

# Glorifying in God's Glory: A Contemporary Account of Divine Glorification from a Methodist Theologian<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract:

This paper seeks to understand the people of God's giving glory to God as a responsive participation in God's infinite glory which is known in the radiance of its perfect effulgence. The paper begins by outlining the implications of the claim that God is perfectly glorious in Godself. The second section seeks to unpack what it means to see the glory of God as a perfection of divine movement, in which the radiance of the effulgence of God's glory is made present in the theatre of creation. Section three of the paper turns to the Christian's glorification of God. This glorification is understood, in virtue of the preceding sections, as a responsive participation in the overflowing and superabundantly gracious, glorious life of God. This responsive participation by the Christian is the response of active sanctification in which the creature is conformed by the Spirit to the image of Christ so as to participate in the perfection of God's eternal glory. This very response of the Christian is itself one of overflow and grace as she participates in and witnesses to the logics of the Lord's glory.

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<sup>1</sup> This is the first academic paper I wrote following the unexpected loss of my teacher, friend and colleague, Professor John Webster, at an all too early stage of his life. John had taught me at Oxford, and latterly we were colleagues and shared a doctoral seminar in Aberdeen. I cannot begin to account for the debts I owe to John. I didn't always agree with him theologically; but the seriousness with which he took the task of theology was something I could never cease but be impressed by, and – having prayed with him most days while we were colleagues – the breadth and intensity of the vision of God John had, as a God supremely, unendingly, totally and incomprehensibly complete in Godself, always moved me – pietistically as well as intellectually. I have tried in this paper to learn more from John than perhaps I have before. He did not, in fact, say so much about God's glory in his work – preferring other ways of expressing the majesty of the divine life – plenitude, sovereignty, perfection. But he never tired from challenging theologians to speak about God. I offer this paper in memory of John Webster.

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The Westminster Catechism begins by posing the question: ‘What is the chief end of humanity?’ To this question, the catechism gives following answer: ‘Humanity’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.’<sup>2</sup> But what does it mean for humanity, or indeed more narrowly the people of God, to glorify God? Does God need our glory? If God does, what does that say of God? If God does not, what does it say of humanity’s and (more narrowly) the church’s giving glory to God? It is to these issues that this paper turns in seeking to understand the people of God’s giving glory to God as a *responsive participation in God’s infinite glory which is known in the radiance of its perfect effulgence*. To unpack this account, the paper begins by outlining the implications of the claim that God is perfectly glorious in Godself: that glory belongs properly to God. It then, in a second section, seeks to unpack what it means to see the glory of God as a perfection of divine *movement*,<sup>3</sup> in which the radiance of the effulgence of God’s glory is made present in the theatre of creation: in the divine perfection of glory the creature is confronted with the reality that the perfection of the divine life is One which is never now without the creature; the radiance of glory, we might say, has a locus in which it is known and received by creation. Section three of the paper turns to the Christian’s glorification of God. This glorification is understood, in virtue of the preceding sections, as a responsive participation in the overflowing and superabundantly gracious, glorious life of God. This responsive participation by the Christian is the response of active (*de facto*) sanctification in which the creature is conformed by the Spirit to the image of Christ so as to participate in the perfection of God’s eternal glory. This very response of the Christian is itself one of overflow and grace as she participates in and witnesses to the logics of the Lord’s glory, the radiance of the effulgence of which touches the world that Lord is redeeming.

### **1. Sufficient glory – God is glorious and source of all glory**

The divine life is complete in itself.<sup>4</sup> To account for God’s glory is not to offer in the first instance an account of the recognition by the creature of the divine

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<sup>2</sup> *Westminster Catechism*, Q1; language has been altered to make it gender inclusive.

<sup>3</sup> For an excellent and thorough-going account of divine movement (though one distinct from the account offered in this paper) in the history of Christian thought and in relation to philosophy and science, see Simon Oliver, *Philosophy, God and Motion*, Routledge, London, 2005; particularly relevant by way of contrast is ch. 4.

<sup>4</sup> For an excellent contemporary account of divine aseity, see John Webster, *God without Measure: Working Papers in Christian Theology, Volume 1 – God and the Works of God*, T&T

Creator's qualities and perfections, such that God's glory would not exist, be diminished, or would exist in a changed manner, were God not Creator. Instead, to account for God's glory is in the first instance to claim that God *is* glorious – that God is perfectly and fully glorious in God's eternal life in and of itself. We might say that it is *proper* to God to be glorious. God's glory is a glory which has existed in the eternal triune life as the Father eternally glorifies the Son so that the Son may glorify the Father (Jn. 17:1) in the unity of the Holy Spirit. This is a glory which the presence of God had 'before the world existed' (Jn. 17:5), and is, therefore, not a glory which is dependent on the theatre of creation as the condition for the radiance of glory's effulgence. The divine life is fully sufficient in its glory in the divine eternity of perichoretic relations. When creatures give glory to God, we do not add anything to the divine life which God lacked before our glorifying of God, but we simply acknowledge the perfection of glory in the eternal glorification of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The *Gloria* reminds us of this: 'Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, / *As it was in the beginning, is now, and shall be forever.*' God's glory does not enhance itself through the glorification offered by the creature: God's is a glory already perfect in itself in the eternal Trinitarian relations of the divine life in which glory is given and received. God has no need of the creature for God's glorification: the plenitude of God's glorious life is infinite, and it is only in that infinite plenitude of glory that speech about the creature's glorification of God finds its appropriate place.

In understanding what it means to speak of the glory of God in the people of God, it is necessary, firstly, then, to establish that glory in relation to God does not reside in the creation's perception of or response to the divine life; instead, to speak of God's glory is to speak of who God is in and of God's perfect self. God is wonderfully, superabundantly, perfectly glorious in God's own self in the eternity of God's life. God, we might say, *is* the God of glory. It is proper to God's own nature to be glorious. To speak of the glory of God in the people of God is to speak first of *God's* glory and only then of how it is perceived and responded to by God's people. God's is a glory which is not a greater or even maximal outworking of a scale of glory we imagine in our creaturely realm; God's is the glory of the

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Clark, London, 2016). Chapter 2 directly tackles this question, and the volume as a whole tackles the relationship between the divine life and God's outer works. The present author has some reservations about the dogmatic proportionality and topography of some of the material in this volume, but it remains the most helpful account of the divine life's freedom from and for creation in recent years. For the classical account of divine perfection and simplicity (from which much of Webster's own insights are drawn), see Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, prima pars, qq. 3&4. For all that the current author might disagree on *how* to express the relationship of the divine life in and of itself to the economy of God, that God's life is perfect in and of itself remains a point of full agreement.

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One who is the King of glory. It is not like any other. To speak of the glory of God in God's people is to join in the first instance with the Psalmist in saying: 'Lift up your heads, O gates, And be lifted up, O ancient doors, That the King of glory may come in! Who is the King of glory? The LORD ...' (Psalm 24:7-8). It is not that we may know what is glorious and see God as the fulfilment of that; it is that by God's glory we may learn to see creation as the theatre of the radiance of the effulgence of God's glory. God's glory is the illuminating light which gives light to every other thing, and by which we might see glory (or its radiance, rather) in the creaturely sphere.

Habakkuk puts it well when he states: '[God's] radiance is like the sunlight' (Hab. 3:4a). In the light of God's glory, we do not simply see a kind of glory comparable to anything in creation; but we see the glory of the Creator which illuminates the creation with its radiance. Order and topography in systematic theology are important here. It is not that by the glory of God's people we see the glory (or the giving glory) of God; it is by the radiance of the glory of God that we see the glory (and giving glory) of God's people. And it is this principle of the perfect and plenitudinous sufficiency of God's divine glory which is best spoken of first in any systematic, doctrinal or dogmatic account of God's glory. A god who is not glorious in and of godself is not a god worthy of glorification: that would be an idol who receives glory like anything else in creation, rather than the God who is the source and perfection of all that is glorious in the glories of God's eternal life.

But perfection itself in the divine life is an *infinite* perfection. It is not a perfection which is staid and static in its condition: God's perfect glory is a perfection which is supremely unconditioned. The divine eternity of glory is an eternal *life* in which God's glorious and infinite aliveness must not be forgotten. God is not only glorious in the glories of God's pretemporal life;<sup>5</sup> God is also simultaneously glorious *now* in the context of the theatre of the radiance of God's glory and in the context of creation's glorification of the eternal glory of God; just, indeed, as God will be perfectly glorious after creation forever more. By this is meant that God's perfect glory does not exist *competitively* in relation to the creature's act of glorification of the divine life, but exists as the infinity of the divine plenitude which now *includes* the creaturely act of the glorification of the eternally and sufficiently glorious God. God's existence before all time, in the perfection of God's eternity, already contained within it the glorification by the creature of God now: God's eternity is, as Boethius reminds, *interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio*.

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<sup>5</sup> By this is meant that we should not think of God's freedom from creation in God's free electing grace simply as being pre- or a-temporal in relation to God's glory: God's glory *is* glorious in the spatio-temporal theatre of creation also..

sio.<sup>6</sup> The simultaneity *and perfection* of God's presence to and possession of time is significant in terms of what it means for God to be glorious: God's glory is not dependent upon the creature's glorifying of God or upon creation as a theatre of the radiance of God's glory, but equally God's glory does not remove the integrity and significance of the creature's glorifying of God or the creation as a theatre of God's glory.

But how do we know of this perfectly sufficient glory of God? We know it because the God who is complete in God's own glory is glorious with an end point in that which is not God – in the theatre the radiance of glory's effulgence. God's glory for the creature has the logic of grace.<sup>7</sup> Glory is the perfection of the divine life in which the outwards movement of the immutable and constant perfection of the eternal triune life is known. Complete in itself, divine glory is known because it is glorious – because it shines forth in its infinite excess beyond itself, and thereby glory's radiance is known in creation.<sup>8</sup> Glory at once implies the free sovereign glory of the divine life, and the loving and gracious movement of the divine life to that which is not Godself – the rays of the glory of God known in the terminus of the theatre in creation as the radiance of divine glory's effulgence.<sup>9</sup> It is to this topic which this paper now turns.

## 2. The Perfection of Glory's Movement

Although it is imperative to understand the glory of God as a perfection of the divine life in and of itself in the perfect, immutable eternity of the divine living, in the perfection of God's glory the creature is confronted with the reality that the perfection of the divine life is one which is *never now without the creature*.

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<sup>6</sup> See Boethius, *de Cons. Philos.*, prose VI. For some survey material on the philosophical backgrounds and theological history of accounts of divine eternity, the reader is directed to the following works as examples: For a discussion of this see Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Metaphysics and the Idea of God*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1990, 75ff., and Michael Chase, "Time and Eternity from Plotinus and Boethius to Einstein", *ΣΧΟΛΗ*, 8:1 (2014), p. 68-110. I have attempted to unpack some of the details of this material myself in my "The Order and Movement of Eternity: Karl Barth on the Eternity of God and Creaturely Time", in *Eternal God, Eternal Life: Theological Investigations into the Concept of Immortality*, Philip G. Ziegler (ed.), T&T Clark, London, 2016, ch. 1.

<sup>7</sup> See Ephesians 1:6 where grace and glory are connected.

<sup>8</sup> The relation of glory to light in Scripture can be found in Ex 34 (in the Septuagint's rendering *doxa*); Jer 13:16 in the contrast of light to darkness; Lk 2:9 (in the shining of glory); and 2 Cor 4:6; as well as the relation of glory and fire in the Old Testament.

<sup>9</sup> Speaking of the radiance of the effulgence of glory is an attempt at preserving the perfection of glory as that which belongs perfectly to God apart from the economy. It is a way of attempting to preserve something of the distance of the glory of God from the creaturely sphere, as is seen in Ez 1 (especially v. 28).

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Here, the eternity of God's glory needs further unpacking. To say that God is glorious in God's own eternity is not to set up the divine life's eternity as a-temporal existence aside from creation in opposition to the creaturely sphere. It is not only that God's glory exists only as it was in the beginning; God's glory also exists as it is now and it will exist as it ever more shall be. There is no eternity aside from the eternity in which creation (in its temporality) also exists; there is no eternal glory of God aside also from the glorifying of God by creation. Eternity is not perfectly static in glory; eternity is perfectly alive in glory. There is a need for care here. It is not that God requires creation for the completion of God's glory; nor that creation adds anything to God's glory in conceiving God's glory as never now being without creation. These options presume false dichotomies (dualisms even) which imagine we can think of God without creation or of the creation without God. It is, rather, simply the case that God has in God's eternal, sovereign and wise freedom determined Godself to be God who is the Creator, Reconciler and Redeemer of creation. This determination is not the determination of a will dependent on the exercise of an intellect that chooses and then enacts a purpose. This determination is a determination of the One who is eternally (in the simultaneous and perfect possession of unending time) the LORD, the one who is *actus purus*. In her wonderful first volume of her systematic theology, Kate Sonderegger very helpfully reminds us of this in her account of the burning bush (in relation to Schleiermacher's interpretation). Permit me to quote her at length, so that the cadence of her voice can be heard as well as the material point:

We intend ... to speak in the earthly words given us of the I AM who is cradled in the things of this world, the Person who Radiates Truth. As unearthly Fire, God explodes into the earth. His own Reality is itself impulsive, alive. But it is alive as Subject, not natural Emanation alone. It is Nature, Spiritual Substance. God can fittingly be described as Energy or Fire, *Dunamis*, and it scorches the earth. But in a mode unimaginable to us – the greater unlikeness of the likeness – God's Nature is entirely, throughout, and inexhaustibly creative and subjective. God does not *elect* an action that He then executes in the power of His own willing. He does not *deliberate*, then *enact*. We do not mean personal, in that sense – precisely not that! God teaches in a divine sense: that is, He descends down through the individuals and kinds He has made with His own Life, His own Vitality and Truth, so that they catch Fire, they combust with the Life that is Divine – yet they remain their own kind, the bush not consumed.<sup>10</sup>

The God who is glorious, perfectly in and of Godself, has determined Godself in this way to be the God who creates, who binds Godself (covenants) with the

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<sup>10</sup> Katherine Sonderegger, *Systematic Theology: Volume 1, The Doctrine of God*, Fortress, Minneapolis, 2015, p. 266.

creature as creature for all eternity. There is not a moment in pre-temporal eternity in which God decides to be the Creator; such a description ironically makes God all too temporally contingent. No; for all eternity God was eternally the One who would create, creates, and has created.<sup>11</sup> The existence creation does not add anything to God's glory, but is as the creation of God a place, a theatre, in which God in God's radiant glory is alive.

To speculate about a God who is glorious without God's creation is to create an abstractly atemporal being who is other than the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ who with together with the Spirit is to be worshipped and glorified. The otherness of God's glory is not an otherness from creation but an otherness *for* creation, an otherness which is known only by God's self-disclosure in creation. To quote St Paul: 'For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ' (2 Corinthians 4:6). Glory is that perfection of God which speaks of God's self-determining love to be the God who is eternally for the other as much as it bespeaks the God who is perfectly complete in Godself; to be for that which is not God, for the creation which becomes the theatre of the radiance of God's glory. That is why the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God is seen in the face of Jesus Christ: we know who God is because God's glory *comes, shines forth*, and in this coming, this shining forth, God has made Godself known; and God's glory is known in the locus in which the foundation for the eternal covenant of God with creation is to be seen – in the person of Jesus Christ.

The Creator-creature distinction, which is often employed in Systematic Theology at these points in the discussion, is a distinction which is helpful here, but we must remember that the distinction is not an expression of abstract metaphysics, but of a *revelation*. There is as much intimacy as there is ultimacy in speaking of God as Creator.<sup>12</sup> To speak of this distinction is not to speak simply of a demarcation of God and world, but to speak instead of the creature's Creator and the Creator's creature – a distinction only meaningful in asymmetrical inter-relationality.<sup>13</sup> Or, again, to quote Sonderegger:

God's Reality is personal rather, in *this* sense: He is the One, the Utterly Unique One, who in His concrete Person makes possible the concrete, specific

<sup>11</sup> The idea here is not so distant from the account of the relationship of Jesus to eternity and time given in Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus – God and Man*, SCM, London, 1968, p. 367-369; cf. 320.

<sup>12</sup> See Janet Soskice, *The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender, and Religious Language*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007, p. 61.

<sup>13</sup> This is the structure I observe in Augustine's *Confessions*: Augustine speaks of God's nature in relation to his own creation and climaxes the book with a commentary on Genesis' account of creation.

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relation with creation, the unique relation that brings into being the creature. The *Relatio* between such a Creator and such a creature is itself *God*— that is another way to put this point. He alone can bridge the two; He alone can bring into existence another.<sup>14</sup>

That creation is a theatre in which the radiance of the effulgence of the glory of God may be known is an expression of precisely this relational Creator God, who is not perfected by the creature but is the perfect Creator of the creature, and the radiance of whose glory is manifest to the creature the Creator has created.

In this way, we may wish to speak of glory as the supreme perfection of divine loving since glory bespeaks the divine reality of the radiance of God in the theatre of that which is not God. While glory speaks of God's unique and unchangeable infinite majesty, we may also say that glory has a terminus in the radiance of the effulgence of God's glory as received and recognised by that which is not God – that is, by creation. Glory speaks at once of God's otherness from creation as God (*God is glorious*) and God's presence in creation as God (*God's glory is radiant*): *glory is God's otherness for creation*, we might say. To continue with the verse from Habakkuk I have already quoted: 'His radiance is like the sunlight; He has rays flashing from His hand, And there is the hiding of His power' (Hab 3:4). In the sunlight, the rays which flash to creation are not only the presence of God's glory to creation, but also the hiding of God's power (the veiling in God's unveiling to use one of Barth's dialectics):<sup>15</sup> God's glory at once speaks of the *knowledge* of God which radiates from God's infinitely perfect glory, *and* the knowledge of *God* towards whose infinite glory the creature can only bow her knee and squint her eyes as she seeks to behold the glory of the King. This glory of God is the glory of the God known in the face of Jesus Christ: such glory is what is means to behold God's hidden power in the context of the human Jesus hanging on the cross.<sup>16</sup>

As Karl Barth reminds us, glory is the supreme perfection of God which can be understood only in terms of seeing the divine freedom as the divine freedom to love. Glory is the way God makes Godself conspicuous and apparent everywhere God is. In a captivating phrase, Barth writes: 'God's glory is His competence to make use of His omnipotence as the One who is omnipresent, and to exercise

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<sup>14</sup> Sonderegger, *Systematic Theology*, vol 1, p. 267

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*. 4 volumes, T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1936-1977, I/1, p. 178-9 and p. 315-26.

<sup>16</sup> For the best account of the relationship between the cross and theology proper, see Eberhard Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World: On the Foundation of the Theology of the Crucified One in the Dispute between Theism and Atheism*, Bloomsbury, London, 2014. In this book, Jüngel explores the effect on the doctrine of God of what it means for God to define Godself through identification with the crucified.



lordship in virtue of His ever-present knowledge and will.’<sup>17</sup> God’s glory is both God’s right in and of Godself, and God’s power in the context of God’s creation. Or again, to quote Barth: ‘God’s glory is God Himself in the truth and capacity and act in which He makes Himself known as God.’<sup>18</sup> That we know of the radiance of the effulgence of God’s glory is in and of itself an expression of the divine determination to be for another that is not God: that we know of God’s glory is an expression of the infinitely excessive gracious nature of the overflow of divine love. In the reality that God is glorious is the reality that God loves. Glory at once speaks of the fullness and sufficiency of God’s divine perfection, but also the ‘the emerging, self-expressing and self-manifesting reality of all that God is.’<sup>19</sup> Glory speaks of God’s perfect being as a perfect being which always reaches beyond itself through the radiance of God’s effulgence to that which is not God: glory speaks of the God who *declares* Godself, and of the other as one for whom in gracious love God determines Godself to be. *God’s glory is identical with the plenitude of God’s self-sufficiency in God’s inner life, but God’s glory is simultaneously the declaration of the plenitude of God’s self-sufficiency to the creature who God never now is without.* The reason why we see the ‘Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ’ is because God’s glory is God’s loving: in the love expressed in the face of Jesus Christ is found the infinite glory of the God whose infinitely sufficient nature is one which is sufficient in the plenitudes of its grace which overflows towards that which is not God; in the face of Jesus Christ is the God who is Creator, Reconciler and Redeemer, and who in this never ceases to be fully, sufficiently and completely God. Glory is an account of God’s divine self-manifestation, which does not cease to be divine in its self-manifesting. John Webster writes as follows:

God’s glory is God himself in the perfect majesty and beauty of his being. This glory is resplendent. Because God himself is light, he pours forth light. God is glorious and therefore radiant. ... [There is an] unbroken continuity of being between God’s glory and effulgence; light and its splendour are one.<sup>20</sup>

In attesting to the relationship between the divine light and the radiance of its effulgence which manifests that light, theology cannot help to be drawn back to the eternal relationship of the Father to the Son. As the one who is Light from Light, the Son is the effulgence of God’s glory: glory and its effulgence are an eternal dynamic expression of the movement of the Father’s paternity and the Son’s filiation. This filiation itself is part of the double reality (or movement) of

<sup>17</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/1, p. 641.

<sup>18</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/1, p. 641.

<sup>19</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/1, p. 643.

<sup>20</sup> Webster, *God without Measure 1*, p. 73.

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the Son's relation to the Father and the Son's radiating of the presence of God's majesty. The presence of the radiance of the effulgence of the glory of God on earth is a manifestation of the eternal movement of glory and glorification in the divine life: the Son Himself as the *Verbum incarnandum* is already eternally the one determined as the effulgence of God's glory to bring light to the world in the radiance of His being.<sup>21</sup> Christ's divinity overflows in His glory in true God becoming true human in Him.<sup>22</sup> As the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews puts it:

In these last days [God] has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created all things. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word.<sup>23</sup>

The glory of God is known to us in the manifestation of the Son, who manifests to creation the reality of the eternal triune Creator's glorifying and loving dynamic movement in the theatre of creation. Christ is the one who has glory in the presence of God before the world existed (Jn. 17:5) but who also glorifies God on earth (Jn. 17:4). This Son is the one who glorifies the Father, who is the reflection of God's glory, the effulgence of God's Light.<sup>24</sup> This Son is the one eternally destined to befor creation's salvation and redemption, as an expression of the Father's love for creation even as the love of the Father for the Son (17:23). Glory speaks of God's double movement: God's internal immanent life of paternity and filiation; and God's manifestation in the realm of God's creation with God's own presence in the effulgence of God's glory in the person of the Son – the very One who is eternally self-determined to be for the creation which was created through Him and reconciled by Him.

Put succinctly, the point of the preceding is to say that God's glory is the means of speaking of the very deity of God – in the eternal infinitely self-sufficient relation (movement) of the Father and the Son; and simultaneously of the manifestation of the deity in the movement of God towards that which is other than God – towards creation – in the effulgence of the glory of God known in the person of Jesus Christ. God's glory is both an account of God's immutable divinity aside from creation, and of God's unbreakable covenant with creation. God is immutably the glorious Creator, Reconciler and Redeemer of the world. God's glory is

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. Webster, *God without Measure 1*, p. 73-4; albeit the form of this in terms of the *Verbum Incarnandum* is expressed in a more Barthian register.

<sup>22</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics, I/2*, p. 662.

<sup>23</sup> Heb 1:2-3a.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Origen regarding the Son's filiation: "This is an eternal and everlasting beginning, as brightness is begotten from light". Origen, *On First Principles*, Harper & Row, New York, 1966, 1.2.4.

distinct from the glory of every other being because it is *God's* being, and God is pre-eminent to every other being and therefore excels them perfectly, infinitely and absolutely. But a being can live in such contrast to others that is so marked off from them as to have no significance for those others – to have no meaning, no terminus. If this were true of God, however, this could not be the God to whom belongs the glorifying of the creature who would be unreached by God's glorious otherness. Instead, God is not at one point (in God's immanent life) and we at another (in the economy of creation): what reaches creatures is the radiance of the effulgence of God's own glory— God Godself in Jesus Christ in whose face is found the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. God's glory is revealed when it is not just immanent but when recognized and acknowledged by humans, known in the illumination it brings – even in the darkness.<sup>25</sup> Glory speaks of God infinity and God's infinite capacity in God's infinity to love and move towards that which is not God, and speaks of God's very nature as being such. Put more dogmatically, we might say that in God's omnisufficiency, God's glory is God's love: divine glory is not just God's plenitude but God's superabundant plenitude of grace (of absolute free loving kindness). The God of glory is this God: the God who is not glorious from creation but whose glory is radiant in creation; the God whose aseity is not static but eternally and infinitely on the move to that which is not God – an aseity which is *spoken in the economy of God's people*.

### 3. Responsive Participation in Glorification

What, then, is the creature's role in glorifying the perfectly glorious God who reaches the creature in God's effulgence? How are we to speak of the glory of God in the people of God, given the account of glory offered so far? First, it is necessary to affirm that the human creature's glorification and glorifying of God is a *response* to the overflowing and superabundantly glorious nature of divine grace. It may be possible further to say, second, that the people of God's giving glory to God is not a conditioning or an adding of anything to God; the people's glorifying is a responsive *participation* in God's own gloriously gracious life. The logics of grace (of the free and supreme divine self-giving) are logics of non-necessity. God has no need or necessity of the creature for God's own glory, but in God's grace the creature in glorifying God may join in God's own perfect glory. It is necessary to unpack this.

In faith in Jesus Christ, the believer not only confesses her faith in the glory of God, but also that she is a sinner reconciled by God and in God. This faith in God's reconciling work is what enables the Christian to praise God as she is

<sup>25</sup> The points made here are a reworking of Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/1, p. 646-647, seeking to draw out more the relation between filiation and manifestation in terms of divine glory.

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awakened by God to God's own glorious light – a light which in prevenient grace reaches her first.<sup>26</sup> In being reached by this illuminating light, the creature shares in God's glory as it reaches to her. The response to the illuminating light of God's glory is to give glory to God, and in giving glory to God we participate (as the creatures for whom God eternally determined Godself in God's infinitely glorious life) in the divine glorification: God makes this glorification of ours (this creaturely glorification) God's own. Since God's glory is infinite, we cannot add anything to it in our giving glory. We can only participate in that perfect and infinite glory which already exists in God's own life. Glorification by the creature is a creaturely (and this side of the eschaton), therefore, imperfect giving of glory which is nevertheless being drawn up into the glorification of God by the Son: 'Changed from glory into glory,' to quote Charles Wesley.<sup>27</sup> Because of Jesus Christ, what is done by God's people in gratitude to God's gracious glory is to share in glorifying God. Because this glorifying takes place in Jesus Christ in His body the Church, even though it is creaturely, it is still within the glory of God. Jesus is recorded as saying to the Father in John's Gospel: 'The glory you have given me, I have given them' (Jn. 17: 22a). The creature in Christ is taken up into the act of the Father and the Son's relationship of glorification. Pannenberg summarises this well:

The Son has glorified the Father (17:4) by proclaiming his lordship. He now asks the Father to glorify him by reaccepting him into his original fellowship with the Father (v. 4). In this way, and by the participation of the believers in the common glory of the Son and the Father (v. 22), the glorifying of the Father by the Son will come to fulfilment.<sup>28</sup>

The response of the creature receiving the revelation of the radiance of God's glory, being illuminated by God's glory and being caught up in God's glory, is for the creature itself to share in giving glory to God. This is not an addition of something to God which was lacking before, but a participating by the believer as a creature in Christ in the eternal glorification of the Father by the Son and the Son by the Father. Hardy and Ford describe this relationship to perfection helpfully as follows with regards to praise, but the same point could be made of glorifying: perfection would not be perfect if it had to require praise for its completion. Yet the odd fact is that in this way perfection itself can be perfected, and the more perfect it is the more wonderfully it evokes new forms of perfection. The logic is that of overflow, of freedom, of generosity.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/1, p. 668.

<sup>27</sup> Charles Wesley, *Love Divine* (hymn).

<sup>28</sup> Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology: Volume 3*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1997, p. 625.

<sup>29</sup> David F. Ford and Daniel W. Hardy, *Living in Praise: Worshipping and Knowing God*, Second Revised Edition, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, 2005, p. 9.

In responding to God's glory, the creature is drawn up and participates in the already perfect glorifying by the Son of the Father and the Father of the Son by virtue of the gracious and free excess and overflow of the radiance of the effulgence of God's glory.

This participative response in and to the glory of God is something even more than salvation from sin and reconciliation to God. Giving glory to God is something greater, something more abundant. As Barth puts it, the creature in knowing reconciliation should have joy and jubilation not only in the creature's reconciled nature, but also in the act of glorifying God which accompanies it. He writes: 'This is the destiny which man received and lost, only to receive it again, inconceivably and infinitely increased by the personal participation of God in man's being accomplished in Jesus Christ.'<sup>30</sup> This capacity the people of God come to possess of being able to share in the glorifying of God is a further work and permission of God that comes following the reconciliatory work of Jesus Christ. The power to glorify God does not come from the creature (or else it would be an addition to God), but comes from the infinitely perfect glorious God. The glory of God speaks of divine superabundance, and the glorification of God may well equally take place as an overflowing in the people of God itself.<sup>31</sup>

At this point, the conspicuously absent member of the trinity thus far in this paper must be discussed. Although the Spirit is absent in John 17, the Spirit is very present in chapter 16; and Jesus' prayer in chapter 17 is for the disciples for that time after He has gone, the time of another Counsellor. It is the Spirit of truth about whom John writes when he has Jesus state: 'He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you' (16:14). It is the Spirit who is the one who glorifies the Son in believers by bringing to them the memory of Jesus and His work of glorifying the Father. Pannenberg is worth quoting at length on this point:

The glorifying of believers, however, their transforming by the light of divine glory, draws them into the eternal fellowship of the Father and the Son by the Spirit. It is the same Spirit who is already conferred on believers by their baptism and who enables them, as they participate in the filial relationship of Jesus Christ to the Father, to call on God as their Father, and in so doing to have a foretaste of their own eschatological consummation as participation in the eternal life of the trinitarian God in the fellowship of the Son and the Father by the Spirit.<sup>32</sup>

The work of enabling the creature to glorify God in response to God's own glory is an expression of the overflowing of the self-glorification of God to establish fellowship between God and our created being. This is not by virtue of

<sup>30</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/1, p. 648.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/1, p. 671.

<sup>32</sup> Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* 3, p. 626.

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any mediatorial *tertium quid* or common element (spirit, with a lower case 's', so-called) between humanity and God. The One who is Spirit, too, is God, and is – as the creed of Constantinople reminds us – with the Father and Son worshipped and glorified. The glorification of God in God's people through the Spirit consists in nothing short of God's co-existence with us and our co-existence with God.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, to engage in glorifying God is to have a foretaste of the eternal life with (our perfect co-existence with) God in which creatures will share. 2 Corinthians 3:18 puts it thus: 'But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.' Glorifying God is a proleptic anticipation (for all of its fallen creaturely form) of the life with God to which creation is determined; it is through the Spirit in the life of the believer that this proleptic anticipation is offered and is possible.

The reality of this anticipation of an eschatological presence with God in participating in glorifying God should not result, however, in some cheap, one dimensional and prosperous ecclesial headiness. The same light of God which is glorious is also the fire which consumes. Sin itself is, after all, a falling short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23), and as the people of God participate in the eternal act of glorifying God so too we participate in the divine judgement on that which is not glorious in our lives.<sup>34</sup> To glorify God is not simply to be caught up in the raptures of praise and song; to glorify is also to call to mind and confess our sins on bended knee as the King of glory comes.

To participate in God's glory is to become the image of God that the human was eternally destined to be:<sup>35</sup> remembering that the new creature is in Jesus Christ freed from sin, and lives in the freedom of the Spirit, as the creature conforms more and more to the image of Christ, so she shares more and more in the eternal glorifying of the Father and the Son in the Spirit. Just as God breathed life into the first human, so being filled (or baptized) with the Spirit of God breathes new life into the new creature: Jesus is the One most filled with the Spirit in all creation, and shows the people of God what a life filled with the intensity of the Spirit looks like. Indeed, it might be best to think of Christ's receiving the Holy Spirit in His baptism as a fitting sign or perhaps the greatest expression of Christ's full humanity – the humanity we as yet do not possess but which was determined for us for all eternity – a perfect humanity perfectly drenched in the Spirit. The Spirit who is the Giver of Life gives life (breath) to humanity: it is by God's own Spirit that

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/1, p. 673.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Karl Rahner, "Purgatory", in *Theological Investigations. Volume 19: Faith and Ministry*, Darton, Longman & Todd, London, 1984, p. 181-93.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/1, p. 673.

humans become living beings, as the book of Job attests.<sup>36</sup> To be a true and real living human being involves receiving the breath (or Spirit) of God. Since we have cope to receive the Spirit of God more fully, we are not yet, we might say, fully human. If we are to be images of the image of God in Jesus Christ, it is the presence of the Spirit within the creature which is required in overflowing abundance for us to be conformed to the form of Christ. Only in the form of correspondence to Jesus Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit can there be the glory of God in the glorification of God, whose glory is perfect, by the creature.<sup>37</sup> The glorification of God by the creature in response to God's eternal and infinite glory is the Spirit's work of *de facto* sanctification in the life of the believer as the believer participates in God in Christ. 1 Thessalonians 2:12 has it thus: 'so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory'. Glorifying God is for the people of God about living lives worthy of the glory of God, lives conformed to Christ as we (like Christ) are filled with overflowing abundance with the Spirit. Barth understands this well when he writes in his long discussion of the glory of God that glorifying can only ever mean imitating. For him, if the people of God wish to offer glory to God, they simply need to live a life of obedience in which as creatures they seek to know God, and in knowing God (through God's gracious and illuminating radiance) have no option but to offer glory to God. In this imitation of Christ, which the Spirit enables, we share in what it means to give glory to God and to share in God's glory.

Since for the people of God to engage in responsive participation in the glory of God involves being filled with the Spirit so as to imitate Christ, the glory of God in the people of God has a horizontal as well as a vertical axis.<sup>38</sup> Glorifying God is not simply something the believer participates in when she engages in acts of worship and adoration of the divine life and is orientated upwards, vertically to God in praise and thanksgiving. Glorifying God involves responding to the radiance of the effulgence of God's glory and participating in that. To participate in that glory means that the creature participates in the form of that glory – a form which has been described in terms of its movement, overflow, excess and freedom to be for that which is not God. A creaturely participation in divine glory is, therefore, a participation in the excessive overflow of glory, in the glory which produces an effulgence, in the effulgence which is radiant. The believer's participation in glo-

<sup>36</sup> See for example, Job 34, 14-16.

<sup>37</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/1, p. 674.

<sup>38</sup> Gregory of Nyssa points to this well in his *Life of Moses* when he discusses how receiving the revelation of the glory of God (the vertical axis, in the terms of his paper) is immediately followed by Moses descending with the law (the horizontal axis, in the terms of this paper). See Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses*, Paulist Press, Mahwah, 1978.

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rifying God is, therefore, not simply one which is ordered ever more to the depths and intensities of God's being, but also one in which the creature is (like the glory in which she participates) pushed outwards towards the creation, the world in and for which the light shines. The intensity which the Spirit brings in the believer who participates in the glory of God is an intensity which propels the believer to the outward reaches of the radiance of the effulgence of God's glory in the world. If the believer is not pressed outwards in this way by the glory of God, it is not the Lord's own glory which moves towards creation in the radiance of its effulgence in which she participates, but some other glory which does not have the logics of the infinitely sufficient plenitude of the Lord's own glory. To quote Barth, God 'is God who is glorious in His community, and for that reason and in that way in all the world.'<sup>39</sup>

What does the horizontal component of glory look like? The space allotted does not allow a thoroughgoing entry into this topic. But we might point initially to two dimensions of this glory the people of God have by virtue of their participation in God's own glory, a glory which in its infinite sufficiency is infinitely radiant in its effulgence, a glory which extensively illuminates that which is not God. The first dimension is that of witness. The people of God join in Christ's work of witnessing to the glory of God, of bringing light in the darkness, of pointing to the light, of (as we participate in it) shining with the radiance of the effulgence of the glory of God. This is a witness across space and time in the world in the time between the ascension of Jesus and the *eschaton*. The second dimension is that of existence towards one another. Since we have said that otherness of God's glory is not an otherness from creation but an otherness for creation, for the creature in her creaturely integrity to participate in the otherness of God's glory in response to being reached by God's glory determines that in her participation there will always be an otherness *for* creation. Worship so deeply and individualistically orientated on God's glory is no glorification of God: such worship does not participate in *God's* glory. We know God's glory as by it we are moved to be orientated beyond ourselves towards others, in the corporate life of the church, and perhaps most pertinently towards those others in situations where there is darkness. A triumphalist glorifying of God will not be a genuine response to, participation in or engagement with the God, the knowledge of whose glory is known in the face of Christ – the crucified, the man for others, the one who is the great intercessor, the one who laid down His life not just for His friends but His enemies. There is not, despite the protestations no doubt of some Lutheran friends, in the end a choice between a theology of glory and a theology of the cross: the glory of God known in the face

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<sup>39</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/1, p. 677.



of Christ is a glory which is cruciform (as a shorthand for the whole self-giving of God in the life, death and resurrection of Christ), and to participate in the reality of that glory is (in both witness and in living – or even dying – for the other) to be given the power by the Spirit of God in the hope of the resurrection to take up our crosses and follow Christ.<sup>40</sup> In Calvin's Commentary on the Book of Ephesians, he writes: 'We will receive God's glory in its highest when we are no longer anything other than the vessels of his mercy.'<sup>41</sup>To be a vessel of God's mercy (to move with God's movement) is, I think, what it means for the people of God to join with the writer of the Ephesians in praying: 'to Him [God] be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen' (Eph. 3:21).

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. Rom 8:17: those who suffer with Christ will be glorified with Him. For an unpacking of the call to cruciform living, see John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1996.

<sup>41</sup> Calvin, On Eph. 1.11; CO 51.152.