anything, whilst there was nothing but himself, as they are since he has made all things: for the blessedness of God consists in the ineffable mutual in-being of the three holy persons in the same nature, with the immanent reciprocal actings of the Father and the Son in the eternal love and complacency of the Spirit.<sup>42</sup>

God creates and acts out of his fullness *and* is pleased to manifest his glory to his creatures. Completely sufficient, God is pleased to receive

---

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 714.

<sup>41</sup> Eichrodt 1967: 31.

<sup>42</sup> Owen 1684: 160.

## A panorama of God's glory

glory from them, but not in the sense that they add something to him. Rather, they acknowledge, enjoy, love and delight in God and his glory.<sup>43</sup> As the Westminster Shorter Catechism states, 'Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever.' We extol God, reflect God and find ourselves satisfied in him by having the manifestation of his fullness communicated to us and by our appropriate response of dependent faith and awe-inspired worship.<sup>44</sup> In this way our faith acknowledges our insufficiency and depends on his sufficiency. This glorifies God as we recognize our creaturely dependence and his infinite independence. Similarly, our worship is triggered by our awareness of his infinite worthiness. All this glorifies him as it manifests his fullness, self-sufficiency and glory as the beginning, middle and end of this process (cf. Rom. 11:33–36).

That God's glory is both full and received is articulated marvellously in Revelation 4:8–11:

[T]he four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all round and within, and day and night they never cease to say,

'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,  
who was and is and is to come!'

And whenever the living creatures give glory and honour and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives for ever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

'Worthy are you, our Lord and God,  
to receive glory and honour and power,  
for you created all things,  
and by your will they existed and were created.'

In the form of a prayer, Owen also portrays our appropriate response to these truths:

---

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Ps. 29:1–3; Isa. 41:16; 42:1; 43:21; 46:13; Matt. 5:16; John 15:8; Rom. 15:6–9; 1 Cor. 6:20; 10:31.

<sup>44</sup> See Edwards 1998: 154–168.

Blessed Jesus! We can add nothing to you, nothing to your glory; but it is a joy of heart to us that you are what you are, that you are so gloriously exalted at the right hand of God; and we do long more fully and clearly to behold that glory, according to your prayer and promise.<sup>45</sup>

## God's glory is unique and shared

Another expression of God's intrinsic and extrinsic glory is that his glory is both unique and shared. God alone is intrinsically glorious. He is uniquely and incomparably glorious. As Richard Gaffin points out, glory is pre-eminently a divine quality; ultimately only God has glory.<sup>46</sup> And according to Isaiah 42:8, God jealously guards his glory:

I am the LORD; that is my name;  
my glory I give to no other,  
nor my praise to carved idols.

In the intrinsic sense, God's glory is unique. No one and nothing else is glorious. All idols are unworthy of comparison.

But, amazingly, the glorious God extrinsically manifests his glory and communicates his fullness. In so doing he remains ontologically unique and distinct from his creatures<sup>47</sup> and graciously shares his glory and makes glorious many things.

For example, the Bible makes it clear that humans are created in God's image with glory, honour and dominion. Psalm 8:4–8 is instructive. Though humans are minute in comparison to God or the heavens, he remembers and has special concern for them. Indeed, God has even 'crowned' humans 'with glory and honour' (8:5), which connotes kingship (cf. 29:1; 104:1).<sup>48</sup>

Further, God shares his glory with Israel (cf. Rom. 9:4). In the same section of Isaiah appear statements such as 'My glory I will not give to another' (42:8; 48:11) and those that refer to God's calling and putting his

---

<sup>45</sup> Owen 1684: 128.

<sup>46</sup> Gaffin 2000: 508; 2010.

<sup>47</sup> Horton (2008: 62): 'Even those rendered one in Christ by the gospel become brothers and sisters, not a fusion of persons.'

<sup>48</sup> VanGemeren 1991: 112–114. Heb. 2:7–8 (quoting Ps. 8) ascribes 'glory/honour' and dominion to Adam and Eve before the fall. V. 8 says these were lost; v. 9 says Christ, the second Adam, recovered them; v. 10 speaks of Christ's people being led to glory as a result.

## A panorama of God's glory

name on Israel (43:1–6; 44:1–5), glorying in Israel (46:13) and, yes, even making Israel glorious. 'My glory I will not give to another' refers in context to God's unique glory and his warnings to Israel that he allows no idols and brooks no rivals (cf. 48:11–12). Nevertheless, Isaiah declares to the people of God that the Lord 'has glorified you' (55:5). Even more, Isaiah 60 shows that God's glory will rise upon them (60:1) and will be seen on them (v. 2) and that other nations will see their radiance and glory, for God has made them beautiful (vv. 3–9; 62:2). God says to his people, 'I will make you majestic for ever, / a joy from age to age' (60:15), and in turn God himself will be glorified (v. 21).

This hope of the glorious God's not only manifesting his glory to the people of Israel but also sharing it with them is echoed in Simeon's blessing of Jesus:

Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace,  
according to your word;  
for my eyes have seen your salvation  
that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,  
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,  
and for glory to your people Israel.  
(Luke 2:29–32)

This idea of the uniquely glorious God's sharing his glory with his people would appear bizarre, except for the fact that it is such a prominent theme. The breadth of the New Testament teaching on this is astounding.

In his high priestly prayer Jesus reveals, 'The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one as we are one' (John 17:22). Peter refers to himself as a partaker in the glory that will be revealed (1 Peter 5:1) and encourages suffering believers that 'the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen and establish you' (v. 10).

But it is the apostle Paul who most develops this idea that we share in God's glory. Because of our union with Christ, we, in some sense and to the extent it could be true of creatures, participate and share in his glory.<sup>49</sup> As Michael Horton ably puts it, 'What happens for us is the basis for what

---

<sup>49</sup> See Ferguson 1996: 91–189; cf. Horton 2008: 27: 'Only the Spirit can keep us aware simultaneously of the otherness of Jesus and our communion with and in him.' Cf. Horton's helpful critique of Eastern Christendom's approach to deification (2007: 267–307).

happens to us and in us.<sup>50</sup> Paul instructs the Thessalonian believers that God calls us into his own kingdom and glory (1 Thess. 2:12). He also prays for their faith, ‘so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him’ (2 Thess. 1:12). Paul encourages the Thessalonians to gratitude because God called them so that they ‘may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ’ (2 Thess. 2:14; cf. Col. 1:27; 3:4).

To the Corinthians Paul also highlights the shared nature of this glory in conjunction with Jesus’ identity as the new Adam and his saving work, particularly in the cross and resurrection: ‘[W]e impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory’ (1 Cor. 2:7–8). Because of our union with Christ and his resurrection, our bodies too will be raised in glory (15:42–58). Later, in one of the most penetrating Christological and soteriological statements in all of Scripture, Paul explains, ‘[W]e all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another’ (2 Cor. 3:18).<sup>51</sup> He develops this more in chapter 4, where he culminates his argument by stating that ‘this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison’ (4:17). Related truths about sharing in glory appear throughout Paul’s writings, especially in Romans and Ephesians, which we will examine in more detail later.

## God’s glory appears in redemptive history

Thus far we have studied God’s intrinsic and extrinsic glory and their multiple expressions, including his glory as transcendent and immanent, full and received and unique and shared. We still must survey some other important expressions of God’s extrinsic glory. These redemptive-historical expressions of God’s extrinsic glory are helpfully viewed from the following vantage points:

- Particularity and universality
- Already and not yet

---

<sup>50</sup> Horton 2007: 307.

<sup>51</sup> See Gaffin 2010.

## A panorama of God's glory

- Divine sovereignty and human responsibility
- God's ultimate end and other ends

### Particularity and universality

God has extrinsically displayed his glory both particularly and universally. Exodus portrays the particularity of God's glory:

- Pillar of cloud and fire (Exod. 14 – 15)
- God's glory displayed in judgment of Israel (16:7–10)
- Glory in cloud (19:9)
- Cloud, thunder, lightning, mountain, trumpet blast, smoke and fire (19:16–17; 20:18–19)
- Sinai, cloud, mountain, fire, and so on (24:15–17)
- Ark of the covenant, court of tabernacle, presence, power and covenant (Exod. 24 – 27; 29:43–46)
- Moses' encounter with God (Exod. 33 – 34)
- God withdraws his presence in the wilderness due to sin (33:3–5)
- Glory filled the tabernacle, cloud covered tent of meeting (40:34)

The particularity of the revelation of God's glory is also found throughout Scripture, as God manifests himself particularly in the temple (1 Kgs 8:11), Israel, the church, heaven, and so forth. We recognize these covenantal and particular expressions and are inclined to focus on them – and rightly so.

We should not fail, however, to notice that God's glory is also universal. Interestingly, the familiar story of Isaiah's encounter with God in Isaiah 6 reveals that God's glory is both particular and universal. It is particular in that the vision is of God's glory filling the temple, with all the accompanying shakes, sounds and smoke. Yet God's glory is also depicted as universal: '[T]he whole earth is full of his glory!' (Isa. 6:3). 'YHWH's abundant glory presses . . . beyond the sphere of the heavenly-earthly temple and the royal palace into the world.'<sup>52</sup> Particularity and universality are frequent in Isaiah, especially in chapters 40–66. For instance, Isaiah 66:18 states, 'I know their works and their thoughts, and the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and see my glory.'

---

<sup>52</sup> Preuss 1995: 167.

## The Glory of God and Paul

The Psalms also convey God's glory as both particular and universal. Psalm 26:8 stresses particularity:

O LORD, I love the habitation of your house,  
and the place where your glory dwells.  
(Cf. Exod. 40:34–35; 1 Kgs 8:11)

And Psalm 19 emphasizes universality: the glory of God is communicated to all people at all times in all places through the witness of creation (cf. Pss 8; 72:19). Indeed, creation witnesses universally to God's glory.

### Already and not yet

Another redemptive-historical expression of God's extrinsic glory can be viewed from the vantage point of the already-and-not-yet tension.

God is glorious. His glory has been and is presently being displayed. That is clear from many of the texts and topics already referenced:

- Creation (Ps. 19:1–6)
- Humans being created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26–28; Ps. 8; Jas 3:9–12)
- Particular manifestations (Isa. 6:3)
- Christ (John 1:14–18)
- Salvation (Eph. 1 – 2)

However, history still awaits God's ultimate display of himself.<sup>53</sup> Commenting on Isaiah, Ortlund puts it passionately: 'His glory will be admired and delighted in and trembled at everywhere.'<sup>54</sup> Later he adds, 'God is moving toward the new heavens and the new earth. He has promised the full display of his glory.'<sup>55</sup>

At the consummation, Jesus' return will be glorious (Matt. 16:27–28; 24:30; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27; 2 Thess. 1:6–11; Titus 2:13). Further, his victory will be glorious, his judgment will be glorious and his punishment of the wicked in hell will be glorious (Rom. 9:20–23; Rev. 20:11–15). Most

---

<sup>53</sup> See Isa. 4:2–6; 40:5; 48:5; 55:5; 59:19; 60:1, 19; 62; 66:12, 18–20, 21–24; Hab. 2:14; Luke 2:25–32; Rom. 5:2; 2 Cor. 4:17; Phil. 2:10–11; 1 Peter 4:13; Rev. 4 – 5; 21 – 22; Edwards 1998: 155; Beale 2004.

<sup>54</sup> Ortlund 2005: 236.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. 385.



of all, Jesus' revelation of himself in the new creation will be glorious (Rev. 21 – 22). And, as previously noted, through his saving work and our union with him the church will be presented as glorious (Eph. 5:27; cf. Rom. 8:18–30; 2 Cor. 4:17–18).

Since the glory of God is extrinsic, it is closely related to the biblical story and thus tied to the already-and-not-yet tension. As such, the glory of God is now being displayed, but its ultimate display is still future (1 John 3:2).

## **Divine sovereignty and human responsibility**

Another vantage point from which to examine the redemptive-historical expressions of God's extrinsic glory is that of the truths of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. God is glorious, manifests his infinite glory and will receive the glory he is due. As we have seen, the not yet is coming. Nothing can thwart it. It is the goal of God's cosmic redemptive history, and God will sovereignly bring it to pass (Rom. 8:18–30; 9:20–23; 11:33–36; Eph. 1:3–14, esp. v. 11; Phil. 2:5–11).

But it is also clear that humans are responsible to glorify God as God and worship him.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, Isaiah chastises the people of Judah for their defiance of God's glory (Isa. 3:8). Israel was often encouraged to obedience for the sake of God's name (Isa. 52:3–6; Rom. 2:24). The people also prayed to that end (Pss 57:5, 11; 108:5).

Jesus similarly urges his followers, '[L]et your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven' (Matt. 5:16). He later reminds them, 'By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples' (John 15:8).

In Romans Paul stresses that our refusal to glorify God as God and our subsequent foolish exchange of his glory for that of the creature is the basis of our guilt (1:18–32; cf. 5:12–21; Eph. 2:1–3). Paul later underlines human responsibility as he urges the church to be united for the glory of God:

that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given

---

<sup>56</sup> See Edwards 1998: 155–156.

## The Glory of God and Paul

to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,

‘Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles,  
and sing to your name.’

(Rom. 15:6–9, citing Ps. 18:49)

Paul also reminds the Corinthians of their responsibility to glorify God in all their actions: ‘[Y]ou were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body’ (1 Cor. 6:20); ‘[D]o all to the glory of God’ (10:31). Our responsibility to glorify God is profound, as it shapes every aspect of our lives. Paul likewise prays that the Philippians would ‘approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God’ (Phil. 1:10–11).

The apostle Peter also stresses our responsibility to glorify God, linking it to the nature and mission of the church:

you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honourable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

(1 Peter 2:9–12)

Peter later instructs:

whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies – in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion for ever and ever.

(1 Peter 4:11)

Thus God is already intrinsically glorious, and will sovereignly bring about the consummation and receive ultimate glory. At the same time, we are responsible to glorify him.

## God's ultimate end and other ends

A fourth helpful way of viewing the redemptive-historical expressions of God's extrinsic glory is that of his ultimate and multiple ends. That God's ultimate purpose is his glory is clear enough in Scripture and standard in Reformed theology.<sup>57</sup> It is the goal of creation; the exodus; Israel; Jesus' ministry, life, death, resurrection and reign; our salvation; the church; the consummation and all of salvation history. Paul often highlights this cosmic goal: '[T]hose whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers' (Rom. 8:29); '[A]ll things were created through him and for him' (Col. 1:16; cf. Rom. 11:33–36; Heb. 2:10).<sup>58</sup>

While the Bible teaches that God's glory is his ultimate end, it also shows that God often acts with multiple ends in mind. Regarding the exodus, for instance, why did God redeem his people from slavery in Egypt? One might quickly reply, 'For his glory.' Certainly, God redeems his people from slavery to glorify himself. But many other goals also play a part in this. The book of Exodus presents God's reasons for deliverance as multifaceted:

- His concern for his oppressed people (Exod. 3 – 4)
- His faithfulness to the covenant promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (3:15; 4:5; 6:8; 32:13; 34:6; cf. Deut. 7:6–10)
- That Israel would serve the LORD (Exod. 4:23; 6:5; etc.)
- That Israel would know that he is the LORD (6:7; 10:2)
- To give Israel the Promised Land (6:8)
- That the Egyptians would know that he is the LORD<sup>59</sup> (7:5; 14:3–4, 15–18)
- That Pharaoh would know the LORD is incomparable (7:17; 8:10–18)

---

<sup>57</sup> See Berkhof 1941: 136; Edwards 1998: 125–136; Hodge 2003: 1.535–536, 566–567; Shedd 2003: 344, 364.

<sup>58</sup> See Edwards 1998: 210–220; Piper: 2003a: 250–266, 306.

<sup>59</sup> Pharaoh arrogantly questions God in Exod. 5:2, 'Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go?' Hamilton (2006a: 72) observes that 'the narrative recounts Yahweh's campaign to remedy Pharaoh's ignorance'; cf. House 1998: 87–125.

## The Glory of God and Paul

- To display his power (9:16)
- That his name might be proclaimed in all the earth (9:16)
- To pass down a heritage to the children (10:1–2)
- That his wonders might be multiplied (11:9)
- To get glory over Pharaoh and his army (14:3–18)
- For Israel's sake (18:8)

God delivered his people for a variety of reasons, not merely one. The incomparable God acts out of love, covenant faithfulness and jealousy (notice the emphasis on uniqueness). He does so for his glory, for Israel's good, for judgment on Egypt and for the continuance of his covenant people. Recognizing these multiple ends does not detract from an emphasis on God's glory but underscores it. Indeed, in the exodus God displays his love, covenant faithfulness, jealousy, providence and power through his wonders, salvation and judgment, in which he manifests himself and thus glorifies himself.

Or we can consider the doctrine of salvation and ask why God saves us. One might hastily retort, 'For his glory.' Again, that is a correct answer. But the Bible provides a wide range of reasons. That God's motive in saving us is his love is set forth powerfully and regularly: John 3:16 states, 'For God so loved the world, that he gave' (cf. 1 John 4:9–10). Ephesians 1:4–5 extols that 'in love' God predestined us (cf. Deut. 7:6–8), and Ephesians 2:4 ties our salvation to God's love, mercy and grace (cf. Titus 3:4–5). John 17 records Jesus' high priestly prayer, interweaving God's glory and the good of his people, praying and acting in part 'for their sake' (17:19). Romans 8:28 also makes it clear that redemptive history is, in large part, for the good of God's people. So why does God save? For many reasons, as noted above, but in and through all of them God displays who he is and thus glorifies himself. God manifests his glory because in saving us he displays his wisdom (Rom. 11:33–36; 1 Cor. 1:18–31; Eph. 3:10–11), righteousness, justice (Rom. 3:25–26), love, mercy, kindness (Rom. 9:20–23; Eph. 2:4–7), freedom, wrath and power (Rom. 9:20–23). Texts such as Ephesians 2:4–10 set this forth with clarity and force:

God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved – and raised us

up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Understanding this is significant, as it helps us address a common question concerning God's glory: If God seeks his own glory above all things, does this mean he is selfish? After all, if we seek our own glory, we are deemed selfish. The standard answer to that line of enquiry is that God is the ultimate being and the highest end, and we are not. Good behaviour seeks the highest end, so God's making himself his own ultimate end is appropriate. If we make ourselves the highest end, however, we are acting inappropriately because we treat ourselves as the highest end when we are not. Such argumentation is correct and beneficial but fails to do justice to much of the biblical emphasis concerning God's goodness and love. The argument understates God's genuine desire for the good of his creatures, and fails to show how God's love and glory are united. Passages such as the ones just quoted emphasize how God saves us out of love, displays his kindness toward us for all eternity and is glorified through the entire display. In this way God is self-giving and self-exalting, saving us for our good and his glory. He gives himself to us, which simultaneously meets our needs and demonstrates his sufficiency. Thus his love and glory cohere.<sup>60</sup>

That God is simultaneously self-giving and self-exalting is displayed also in the mutual glorification of the persons of the Trinity. The glorious Father sends the glorious Son, who voluntarily humbles himself and glorifies the Father through his incarnation, obedient life and substitutionary death (Phil. 2:5–11; cf. John 1:18; 7:18; 10:1–30; 14:13; 17). In response the Father glorifies the Son, resurrecting him from the dead and exalting him to the highest place (Acts 3:13–15; Rom. 6:4; Phil. 2:9–11). The Father sends the glorious Spirit, who glorifies the Son (John 16:14). And this all takes place to the glory of the Father (Phil. 2:11).

---

<sup>60</sup> Edwards 1998: 248–249.

## The Glory of God and Paul

Each member of the Trinity gives to the others as a display of love and as a way of accomplishing cosmic redemption. The Son says to the Father, ‘I love you and the people you have given me, so I will undergo humiliation and suffering for you and them.’ And then the Father responds to the Son, ‘I love you and these people, so for your sake and theirs I desire to raise and exalt you to the highest place and reputation.’ Amazingly, through serving the Father, the Son is glorified, and, through blessing the Son, the Father is glorified (John 17:1–5; Phil. 2:5–11). Further, the Father blesses the Son with people to save, depicted as love gifts from the Father. The Son, in turn, saves and keeps all of these love gifts, giving them back to the Father (John 6; 10; 17). The Father blesses the Son with gifts (us!), and the Son blesses the Father by giving gifts in return. In addition, the Spirit communicates the gifts, disclosing to believers what belongs to the Father and the Son (John 16:14–15).

Jesus’ high priestly prayer also reveals that the self-giving and self-exalting triune God draws his redeemed people into the circle of fellowship, mutual blessing and shared glory. Jesus begins his prayer, ‘Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you’ (John 17:1). Jesus longs to be glorified not for his own benefit but for the glory of the Father and of his people (17:20–24). Owen underscores this:

It is evident that in this prayer the Lord Christ has respect to his own glory and the manifestation of it, which he had in the entrance asked of the Father (John 17:4–5). But in this place he has not so much respect to it as his own, as to the advantage, benefit, satisfaction, and blessedness of his disciples in the beholding of it.<sup>61</sup>

Such is the peculiar nature of Christ: he is the loving Lord who gives and serves (Matt. 20:26–28; John 13:1–17; Phil. 2:5–11). From John 17 we also learn that the Father grants glory to the Son because of his eternal love for the Son (17:24). Does any of this sound selfish? Not at all! The Father is determined to bless the Son, and the Son is determined to bless the Father! The mutuality and reciprocating love of God displayed within the Trinity flows outward even to bless us. By union with Christ we are recipients of God’s love and its corresponding blessings, including forgiveness of

---

<sup>61</sup> Owen 1684: 42.

## A panorama of God's glory

our sins, adoption into his family and final glorification (17:22). And because it is God who accomplishes all of this, it is for our good *and* his glory!

The panorama of the glory of God is greater than words can express. The same is true for the biblical narrative of God's glory, to which we now turn. The words of Herman Bavinck, late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Dutch Reformed theologian, form a nice bridge between this chapter and the next:

The 'glory of the Lord' is the splendor and brilliance that is inseparably associated with all of God's attributes and his self-revelation in nature and grace, the glorious form in which he everywhere appears to his creatures. This glory and majesty . . . appeared to Israel . . . It filled the tabernacle and temple . . . This glory is above all manifested in Christ, the only-begotten Son (John 1:14) and through him in the church (Rom. 15:7; 2 Cor. 3:18), which is looking for 'the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ' (Titus 2:13).<sup>62</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup> Bavinck 2003–8: 2.252.

**BUY THE BOOK!**

[ivpress.com/the-glory-of-god-and-paul](http://ivpress.com/the-glory-of-god-and-paul)