

# THE GLORY OF GOD IN ST JOHN'S GOSPEL

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IN THE COURSE OF MY LAST ANNUAL RETREAT my director proposed various passages of scripture as matter for my prayer, and on one occasion she suggested chapter 15 of St John's Gospel, about Jesus as the vine and his disciples as his branches. I became intrigued by John 15:8, where Jesus observes of his Father, the vine-dresser (John 15:1), 'It is to the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit and then you will be my disciples', as the Jerusalem Version puts it. Looking more closely at the Greek text (*en touto edoxasthe ho pater mou, hina karpon polun pherete kai genesthe emoi mathetai*, ἐν τούτῳ ἔδοξάσθη ὁ πατήρ μου, ἵνα καρπὸν πολὺν φέρητε καὶ γένησθε ἐμοὶ μαθηταί), I felt that the verse could be better translated as, 'In this is my Father glorified, that you produce much fruit in becoming my disciples'. One thing that especially struck me about this verse was that mostly, where Jesus is talking about glory in John's closing discourse, the emphasis is on the glory that the Father is giving to Jesus or on the glory that Jesus is giving to the Father. Here, unusually and by contrast, the reference is to how others appear to be giving glory to the Father. I decided to pursue this idea of how the biblical idea of the glory of God figures in the Fourth Gospel, beginning with the wider context of God's glory in the Bible as a whole.

The great modern exponent of God's glory, of course, was Hans Urs von Balthasar, in his seven-volume treatment: *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*. The German original work (1961–69) was entitled *Herrlichkeit*; the German word *herrlich* literally means 'lordly' and has come to express the idea of brilliant, splendid, sublime or glorious. For von Balthasar, religion and theology spring from human wonder at the glory and beauty of God manifested throughout

created reality.<sup>1</sup> Karl Barth likewise has much to say about God's glory, notably in his demanding reflections on 'the Eternity and Glory of God' as perfections of the Divine Freedom.<sup>2</sup> For him, 'God's glory is ... the fullness, the totality, the sufficiency, the sum of the perfection of God in the irresistibility of its declaration and manifestation'.<sup>3</sup> He expands this elsewhere to explain that,

God's glory is the indwelling joy of His divine being which as such shines out from Him, which overflows in its richness, which in its superabundance is not satisfied with itself but communicates itself. All God's works ... take part in the movement of God's self-glorification and the communication of His joy. They are the coming into being of light outside Him on the basis of the light inside Him, which is Himself. They are expressions of the infinite exultation in the depth of His divine being.<sup>4</sup>

This is later summed up by defining the glory of God as 'the superabundance, the overflowing of the perfection of the divine being';<sup>5</sup> referring to the incarnation Barth observes that 'God's divinity overflows in its glory in the fact that the true God became true man in Jesus Christ'.<sup>6</sup>

Equally magisterial on this subject is the Anchor Bible commentary on St John's Gospel by Raymond E. Brown, who shows the central significance of 'glory' in John by identifying the second part of the Gospel, from chapters 13 to 21, as the 'Book of Glory'.<sup>7</sup> What emerges from all these treatments of 'glory', and from all the contexts where the term occurs in the Bible, is that the idea is so diversified there and leads off in so many different directions that its core can elude our grasp. This makes the remark of Sachs attractive, especially his reference to 'the "godliness of God" as it has appeared', in commenting about the term 'glory' that 'it is probably best to treat the word as

<sup>1</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982–1991). See especially volume 6 (1991), 31–37.

<sup>2</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, volume 2/1 (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1957) chapter 6, § 31.3, especially 640–677.

<sup>3</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, volume 2/1, 645, emphasis added.

<sup>4</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, volume 2/1, 647–648.

<sup>5</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, volume 2/1, 671.

<sup>6</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, volume 2/1, 662.

<sup>7</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1975), volume 2, 541–542.

something of a cipher, a heuristic term used to point to the “godliness of God” as it has appeared rather than as a notion with a meaning already defined which is then applied to God’.<sup>8</sup>

### **God's Glory in the Hebrew Bible**

Within the Hebrew Bible the Psalms, in particular, refer frequently to the glory of God, typically Psalm 72:19: ‘Blessed be his glorious name for ever; may his glory fill the whole earth’. The main Hebrew word which came to be translated as ‘glory’ in English was *kabod*, which initially meant heaviness or weight, intimating something of considerable substance or significance. One development of the term as it was applied to God in the Hebrew Bible expressed what Moloney in the *New Jerome Biblical Commentary* identifies as ‘the felt presence of a loving, saving and guiding God’:<sup>9</sup> the awareness of God’s inherent grandeur, or of the striking scale of God’s manifestations—as when Psalm 19:1 affirms that ‘the heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork’.

If the works of God in creation, in nature and in the elements as we witness them around us are so grand and so manifestly striking (see Psalm 29), how much more ‘glorious’ and majestic must God be in Godself. As Psalm 108:5 exclaimed, perhaps comparing God to the sun and its worldwide radiance, ‘Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, and let your glory be over all the earth’. Glory here takes on the meaning of the divine power making itself manifest. This is the creational exaltation expressed in the popular gospel hymn, ‘How great Thou art’:

O Lord my God! When I in awesome wonder  
Consider all the works Thy hands have made.  
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,  
Thy power throughout the universe displayed.  
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee;  
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!

The other main use of ‘glory’ in a divine setting refers to the praise and recognition given to God by God’s creatures. ‘My mouth is filled

<sup>8</sup> John R. Sachs, ‘Glory’, in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Joseph A. Komonchak (Wilmington: Glazier, 1989), 418.

<sup>9</sup> Francis J. Moloney, ‘Johannine Theology’, in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, edited by Raymond E. Brown and others (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1989), 83:26.

with your praise, and with your glory all day long.’ (Psalm 71:8) Brown explains the connection between the two meanings of glory—on the one hand the inherent divine magnificence in operation, and on the other the praise that it evokes—by observing that the praise given to God by others is a recognition of the glory that God possesses in Godself.<sup>10</sup>

Allied to this awareness of God’s majestic presence pervading the entire creation, the idea of ‘glory’ in the Old Testament also points to a more intimate, religious, relationship between God and God’s human creatures. After Moses had led the Israelites out of Egypt into the desert to become the Lord’s chosen people, he brought them into the divine presence at Mount Sinai, where God intended to enter into a covenant with them. Literary convention uses the word ‘LORD’ in many English translations as a circumlocution for the Hebrew YAHWEH, following the Jewish respectful care to avoid every use of the name of Israel’s God—and not just its improper use, as the commandment enjoined (Exodus 20:7). However, using the general term ‘LORD’ obscures the immediacy of God’s self-revelation to the chosen people, and in the following quotations I have substituted the proper name to convey the intimacy of God’s relation with Israel. As Israel approached God,

... the glory of Yahweh settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it ... and the appearance of the glory of Yahweh was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel (Exodus 24:16–17).

Following Yahweh’s instructions, the people would now build a tabernacle, an elaborate ‘tent of meeting’ where God could ‘dwell among them’ (Exodus 25:8), which would contain the wooden ark that held the tablets of the covenant (Exodus 25:10–16) and the angel-decorated mercy seat (Exodus 25:17–22). As Exodus informs us, ‘Everyone who sought Yahweh would go out to the tent of meeting which was outside the camp’ (Exodus 33:7) for, once the people had built the tabernacle as ordered by God, ‘the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of Yahweh filled the tabernacle’ (Exodus 40:34). Later in its history, once Israel had become established as a successful nation, King Solomon complied with the instruction of his father, David, in

<sup>10</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, volume 1, 503.

deciding to build on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 3:1) a splendid permanent Temple as a home for Yahweh. Here, as at Sinai, God promised to dwell with the chosen people (1 Kings 6:13). At its consecration the whole people assembled as the ark and the tablets of the covenant and the tent of meeting were ceremonially installed in the inner sanctum of the Temple, which was decorated with depictions of attendant angels. Then, in glory, Yahweh took possession of the Temple:

When the priests came out of the holy place, a cloud filled the house of Yahweh, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of Yahweh filled the house of Yahweh (1 Kings 8:10–11).

It was this glory-filled temple of Solomon which later provided the setting for the awesome vision of Isaiah, in which he saw Yahweh enthroned and ministered to by angels as the cherubim sang together the praise that was later taken up by the Christian liturgy to begin its Eucharistic prayer: 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory' (Isaiah 6:3; and see John 12:41).

The presence of God among God's people was also referred to in Jewish literature outside the Bible as the *shekinah*, the dwelling place of God's glory or the presence of God in glory—a term coined by rabbis from *shakan* (to reside). It is intriguing to note that in St John's Gospel the prologue describes the incarnation of the Word of



Isaiah 6:1–3, from *Figures de la Bible* (1728)

God as not just his prosaically ‘coming to live among us’ (John 1:14), as some versions put it, but literally as ‘pitching his tent among us’ (ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν). This appears a clear Johannine reference back to the *shekinah*, the Israelite tent of meeting (whose syllables, s, k and n, are also clearly echoed in the Greek *eskenosen*). It intimates that the incarnation, God’s becoming flesh, was the ultimate theophany: the defining presence of God in God’s glory, as earlier anticipated by the Israelite tent of meeting. Not surprisingly, the verse in John pursues the parallel between the incarnation and the *shekinah* by adding ‘and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth’. On this Brown comments that ‘we are being told that the flesh of Jesus Christ is the new localization of God’s presence on earth, and that Jesus is the replacement of the ancient Tabernacle.’<sup>11</sup> Moloney explains John’s ‘we have seen his glory’ by observing that ‘in the enfleshed Logos, the loving, saving presence of God himself is made visible’.<sup>12</sup>

### **‘Glory’ in the Gospels**

The Greek term used for ‘glory’ in the above passage from John’s Gospel is *doxa*, the word which had been used to translate the Hebrew *kabod* in the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Hebrew Bible which was produced in the third to second centuries BC.<sup>13</sup> As a common Greek term, *doxa* (derived from the verb *dokein*, ‘to seem’) has a subtle variety of meanings, ranging from a person’s subjective opinion to their objective reputation, and it occurs quite frequently in the New Testament.<sup>14</sup> When used in a religious context, *doxa* as ‘glory’ resembles the Old Testament *kabod* in conveying the ideas of God’s greatness and grandeur, fame and reputation, as well as the respect, praise and reverence shown to God by God’s creatures. At the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem Luke refers to the praise due to God as well as to the manifestation of God’s essential greatness when he tells us that the angels sang ‘Glory to God in the highest heaven’ (Luke 2:14; see also 19:38), and also

<sup>11</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, volume 1, 33. On the *shekinah*, see 33–34.

<sup>12</sup> Moloney, ‘Johannine Theology’, 83:27.

<sup>13</sup> Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, volume 6, 17.

<sup>14</sup> See von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, volume 6, 52, n.3. Von Balthasar estimates that ‘glory’ occurs in the New Testament 116 times, and the corresponding verb ‘glorify’, or ‘give glory’, which we shall examine later, is found more than 60 times (volume 7, 239).

that 'the glory of the Lord shone around' the shepherds in the fields (Luke 2:9).

It is a striking feature of the Gospels that they view God's glory as being shared with Jesus of Nazareth. Sachs observes that,

... the glory which had always been associated with the saving self-revelation of God refers now in a unique way to the person of Christ .... Jesus reflects the glory of God; in him we see just what the godliness of God is.<sup>15</sup>

For instance, in his eschatological prophecies in Matthew, Jesus described how the Son of Man would come on the clouds of heaven 'with power and great glory' (Matthew 24:30) and would 'sit on the throne of his glory' (Matthew 25:31). But the earlier Mark informs us that when Jesus came he would come 'in the glory of his Father with the holy angels' (Mark 8:38, and compare Matthew 16:27); while Luke combines the two when he has Jesus look forward to the time 'when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels' (Luke 9:26).

This was the brilliant glory that was anticipated, and with which Jesus was suffused, at his transfiguration, when God also spoke from heaven to commend him (Mark 9:2–8; Matthew 17:1–8; Luke 9:28–36). This event is not recorded in John's Gospel, but all the Synoptics, and notably Matthew for his Jewish-Christian community, recall here the Old Testament *shekinah* and the glorious presence of God which it manifested when they describe how 'suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them. And from the cloud a voice said, "This is my Son, the beloved" ...' (Matthew 17:5; compare Mark 9:7 and Luke 9:34: Mark and Luke do not refer to Matthew's 'bright'.)

### **'Glorifying' in St John's Gospel**

In John's Gospel an aspect of glory which is emphasized is found in the ideas of 'glorifying' and of 'being glorified', as expressed by the verb *doxazo* (δοξάζω). Perkins observes of the whole of John's Gospel that 'the plot of the Gospel is focused on the "hour" of Jesus' glorification, his return to the Father at the crucifixion'.<sup>16</sup> And von Balthasar writes

<sup>15</sup> Sachs, 'Glory', 418.

<sup>16</sup> PHEME PERKINS, 'The Gospel According to John', in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 61:14.

of the New Testament that 'Jesus' life task is summarised as the glorification of the name of the Father (John 12:28; 17:4, 26).<sup>17</sup>

If we begin with the Father's glorification of his Son, Jesus, we are informed in the key verse, John 1:14, that 'the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth'. This was the glory conveyed to the Son by the Father, John tells us, that Jesus first revealed in Cana when he miraculously turned water into wine. Jesus showed by this 'sign' that a new, richer, divine dispensation was being introduced by God through him (John 2:11, and see 11:40). As Jesus was to point out later, in controversy, any glory which he had came from his Father. 'If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, he of whom you say, "He is our God".' (John 8:54)

Marsh offers a simple statement which clarifies much of what John has to say about Jesus' glory:

The glory of Jesus was something he shared with the Father before the incarnation (17:5, 24) and to which he was to return thereafter. But while he was on earth that glory was from time to time made manifest.<sup>18</sup>

It almost appears, however, that for Marsh here the earthly life, death and resurrection of Jesus added nothing to his glory, but were only transient episodes, until he simply 'returned' to his previous pre-incarnation glory at his ascension. Yet his being 'glorified' while on earth must have contributed something new to him.

In fact, in the passage where visiting Greeks ask to see Jesus (John 12:20–33), he remarks,

The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified .... Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name. Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again'. (John 12:23, 27–28)

Jesus' reaction appears to be John's equivalent of the agony that, in the Synoptics, Jesus experiences in Gethsemane in anticipation of his

<sup>17</sup> Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, volume 6, 66.

<sup>18</sup> John Marsh, *The Gospel of Saint John* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), 149.



suffering and death. In this passage the Father is pointing forward to the 'hour' that Jesus too would consider to be the time of his glorification: it had not yet come at Cana, as Jesus remarked to his mother (John 2:4), but he recognises it now as having arrived when the Greeks ask to see him (John 12:23). These are the first of the non-Jews who will be drawn to him, he goes on to say, when he is raised up on the cross (John 12:32). It is helpful to bear in mind Brown's observation that 'John conceives of passion, death, and resurrection as the one "hour" which is pervaded by the idea of Jesus' glory'.<sup>19</sup> Moloney adds, 'the cross of Jesus is the place where the glory of God will shine forth, drawing all to himself'.<sup>20</sup>



The Risen Christ, from the Isenheim Altarpiece, by Grünewald

Considering further how the Son is 'glorified' by the Father in Jesus' farewell speech in John's Gospel, we find the speech itself difficult to hold together. Apart from the fact that it appears to be conflated and edited from at least two earlier versions (13:31–32 possibly duplicates 17:1–5 in referring to Jesus' glorification), much of it is, naturally enough, looking forward to events that are going to happen—what we now know as the passion and crucifixion, the resurrection and Pentecost—and seems to be providing a commentary before the event.<sup>21</sup> Yet other parts seem to be looking back, as if the

<sup>19</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, volume 1, 504.

<sup>20</sup> Moloney, 'Johannine Theology', 83:30.

<sup>21</sup> On the various explanations offered to account for the composite nature of the Last Supper discourse as we now have it, see Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, volume 2, 582–597, especially 594.

events referred to have already happened, including Jesus' having completed the task he was given (John 17:4) and God's having been glorified (John 13:31; 17:22). At times it almost seems as if Jesus is addressing his disciples after his resurrection has taken place.<sup>22</sup> Brown quotes C. H. Dodd as commenting that 'in a real sense it is the risen and glorified Christ who speaks'.<sup>23</sup> Brown himself explains that,

... the Last Discourse partakes of the glory of 'the hour'.... The Jesus who speaks here transcends time and space; he is a Jesus who is already on his way to the Father .... Although he speaks at the Last Supper, he is really speaking from Heaven; although those who hear him are his disciples, his words are directed to Christians at all times .... whatever there may be of *ipsissima verba* in the Last Discourse has been transformed in the light of the resurrection and through the coming of the Paraclete into a living discourse delivered not by a dead man, but by the one who has life (v.57), to all readers of the Gospel.<sup>24</sup>

Not only was the Father glorifying Jesus, however; Jesus in turn was glorifying his Father. In the dramatic climax of Jesus' final prayer to his Father, he looked up to heaven and said,

Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son *so that the Son may glorify you*, since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. *I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do*. So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed. (John 17:1–5; emphasis added)

As Jesus had earlier observed in his own defence, 'Those who speak on their own seek their own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and there is nothing false in him' (John 7:18).

From this way in which John tells us that the Father and the Son glorify each other, it is clear that to glorify someone is not only praising or extolling them, which has the note of increasing their repute or

<sup>22</sup> See Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, volume 2, 584.

<sup>23</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, volume 2, 585; Charles H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1960), 423.

<sup>24</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, volume 2, 581–582.

status in the view of others. It can also mean increasing or making more manifest their inherent qualities or virtues. When the Jewish authorities interrogated the blind man whom Jesus had cured and exhorted him to 'give glory to God' (John 9:24), they were not commanding that he praise God but that he tell the truth. In other words, expanding or spreading the truth would enhance or increase the glory of God, who is the origin and source of all truth.

Likewise, Jesus explained, the mortal illness of Lazarus was 'for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it' (John 11:4, and compare 11:40). This was not just to increase people's admiration for God; as Moloney explains, 'The presence of the power of God in the miracle ... is a revelation of the "glory" of God'.<sup>25</sup>

Accordingly, as Jesus sought to glorify his Father—and the Father glorified the Son—this was not simply one praising the other and increasing his repute. It seemed also to show even more clearly and bring into more relief, as they glorified each other, the other's inherent characteristics: in the case of the Father, His love, His mercy and His truthfulness, and in the case of the Son, his devotion, his loyalty and his commitment. Consequently, when Jesus told his Father at the Supper, 'I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do' (John 17:4), he was claiming to have made manifest on the cross the Father's love and compassion for humans in his own supreme act of human love and compassion, in obedience to, and in human imitation of, his Father. And when he added, 'So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed' (John 17:5), he seems to imply that glorying and being glorified are mutual in the relationship between the Son and his Father.

***Glorying and being glorified are mutual in the relationship between the Son and his Father***

The divine glory is not restricted to the Father and His Son, however: John also tells us that the Holy Spirit is intimately involved. When Jesus spoke at the festival of booths about dispensing living water, John explains, he was referring to the Holy Spirit who would be received by believers, but only after Jesus was glorified. 'He said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified' (John 7:37–39). This

<sup>25</sup> Moloney, 'Johannine Theology', 83:28.

was the Spirit, Jesus would observe in his last discourse, who also would glorify Jesus 'because he will take what is mine and declare it to you' (John 16:14; and compare 16:13). Brown points out the parallel: 'Jesus glorified the Father (17:4) by revealing the Father to men; the Paraclete glorifies Jesus by revealing him to men'.<sup>26</sup> But Jesus immediately noted also that not only the Spirit, but 'all that the Father has is mine' (John 16:15).

Father, Son and Spirit, then, share totally in communicating and imparting truth and love; indeed, as Jesus noted, the Spirit of truth, the advocate 'whom the Father will send in my name', will teach the disciples all that they will need to know (John 14:26). The incarnate Son reveals and glorifies the Father; and the Spirit, who is sent by the Father in the Son's name, completes the Son's mission by glorifying him, explaining and expanding his teaching (John 14:26). Hence, as Sachs observes, a theology of God's glory must develop 'an understanding of the Spirit poured out into the hearts of believers as the one who enables men and women to give God glory by working for the justice of God's kingdom'.<sup>27</sup>

The expansion of divine glory does not end with the Trinity, either, but proceeds further, John teaches us, to include even Jesus' disciples. As Jesus observed to his Father in his prayer, 'The glory that you have given me I have given them' (17:22). Jesus glorifies God through his disciples, in revealing God to his disciples (John 17:22–24). 'In Johannine thought', Brown observes, 'Jesus during his lifetime was the tabernacle of God embodying divine glory (John 1:14), and now [at the last supper] in a covenantal setting he promises to give to his followers the glory that God gave to him',<sup>28</sup> to be in them and with them (John 17:26), as the Father was in him and with him (17:21–23). 'The Son glorifies the Father through the disciples', Brown concludes, indeed, seen from the later time when the author was writing the Gospel.<sup>29</sup>

This seems to underlie the statement of Jesus to the Father, 'All mine are yours, and yours are mine'; but then he goes on to say of his disciples, 'and I have been glorified in them' (John 17:10), as he had also pointed out to them that the fruit that they produce glorifies the

<sup>26</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, volume 2, 716.

<sup>27</sup> Sachs, 'Glory', 419.

<sup>28</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, volume 2, 781.

<sup>29</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, volume 2, 771.

Father (John 15:8). On this Perkins comments, 'the disciples now represent Jesus in the world (cf. 13:35) so they are also seen as "glorifying the Father"'.<sup>30</sup> Marsh offers a similar interpretation, that to bear fruit alongside the Lord 'repeats in the life of the members of the new Israel that relationship of love between Father and Son which is the sole reality of the life that is given by the son'.<sup>31</sup>

There is this deep connection between the inherent glory of God and the glorification of God by Christ's disciples, that the latter is at heart also the glory of God. Barth noted that,

God's glory is not exhausted by what God is in Himself ... God's glory is also the answer awakened and evoked by God Himself of the worship offered Him by His creation to the extent that in its utter creatureliness this is the echo of God's voice.<sup>32</sup>

Just as the climax of Jesus' own glory, through which he was also to glorify his Father, was to be his death and resurrection out of love for his Father and for us, so also the climax of the Father's glory (so far as humans are concerned), through which he was also to glorify his Son, was likewise the love and compassion that led him to send his Son into the world for us. Sachs commented,

... seen in their essential unity, ... the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ are the revelation of the glory and majesty of a love stronger than all powers of sin and death, a love greater than which it is impossible to conceive.<sup>33</sup>

As Jesus observed when Judas left the Supper to initiate the sequence of events leading to the betraying and killing of his master, 'Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him', revealing his glory in Jesus, and continuing that 'if God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once' (John 13:31–32).

Jesus was to return to the Father by way of the *via crucis* on which he had just started by sending Judas out (John 13:27), and his glory

<sup>30</sup> Perkins, 'The Gospel According to John', 61:189.

<sup>31</sup> Marsh, *The Gospel of Saint John*, 520–521.

<sup>32</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, volume 2/1, 667–668.

<sup>33</sup> Sachs, 'Glory', 419.

was completely fulfilled when, at the end of his agony, 'Jesus knew that all was now finished'. All was achieved, or 'accomplished' (*tetelestai*, τετέλεσται), and Jesus con-summated his entire mission and life by breathing 'It is finished', or accomplished (John 19:28, 30). As he had said to the Father at the Supper, in anticipation of the consummation on Calvary, 'I glorified you on earth by finishing [*teleiosas*, τελειώσας] the work that you gave me to do' (John 17:4). As the popular hymn of Edmund Budry proclaims, 'Thine be the glory, risen conquering Son, / Endless is the vict'ry, thou o'er death hast won'.

### **An Ignatian Theme**

To anyone familiar with Ignatian spirituality very strong reverberations must arise from considering the Johannine treatment of God's 'glory' and of the connection between glory and being a disciple of Jesus. After all, Ignatius' chosen motto for his Company was *Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam*: as the Jesuit Constitutions stipulate, 'everything being always directed to the greater glory of God our Creator and Lord' (*Constitutions* III.2.7.[305]).

This motto of Ignatius, as expressing the purpose of his new religious Order, can be well translated and expressed as an overall maxim, 'To increase God's glory'. However, for Ignatius it regularly finds practical application as a tactical principle for decision-making, being invoked as a criterion of choice where several options may be available, and leading a person to opt for that particular one which will contribute more than the others to God's glory. In his *Autobiography* Ignatius describes his and his first companions' initial intention of going to work in Jerusalem, failing which they would head for Rome and present themselves to the Pope, 'so that he could make use of them wherever he thought it would be more for the glory of God and the good of souls'.<sup>34</sup> Ignatius adopts the same criterion regularly in his *Spiritual Exercises*. For instance, in considering how to make a decision about one's life he stresses the need to preserve a balance and then to 'follow what I feel to be more for the glory and praise of God our Lord and the salvation of my soul' (Exx 179), 'not wanting or seeking any other thing except in all and through all the greater praise and glory of

<sup>34</sup> Quoted in Joseph F. Conwell, *Impelling Spirit: Revisiting a Founding Experience* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1997), 111.

God Our Lord' (Exx 189).<sup>35</sup> In the Jesuit *Constitutions* Ignatius also writes of a particular superior who,

... after considering the circumstances ... will order ... what he judges to be for the greater glory and service of God our Lord and for the universal good, which is the only end sought in this matter and in all others. (*Constitutions* IV.17.8. [508])

It is interesting to note how Ignatius also regularly uses 'glory' in the Johannine manner that we have been considering, with reference to the successful achievement by Jesus of the mission given him in the incarnation by his Father. When Ignatius begins to direct attention to the resurrection of Jesus in the fourth week of the Exercises, he instructs the exercitant who is contemplating what he judged the first appearance of the risen Christ—that to his mother—to pray to 'rejoice and be glad intensely at so great glory and joy of Christ our Lord'.<sup>36</sup> In this Ignatius is taking up the explanation given by the risen Jesus to his disciples on the road to Emmaus, 'Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?' (Luke 24:26). This is a phrase that Ignatius repeats in his contemplation on the Emmaus appearance (Exx 303) and that he has earlier developed in his meditation on the kingship of Christ. There Jesus is described as proposing 'to conquer all the world and all enemies and so to enter into the glory of my Father' (Exx 95) and as promising, 'Whoever wishes to join me in this mission must be willing to labour with me, and so by following me in struggle and suffering may share with me in glory [literally "enter with me into glory"]'.<sup>37</sup>

As a third and final reflection on the Ignatian implications of the subject of divine glorification in St John's Gospel, I return to my opening theme. I was initially intrigued during my recent retreat by the way in which, in spite of Jesus' repeated emphasis in his closing discourse on the glory that his heavenly Father and he were giving to

<sup>35</sup> David L. Fleming, *Draw Me into Your Friendship: The Spiritual Exercises, a Literal Translation and a Contemporary Reading* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), 140, 144, etc.

<sup>36</sup> Exx 221; Fleming, *Draw Me into Your Friendship*, 168. Ignatius was aware that there was no scriptural evidence of Christ appearing to his mother, but he notes that the New Testament mentions other appearances and comments that we are expected to use our common sense (Exx 299; Fleming, *Draw Me into Your Friendship*, 234).

<sup>37</sup> Fleming, *Draw Me into Your Friendship*, 84–85, 236.

each other, he observed that his disciples too would give glory to the Father: 'My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples' (John 15:8). The identification of his disciples with himself is central, of course, as explained by the mystical unity which existed among them all as between the individual branches and the whole vine (not just the trunk) (15:1). This spells Jesus' claim, which we have already noted, that 'the glory you have given me I have given them' (John 17:22). Underlying the whole relationship in which Jesus and his disciples are united as the vine and its branches and he is energizing them to produce fruitful results is the controlling statement that 'my Father is the vine-grower'. He it is who carefully looks after the vine, who tends it constantly, purifies it, and trains it to be fruitful (John 15:1–2) in producing works appropriate to Jesus' followers.

In the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus invites his disciples to consider themselves the light of the world and to let their light shine before other people, with the apparently paradoxical result that 'they may see *your* good works and give glory to your *Father* in heaven' (Matthew 5:16). The disciples' apostolic achievements would, in very Johannine-sounding terms, lead to the 'glorifying' of their heavenly Father (*doxasosin*, δοξάσωσιν). How would this be so? The verse of John's Gospel that so attracted me provides the rich theological basis for this: the good works produced by Jesus' disciples are fruit produced by the vine, which is Christ, under the care of the Father, who is its cultivator.

Here we may have an interesting illustration of Raymond E. Brown's observation that 'much of the teaching that Matthew puts in the Sermon on the Mount is found in John, scattered at times, and in various forms, but nevertheless present'.<sup>38</sup> Jesus is the vine and his Father is the vine-grower, caring for both the vine and its branches;<sup>39</sup> and his disciples, as those branches, receive life and energy from being in Jesus. They are to continue his mission in the world as inspired and taught by the Spirit (John 16:14), all under the overall care and direction of the Father (John 15:1–8). Sachs points out that 'for the NT, giving God glory is the response of faith to the self-communication of God in Jesus Christ'. Much more now than God's self-manifestation,

<sup>38</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, volume 1, 32.

<sup>39</sup> Marsh, *The Gospel of Saint John*, 522.



glory becomes God's self-communication to believers in the power of the Spirit of Christ.<sup>40</sup>

I have always remembered my novice-master, Fr George Walkerley SJ, telling us that when people praise us for something we may have done well, we should not seek to deny it or modestly demur; instead, we should say a 'Glory be to the Father!'. He may well have had in mind Matthew 5:16, and have concluded that we should not deny our good works, but should give the glory to God who is behind them and who is glorifying Godself in and through us.

As the disciples of Jesus bear fruit in fulfilling and continuing his evangelizing and saving mission given him by the Father, they are caught up into the mutual loving dynamism of the Persons of the Trinity, and clearly contribute to the glorification of both Jesus and his Father, as well as of their Spirit; that is, to their praise—and to their increased impact in the world. In this way we can uncover the deeply pastoral significance of our common Christian prayer, and at the same time confirm the apostolic aim of St Ignatius for his order, as we repeat, 'Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.'

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<sup>40</sup> Sachs, 'Glory', 419.