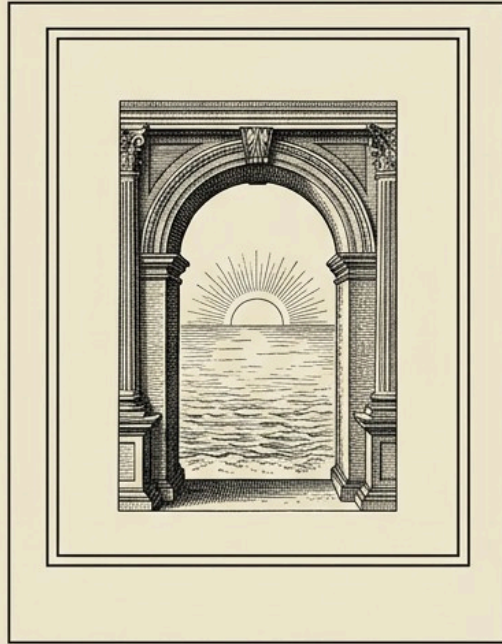


THE GLORY OF
CHRIST IN REVEALATION
IN HIS PERSON
OFFICE AND GRACE

JOHN OWEN



THE GLORY OF CHRIST IN HIS PERSON OFFICE AND GRACE

John Owen



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ABOUT THIS BOOK



One of Owen's final works, written as he neared death, these meditations center on Christ's prayer in John 17:24 — that believers would behold his glory. Owen unfolds the **glory of Christ's person** (the hypostatic union), his **mediatory office** (condescension, love, obedience, and exaltation), his **Old Testament representations**, and his **intimate union with the Church**. The closing chapters contrast beholding Christ by faith in this world with the fullness of sight in heaven, calling believers to a transforming, daily contemplation of Christ that prepares the soul for eternal glory.



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CONTENTS



Title Page	5
PREFACE TO THE READER.	6
Chapter	26
CHAP. II. The Glory of the Person of Christ, as the onl... ..	39
CHAP. III. The Glory of Christ in the Mysterious Cons... ..	64
CHAP. IV. The Glory of Christ in his Susception of the... ..	83
CHAP. V. The Glory of Christ in his Love.	100
CHAP. VI. The Glory of Christ in the Discharge of his	108
CHAP. VII. The Glory of Christ in his Exaltation, after	115
CHAP. VIII. Representations of the Glory of Christ un... ..	124
CHAP. IX. The Glory of Christ in his intimate Conjun... ..	131
CHAP. X. The Glory of Christ in the Communication o... ..	143
CHAP. XI. The Glory of Christ in the Recapitulation of... ..	155
CHAP. XII. Differences between our beholding the Gl... ..	166
CHAP. XIII. The second Difference between our behol... ..	189
CHAP. XIV. Other Differences between our Beholding... ..	218

TITLE PAGE



Meditations and Discourses on the Glory of Christ, in His Person, Office, and Grace: with the Differences between Faith and Sight. Applied to the use of those who believe.

By the late Reverend John Owen, Doctor of Divinity.

London, Printed for B. A. and sold by most booksellers in London, 1691.

PREFACE TO THE READER.



Christian Reader,

The purpose of the following discourse is to describe some part of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ — glory revealed in Scripture and set before us as the chief object of our faith, love, delight, and wonder. But after our most diligent efforts, we must confess: how little of Him can we truly understand! His glory is beyond comprehension, and His praises cannot be fully expressed. An enlightened mind may grasp something of it, but what we can put into words is virtually nothing compared to what it actually is. Those who have abandoned Scripture as their only true guide — straining beyond what is written, trying to elevate their thinking through imagination and fancy rather than through biblical revelation — have only darkened understanding without knowledge, speaking things they do not comprehend, things with no spiritual substance to feed faith.

Even so, the real vision of Christ and His glory that we may have in this life by faith — however dim and partial that knowledge obtained through divine revelation may be — is beyond all comparison more valuable than any other wisdom, understanding, or knowledge. This is declared by one whose judgment on such things

must be respected: 'Yes, indeed,' he says, 'I count all things as loss for the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.' Anyone who does not feel this way has no share in Him.

The revelation of Christ given in the blessed Gospel is far more excellent, more glorious, and far richer with rays of divine wisdom and goodness than the entire creation — more than the mind, even at its sharpest, could contain or produce. Without this knowledge, the human mind — no matter how proud it may be of its other discoveries and ideas — is wrapped in darkness and confusion.

This subject, then, deserves our most rigorous thinking, our best meditations, and our utmost diligence. If our future blessedness will consist in being where Christ is and beholding His glory, what better preparation for that could there be than a constant, ongoing contemplation of that glory as revealed in the Gospel — revealed precisely so that, by seeing it, we may be gradually transformed into that same glory?

I will offer no apology for publishing these meditations, which were first intended for the exercise of my own mind, and then for the building up of a private congregation — likely the last service of this kind I will render them. Some readers may, through these considerations, be prompted to attend to this duty with greater diligence than before and find guidance for how to carry it out. Others may be stirred to share their greater light and knowledge for the benefit of many. What I aim to do further in this discourse is to give a brief account of why this duty is necessary and useful, both in life and in death.

Specific motivations for diligently pursuing this duty will be presented in the discourse itself. Here I will note only a few general points. All people who are not consumed by sensual pleasures or overwhelmed by love for the world and present things — anyone with honest, serious thoughts about their own nature, existence, and purpose — are under the highest obligation to take up the contemplation of Christ and His glory. Without this, they will never find true rest or satisfaction in their own minds. He alone is the one in whom all humanity may glory and boast, on whom all human happiness depends.

First. He is the one in whom our nature — degraded as low as hell by its turning away from God — has been exalted above the entire creation. Our nature, as it was first made in our original parents, was crowned with honor and dignity. The image of God in which it was created, and the dominion over the lower world entrusted to it, made it a place of excellence, beauty, and glory. But all of this was stripped away at once by sin, leaving our nature face down in the dust from which it was taken. 'Dust you are, and to dust you shall return' was its just sentence. All of its inner faculties were invaded by deforming lusts — everything designed to make it unlike God, whose image it had lost. So it became despised by angels and dominated by Satan, who — being the enemy of all creation — found no place to reign except in the degraded nature of man. Nothing was more vile or base; its glory had completely departed. It had lost its unique closeness to God, which was its honor, and had fallen into the greatest distance from Him of any creature — the devils alone excepted — which was its shame and disgrace. And in that condition, as far as anything in itself was concerned, it was left to perish forever.

In this condition — lost, poor, degraded, yes, and cursed — the Lord Christ, the Son of God, found our nature. In infinite condescension and compassion, He set apart a portion of it for Himself, taking it to be His own in a holy and inexpressible union within His own Person. And in doing so, that same nature — crushed to the lowest point of misery — was exalted above all of God's creation. For in that very nature, God has seated Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, authority, power, dominion, and every name that is named — not only in this age, but also in the age to come. This is what the Psalmist celebrates with such great wonder in Psalm 8:3-8. This is the greatest privilege we hold among all our fellow creatures — this is something we may genuinely glory in and value. Those who devote this nature to serving sensual lusts and pleasures, who think that human happiness and the highest capacities of our nature consist in satisfying earthly and temporary desires, are content with it in its fallen state. But those who have received the light of faith and grace — and who therefore rightly understand the being and purpose of the nature they share — cannot help but rejoice that it has been delivered from its deepest degradation and raised to the glorious exaltation it has received in the Person of Christ. This must fill every thought of Him with refreshment to their souls. Let us guard our own lives well; the glory of our nature is safe in Him.

Second. In Him, our nature's relationship to God is secured forever. We were created in a covenant relationship with God. Our nature was related to Him in friendship, in likeness, and in His delight. But that bond of relationship and union was quickly broken by our turning away from Him. As a result, our whole nature came to stand at the farthest moral distance from God — in hostility to-

ward Him — which is the very depth of misery. But in infinite wisdom and grace, God determined to restore it and draw it near to Himself again. And He would do it in such a way that a separation between Him and our nature could never happen again. Heaven and earth may pass away, but the union between God and our nature will never be dissolved. He accomplished this by taking our nature into a substantial union with Himself in the Person of the Son. By this, the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in it bodily, substantially, and eternally. By this, our nature's relationship to God is secured forever. Among all the profound excellencies connected to this, two continually present themselves for our consideration.

First. Our nature is capable of this glorious exaltation and existence in God. No creature could have conceived how God's omnipotent wisdom, power, and goodness could bring about such an effect. The mystery of it is a source of wonder to angels, and will be so for the entire church throughout all eternity. What is revealed in Scripture about the glory, manner, and means of this, I have set out in my Treatise concerning the Mystery of Godliness, or the Person of Christ. What mind can conceive, what tongue can express — who can sufficiently admire — the wisdom, goodness, and condescension of God in this! Since He has set before us this glorious object of faith and meditation, how worthless and foolish we are if we spend our thoughts on other things while neglecting it!

Second. This is also an inexpressible pledge of God's love toward our nature. Though He will not take any other instance of our nature — except that of the man Christ Jesus — into personal union with Himself, He has given in that one instance a glorious pledge of His love for and valuation of our nature. For He certainly did not take on the nature of angels, but He took on the offspring

of Abraham. And this kindness extends to our persons as sharers in that nature. For He purposed this glory for the man Christ Jesus — that He might be the firstborn of the new creation — and that we might be conformed to Him according to our measure, and as members of that body of which He is the head, we share in this glory.

Third. He is the one in whom our nature has been carried — successfully and victoriously — through all the opposition it faces, including death itself. I will address the glory of this in its proper place later in this discourse, so I will pass over it here.

Fourth. He is the one who has shown in Himself that our nature is capable of inhabiting those blessed regions of light far above these visible heavens. Here we live in bodies of clay that are crushed as easily as a moth — bodies that cannot be raised so much as a foot above the earth we walk on. The luminaries we see in the sky appear too great and glorious for us to dwell alongside. We look like grasshoppers compared to those vast celestial bodies, and the places they inhabit seem as though they would instantly swallow up and extinguish our natures. How then can we conceive of being carried and lifted above them all, to exist forever in places incomparably more glorious than the spheres they occupy? What capacity does our nature have for such a dwelling? The Lord Christ has answered that question by pledging it in Himself. Our nature, in Him, has already passed through these visible heavens and been exalted far above them. Its eternal home is in the blessed regions of light and glory, and He has promised that where He is, we will be also — and that forever.

There are countless other encouragements to stir us up to diligence in the duty set before us here — the continual contemplation of the glory of Christ in His person, office, and grace. The principal ones I know of are presented in the following discourse. I will here add only the distinctive benefit we may gain from faithfully pursuing this duty: it will carry us cheerfully, comfortably, and victoriously through life and death, and through everything we must face in either.

Let it be noted that I assume here what is written on this subject in the following discourse, as something designed to prepare the reader's mind for making the most of it.

As for this present life, most who think seriously about these things know what it is like. Temptations, afflictions, changes, sorrows, dangers, fears, sickness, and pain fill up no small portion of it. On the other hand, all our earthly pleasures, comforts, and refreshments are uncertain, passing, and ultimately unsatisfying — all of them, in every form, made bitter by the remaining effects of sin. So everything we experience has sorrow and trouble at its root. Some people labor under poverty and hardship all their lives, and some have very few hours free from pain and illness. All of this is made worse at present by the difficult times in which our lot has fallen. Nearly everywhere, across all nations, things are filled with confusion, disorder, danger, distress, and trouble. Wars and rumors of wars abound, with signs of further judgments approaching — anguish among nations, perplexity, and people's hearts failing them with fear as they look at what is coming upon the earth. In many places there is no peace for those going out or coming in; great suffering plagues the inhabitants of the world. Nation destroys nation, and city destroys city, for God afflicts them with ev-

ery kind of adversity. Meanwhile, outrage at the ungodly deeds of wicked men greatly adds to life's troubles. Many suffer for the sake of their conscience, and the divisions and hostilities that abound among all kinds of Christians make the situation even more deplorable.

The brevity, vanity, and misery of human life have been the subject of complaint from all kinds of thoughtful people — pagans as well as Christians — and it is not my present task to dwell on them. My inquiry is only about the relief we may find against all these evils, so that we do not collapse under them but instead win the victory over them.

The apostle states this in general in 2 Corinthians 4: 'We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed. But for this reason we do not lose heart, and though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison. While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.'

Looking by faith at things that are not seen — at spiritual and eternal realities — will relieve all our afflictions, make their burden lighter, and keep our souls from giving way under them. Of these unseen realities, the glory of Christ that we are discussing is the chief — and in a true sense encompasses all the others. For we behold the glory of God Himself in the face of Jesus Christ. Anyone

who can at any time retreat in mind to the contemplation of this glory will be carried above the overwhelming sense of any of these troubles, or of all of them together.

It is a sad way to live when people scramble after small, perishable comforts in their distress. This contemplation is the universal remedy and cure — the only balm for all our sorrows. Whatever presses, burdens, or bewilders us — if we can only withdraw our minds to a view of this glory and reflect honestly on our own share in it, comfort and strength will be given to us. Wicked people in their distress — which sometimes overtakes even them — are like a restless, churning sea. Others grow discouraged and despondent, not without a quiet resentment toward the wise workings of divine providence, especially when they compare themselves to those they suppose are better off. And the best of us are prone to grow weary and faint when these troubles press unusually hard or drag on without any apparent relief. This contemplation is the stronghold to which such prisoners of hope must turn. In beholding the glory of Christ, they will find rest for their souls.

First. In pursuing this duty, it will become clear how slight and trivial all the things that cause our troubles and distress actually are. They all grow from the root of overvaluing temporal things. Unless we reach a settled conviction that all things here below are passing and perishing — affecting only the outer man, or the body (at most, even killing it) — that the best of them hold nothing truly substantial or lasting, and that we have a secure interest in things incomparably better and above them, we will inevitably spend our lives in fear, sorrow, and inner turmoil. One genuine sight of the glory of Christ, and of our own part in it, will give us full relief. What are all the things of this life — what is their good or evil —

compared to a share in this transcendent glory? When we have a right understanding of it, when our minds are occupied with thoughts of it, when our affections reach out for its enjoyment — let pain, sickness, sorrow, fear, danger, and death say what they will — we will have at hand everything needed to face them and overcome them, on this ground: that they are all outward, temporary, and passing away, while our minds are fixed on things that are eternal and filled with incomprehensible glory.

Second. Trouble tends to throw the mind into disorder — tossing it about and agitating it with various feelings and passions. The Psalmist experienced this in his own distress, which is why he asked himself, 'Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you restless within me?' In truth, the mind is often its own greatest source of suffering. It tends to unleash passions of fear and sorrow that generate countless tormenting thoughts, until the mind is carried completely beyond its own control. But in this state, a proper contemplation of the glory of Christ will restore and calm the mind, settling it into a quiet, peaceful frame in which faith can say to the winds and waves of disordered passions, 'Peace, be still,' and they will obey.

Third. Contemplating Christ's glory is the way and means by which a sense of God's love is conveyed to our souls — and that alone is where we ultimately find rest in the midst of all life's troubles, as the apostle declares in Romans 5:2-5. It is the Spirit of God alone who communicates this sense of love to our souls; it is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Even so, there are things we can do on our part to prepare and fit ourselves to receive these communications of divine love. Chief among these is the contemplation of the glory of Christ, and of God the Father in Him.

This is the time and the means at which and by which the Holy Spirit gives believers a sense of God's love, leading them to rejoice with a joy inexpressible and full of glory. This will be made clear in the following discourse. This will lift the minds and hearts of believers above all the troubles of this life, and it is the supreme remedy that will drive out all the poison in those troubles — poison that would otherwise torment and enslave their souls.

I have only touched on these matters, intending to expand on what follows. This is the advantage we may gain from pursuing this duty, even with respect to death itself. Steadfast contemplation of the glory of Christ is what will carry us cheerfully and comfortably into death and through it. My principal work for a long season now has been to die daily, living in constant expectation of my own departure, and so I will take this opportunity to share with the reader a few of my thoughts and comforts with respect to death itself.

Several things are required of us if we are to face death cheerfully, steadfastly, and victoriously. For lack of these — or some of them — I have known godly souls who lived their whole lives in a kind of bondage through fear of death. We do not know how God will govern any of our minds and souls in that hour and that trial, for He acts toward us in all such things in a way of sovereignty. But these are what He requires of us as a matter of duty.

First. We are required to exercise specific acts of faith — committing and resigning our departing souls into the hand of the One who is able to receive them, keep and preserve them, and bring them into a state of rest and blessedness.

The soul is now parting from all things here below, and forever. Nothing it has seen, heard, or enjoyed through its outward senses can be persuaded to stay with it one hour or take one step alongside it on the journey it is about to make. It must launch alone into eternity. It is entering an invisible world of which it knows no more than it has received by faith. No one has come back from the dead to tell us what the other world is like. Indeed, God seems to have deliberately concealed it from us, so that we would have no evidence of it — at least as to the manner of things there — except what faith receives through divine revelation. This is why those who died and were raised back to life among people — like Lazarus — probably knew nothing of the invisible state. Their souls were kept in being by the power of God, but bound as to any present operations. This is what caused a great emperor to cry out as death approached: 'O poor, trembling, wandering soul — into what dark and defiled places are you going!'

What lies ahead after the few moments we have left in this world under the pangs of death? Is it annihilation — is death the destruction of our entire being, so that after it we simply cease to exist? Some would have it so. Is it a state of wandering existence, drifting through the world under the influence of more powerful spirits that rule in the air — haunting tombs and desolate places, sometimes appearing to the living through impressions made by those greater spirits? Some imagine this from the story of Samuel and the witch of Endor, and it is commonly accepted in the Roman church in connection with their idea of purgatory. Or is it a state of universal misery and suffering, incapable of any comfort or joy? Those who can understand no comfort or joy in this life apart from what their senses provide may expect nothing more. And whatever

the state of this invisible world may be, the soul can take no charge of its own affairs after it leaves the body. It knows it will be entirely at the disposal of another.

Therefore, no one can enter this condition with real comfort except by exercising faith — faith that enables him to resign and give up his departing soul into the hand of God, who alone is able to receive it and bring it to rest and blessedness. As the apostle says: 'I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.'

In this, as in all other graces, our Lord Jesus Christ is our great example. He resigned His departing spirit into His Father's hands, to be held and preserved by Him in its state of separation. 'Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit' (Luke 23:46) — as the Psalmist, His type, did in a similar condition (Psalm 31:5). But the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ in this act — its object and exercise, what He believed and trusted in when He resigned His spirit into God's hand — is fully expressed in the sixteenth Psalm. 'I have set the Lord always before Me,' He says; 'because He is at My right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore My heart is glad and My glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not abandon My soul to the realm of the dead, nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay. You will make known to Me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever.' He left His soul in God's hand, fully assured that it would suffer no harm in its state of separation, but would be brought together with His body into a blessed resurrection and

eternal glory. So Stephen, as he died under violence, resigned his departing soul into the hands of Christ Himself, saying, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.'

This is faith's final victorious act — the one in which its conquest over its last enemy, death itself, is accomplished. In this act, the soul speaks to itself: 'You are now passing from time into eternity; everything around you is fading like shadows and will disappear at once. The things you are entering are still invisible — things no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no human heart has fully conceived. Now therefore, with quiet confidence, give yourself over to the sovereign power, grace, truth, and faithfulness of God, and you will find certain rest and peace.'

It is Jesus Christ Himself who receives the souls of those who believe in Him — as we see in the case of Stephen. And what greater encouragement could there be to resign our souls into His hands than a daily contemplation of His glory — His person, His power, His exaltation, His office, and His grace? Who among those who believe in Him and belong to Him could fear to commit a departing spirit to His love, power, and care? Even we, in our dying moments, will by faith see heaven opened and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, ready to receive us. This, combined with the love all believers have for the Lord Jesus — a love inflamed by contemplating His glory — and their longing to be with Him where He is, will strengthen and confirm our minds as we resign our departing souls into His hand.

Second, it is required of us, toward the same end, that we be ready and willing to part with the body we are clothed in, along with everything connected to and cherished by it. The bond, the relationship, the friendship, the union between soul and body is the

greatest, closest, and firmest found among all created beings. Nothing else is like it; nothing else equals it. The union of three persons in the one divine nature, and the union of two natures in one person in Christ, are infinite, inexpressible, and beyond all comparison. But among created beings, the union of these two essential parts of the same nature in one person is the most excellent. Nothing equal to it or like it is found in any other creature. Among other living things, those with the most life either have no bodies — as angels — or have no souls that survive death — as all animals below.

Angels, being pure immaterial spirits, have nothing in their essence that can die. Animals have nothing in them that can survive when their bodies die. The soul of an animal cannot be preserved in a separate state, even by an act of almighty power — because it simply does not exist as something separable. It is nothing more than the body itself in the operation of its material powers.

Only human nature, among all of God's works, is capable of this kind of separation. Its essential parts — soul and body — can be divided by death, with one continuing to exist and exercise its particular powers in a separate state. The powers of the whole united nature, operating in soul and body together, are scattered and lost by death. But the powers of one essential part of that same nature — the soul — are preserved after death in a more perfect operation than before. This is unique to human nature, which stands as a middle point between heaven and earth, sharing in the spiritual perfection of angels above and the imperfection of animals below. There is this difference, however: our participation in the heavenly, spiritual qualities of the angelic nature is for eternity, while our participation in the limitations of earthly animal life is

only for a season. God has designed our bodies for such a glorious transformation at the resurrection that they will no longer share any resemblance to the animal nature that perishes forever. For we will be like the angels — equal to them. Our bodies will no longer be capable of the functions and operations that now we share with other living creatures on earth.

This is the unique dignity of human nature, as the wise man declares. Against the objection of atheistic Epicureans — 'As the one dies, so dies the other; they all have the same breath, so that a man has no advantage over a beast; all go to the same place; all came from dust, and all return to dust' — he concedes that as to their bodies, this is true for a time: in them we presently share in the nature of animal life. But here, he says, is the difference: 'Who knows whether the spirit of man ascends upward, and the spirit of the animal descends downward to the earth?' Unless we know this, unless we consider the different destiny of the spirits of men and of animals, we cannot escape this kind of atheism — but thinking clearly on this truth will set us free from it. They die in similar ways, and their bodies both return equally to the dust for a season. But the animal has no spirit, no soul, except one that dies with the body and goes to the dust. If animals did have such souls, their bodies too would need to be raised again to be reunited with them — otherwise death would produce a whole new class of creatures for eternity. But man, he says, has an immortal soul — a heavenly spirit — which, when the body returns to the dust for a season, ascends to heaven, where (when the guilt of sin and the curse of the law do not intervene) it exists and exercises all its native powers in a state of blessedness.

But as I said, because of this uniquely intimate union and relationship between soul and body, our entire nature has a deep instinctive resistance to dissolution. The soul and body are naturally and necessarily unwilling to enter a state of separation — the one ceasing to be what it was, the other not knowing clearly how it will subsist. The body clings to the soul, and the soul receives deep impressions from that embrace, so that the whole nature, existing in their union, is strongly averse to being pulled apart.

Therefore, unless we can overcome this natural reluctance, we can never die comfortably or cheerfully. We would certainly prefer to be clothed upon — to have mortality swallowed up by life, to receive the garment of glory over our whole nature, soul and body, without dissolution. But if that cannot be, believers can so overcome this reluctance through faith and views of the glory of Christ that they actually arrive at a desire for this departure. So the apostle testifies of himself: 'I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better' (Philippians 1:23). Not an occasional wish, not something that stirs in him from time to time, but a constant, habitual longing that expresses itself in earnest desire. And what exactly does he desire? It is to depart, we say — to leave this body, to leave this tent for a time. But it is the kind of departure that involves the dissolution of his present state of being, so that it will no longer be what it is. How can a person arrive at such a readiness for, such a yearning toward, such an intense desire of dissolution? It comes from seeing Christ and His glory by faith — a vision that so satisfies the soul that it is convinced being with Him is incomparably better than its present state and condition.

Someone who wants to die comfortably must be able to say to himself: 'Die then, you frail and sinful flesh; dust you are, and to dust you shall return. I give you up to the just sentence of the Holy One. Yet in doing so I am also placing you in the hands of the great Refiner, who will hide you in your grave, and through your decay purify you from all your corruption and tendency toward evil. There is no other way. After a long and sincere effort to put sin to death, I find it will never be completely done away with except by this return to the dust. You shall no longer be a dwelling for even the smallest remnant of sin throughout eternity, nor any hindrance to my soul in its communion with God. Rest therefore in hope; for God in His appointed time, when He desires to reclaim the work of His hands, will call to you, and you shall answer Him out of the dust. Then by an act of His almighty power He will not only restore you to your original glory — as at the first creation when you were the pure work of His hands — but enrich and adorn you with privileges and advantages beyond all imagination. Do not be afraid; away with all reluctance — go into the dust, rest in hope, for you shall stand in your place at the end of the days.'

What will enable us to do this in an outstanding way is the view and consideration of the glory of Christ that is the subject of the following meditations. For He who now possesses all that glory underwent this very dissolution of nature just as truly and really as we ever will.

Third, there is required of us a readiness to accept the times and seasons in which God would have us depart and leave this world. Many people think they will be willing to die when their time comes, but they have many reasons — as they suppose — for wanting it not to be yet, most of which arise simply from fear and

an aversion to death. Some desire to live so they may see more of that glorious work of God for His church that they believe He will accomplish. So Moses prayed that he might not die in the wilderness, but cross over the Jordan and see the good land, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon — the seat of the church and the worship of God — a request that God thought fit to deny him. And God's denial of Moses' prayer, made on the highest possible grounds, is a lesson to all who find themselves in a similar position. Others may judge that they still have work to do in the world that concerns the glory of God and the good of the church, and so they wish to be spared a little longer. Paul himself was uncertain whether it might not be better for him to remain in the flesh a while longer for this reason. And David often pleaded against the prospect of immediate death because of the work he still had to do for God in the world. Others rise no higher than their own private interests — concerns about their persons, their families, their relationships, and their possessions in this world. They would like to see these things in a better or more settled state before they die, and then they will be more willing to go. But the love of life lies at the root of all these desires, and by itself it will never let go of them. No one can die cheerfully or comfortably who does not live in a constant surrender of the time and season of his death to God's will — just as much as he surrenders himself with respect to death itself. Our times are in His hand, at His sovereign disposal, and His will in all things must be accepted. Without this resolve, without this surrender, no one can enjoy even the smallest measure of solid peace in this world.

Fourth, just as the times and seasons of death present their own trials, so do the particular ways and circumstances through which death approaches — trials that will keep us in bondage to the fear of death itself unless we are prepared for them. Long, wasting illnesses; burning fevers; severe pain from kidney stones or the like from within — or sword, fire, torture, shame, and reproach from without — may attend death's approach. Some who have been entirely freed from fear of death as a dissolution of nature, and who have even seen it as something welcome and desirable in itself, have still struggled greatly in their minds about these specific ways it might come. They have earnestly wished that this particular bitterness of the cup might be taken away. Learning to rise above all anxiety about such things is part of the wisdom we gain from dying daily. We must always have ready those graces and practices that are needed for this. Chief among them is a constant surrender of ourselves — in every situation — to the sovereign will, pleasure, and disposal of God. May He not do as He wills with what is His own? Is it not right and fitting that He should? Is not His will in all things infinitely holy, wise, just, and good? Does He not know what is best for us, and what most advances His own glory? Does not He alone know this? So it is necessary to live in the exercise of faith, trusting that if God calls us to endure anything especially dreadful to our nature, He will supply such spiritual strength and patience as will enable us to bear it — if not with ease and joy, then at least with peace and calm beyond our expectation. Many have found that what seemed, from a distance, to be an overwhelming terror was far from unbearable when it came, as strength was received from above to meet it. And beyond this, it is required that we frequently and steadily compare these trials with

things eternal — both the misery from which we are delivered and the blessedness prepared for us. But I will not pursue these particulars any further.

None of the things we have discussed can be attained without a view of the glory that will give us a new and far more excellent state than the one we are leaving. This includes resigning a departing soul into God's hand, willingness to lay down the flesh in the dust, and readiness to accept God's will concerning the time, season, and manner of death's approach — none of these are possible without a prospect of that future glory. We cannot have that prospect, whatever we may claim, unless we have some present sight of the glory of Christ. A vague notion of its future manifestation in heaven will not sustain us if we do not know what it is here and what it consists of — if we have no prior acquaintance with it in this life. This is what will make everything easy and even pleasant to us — including death itself — as the means that brings us to the full enjoyment of that glory.

Other great and glorious benefits that may be gained from diligently pursuing the duty set before us here could be discussed further, but the subject matter itself will make those benefits plain and point us to their source. Besides, weakness, weariness, and the near approach of death now call me away from any further labor of this kind.

CHAPTER



John 17:24 — Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me.

The high priest under the law, on the solemn Day of Atonement when he was to enter the Holy Place, was required to take both hands full of sweet incense from the golden incense table and carry it with him as he entered. He also carried a censer filled with fire taken from the altar of burnt offerings, where atonement for sin had been made with blood. Once he had passed through the veil, he placed the incense on the fire in the censer, until the cloud of smoke covered the ark and the mercy seat (see Leviticus 16:12-13). The purpose of this was to present to God, on behalf of the people, a sweet-smelling aroma from the sacrifice of propitiation.

Fulfilling this symbolic pattern, the great High Priest of the church — our Lord Jesus Christ — as He was about to enter the Holy Place not made with hands, filled the heavens above — the glorious dwelling place of God — with a cloud of incense through the blessed prayer recorded in this chapter. Just as the old high priest's incense was kindled by fire from the altar, so Christ's intercession was kindled by the same eternal fire by which He offered

Himself as a bloody sacrifice to make atonement for sin. From that same fire He kindled in His most holy soul those desires for the application of all its benefits to His church — desires that are expressed here and that constitute His intercession.

There is one specific statement in the verse cited above that I intend to examine here. It concerns what the Lord Christ asks on behalf of those given to Him by the Father: that they may behold His glory.

It is clear that in this prayer the Lord Christ has in view His own glory and its manifestation — glory He had asked of the Father earlier in the prayer (John 17:4-5). But here His focus is not on this glory as something belonging to Himself, so much as on the benefit, blessing, satisfaction, and blessedness His disciples will receive from beholding it. For these were the very purposes of all the mediatorial glory given to Him. Similarly, when Joseph revealed himself to his brothers, he charged them to tell his father of all his glory in Egypt (Genesis 45:13). He did this not to boast about his own glory, but because he knew how much joy and satisfaction his father would have in hearing it. In the same way, the Lord Christ desires that His glory be made known to His disciples in a way that will fill them with blessed satisfaction forever.

This alone — what is prayed for here — will give them that satisfaction, and nothing else. The hearts of believers are like a compass needle touched by a magnet: they cannot rest until they reach the point to which they are drawn by that hidden power. For once touched by the love of Christ and given an impression of that secret, inexpressible virtue, they will always be in motion — restless

— until they come to Him and behold His glory. Any soul that can be satisfied without beholding His glory, or that cannot be eternally satisfied by it, has no share in the power of His intercession.

I will lay the foundation of the following meditations in this one claim: that one of the greatest privileges and blessings of believers — both in this world and for eternity — consists in beholding the glory of Christ. This is what He desires for them in this solemn intercession, as the fulfillment of all His other requests on their behalf: that they may behold His glory — see, observe, contemplate His glory. The reason I apply this privilege not only to the heavenly state (which is the primary focus here) but also to the present life of believers — with their duties and blessings in it — will be explained immediately.

All unbelievers in their hearts call Christ Ichabod — 'Where is the glory?' They see no beauty or desirability in Him. They look at Him as Michal, Saul's daughter, looked at David dancing before the ark — despising him in her heart. Many of them do not openly call Jesus accursed, but they cry 'Hail, Master' and then crucify Him.

This explains the many wicked opinions that have been advanced against His glory — some of them genuinely destructive of everything that true glory actually is. Some deny the only Lord who bought us and substitute a false Christ in His place. Others reveal their contempt for Him and His glory by boldly and irreverently asking what use His person serves in our religion — as if anything in our religion had any reality, substance, or truth apart from its connection to Him. And their answers only bring such questions closer to the edge of blasphemy.

No age in the history of the Christian name has seen such direct opposition to the person and glory of Christ as the age in which we live. In the early church there were certainly swarms of proud, confused, and unstable people who put forward many foolish ideas about Him — ideas that eventually led to Arianism and were buried in its ruin. The gates of hell could not prevail against the Rock on which the church is built. But now we have large numbers opposing the person and glory of Christ under the pretense of sober reason, as they vainly claim. The disbelief of the mysteries of the Trinity and the incarnation of the Son of God — the sole foundation of the Christian religion — has spread so widely in the world that it has nearly consumed the vitals and power of faith. And not a few, who do not yet dare to express their views openly, give clear signals of their intentions and hostility by making those who desire to know nothing except Christ and Him crucified the objects of their scorn and mockery.

In His appointed time, God will powerfully vindicate His honor and glory against the futile attempts of corrupt minds.

In the meantime, it is the duty of all who love the Lord Jesus sincerely to bear witness in a distinctive way to His divine person and glory — each according to his capacity — precisely because of the opposition that is being made against them.

I have felt obligated on many counts to add my small contribution to this topic. I have chosen to do so not through controversy — as I have engaged in at other times — but in a way that, while defending the truth, also aims to strengthen the faith of true believers, build them up in the knowledge of it, and help them recognize the experience they have — or may have — of the power and reality of these things.

What I intend to demonstrate here is that beholding the glory of Christ is one of the greatest privileges and blessings believers can experience — in this world or in the one to come. It is the means by which they are first gradually conformed to His likeness, and then established in the eternal enjoyment of it. In this life, beholding His glory, they are changed and transformed into His likeness (2 Corinthians 3:18); and in the life to come, they will be forever like Him, because they will see Him as He is (1 John 3:1-2). Our present comfort and our future blessedness both depend on this. This is the life and reward of our souls. Anyone who has seen Him has seen the Father also (John 14:9), for we perceive the light of the knowledge of God only in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6).

There are therefore two ways — or two degrees — of beholding the glory of Christ, and Scripture consistently distinguishes between them. The first is by faith in this life, which is the evidence of things not seen. The second is by sight, or immediate vision, in eternity (2 Corinthians 5:7): 'We walk by faith, not by sight.' We walk that way while we are in this world, while we are at home in the body and away from the Lord (verse 8). But we will live and walk by sight hereafter. The Lord Christ and His glory are the immediate objects of both this faith and this sight. Here we see Him dimly, as in a mirror — that is, by faith — but we will see Him face to face by immediate vision; now we know in part, but then we will know fully, even as we are fully known (1 Corinthians 13:12). The difference between these two ways of beholding the glory of Christ will be explained later.

It is the first way — vision in the light of glory — that is primarily in view in our Lord's prayer that His disciples be where He is to behold His glory. But I will not confine my inquiry to that. Nor does our Lord Jesus exclude from His desire the sight of His glory we have by faith in this life; rather, He is praying for its perfection in heaven. Therefore I will take up this present life first, and for the following reasons.

First. No one will behold the glory of Christ by sight hereafter who does not in some measure behold it by faith here in this life. Grace is necessary preparation for glory, and faith for sight. Where the soul has not been previously shaped by grace and faith, it is not capable of glory or vision. In fact, people not prepared in this way cannot truly desire it, whatever they may claim — they only deceive themselves in supposing they do. Most people will confidently say, in life and in death, that they desire to be with Christ and to behold His glory. But they cannot give any real reason why they should desire such a thing. They only feel that it must be better than the awful condition they would otherwise be cast into forever when this life is over. If a man claims to love intensely or strongly desire something he has never seen and has never had any real representation of, he is only indulging his own imagination. The supposed desires of many to behold the glory of Christ in heaven — when they have no sight of it by faith here in this life — are nothing but self-deceiving fantasies.

This is exactly how Roman Catholics deceive themselves. Their physical senses are stirred up by images of Christ — His sufferings, His resurrection, His glory above — which arouse carnal feelings that they take to be love and delight in Christ Himself. They satisfy themselves that they are beholding the glory of Christ, with love

and great devotion. But no true representation of the Lord Christ or His glory is made through such images — that is confined absolutely to the Gospel alone, and this way of attempting it is under a strict prohibition. They are simply entertaining themselves with their own delusions.

The apostle tells us about himself and other believers, when the Lord Christ was present and walked with them in the days of His flesh, that they saw His glory — the glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14). We may ask: what was this glory of Christ they saw, and how did they come to see it? It was not the glory of His outward circumstances, as we behold the grandeur of kings and rulers of the earth — for He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant and living in the condition of a lowly man. The worldly splendor of His so-called vicar on earth bears no resemblance to that glory His disciples saw. He kept no court, no house of entertainment, and though He made all things, He had no place of His own to lay His head. Nor was it the outward appearance of the flesh He took on — the physical form in which He assumed our nature — as we might admire a handsome or beautiful person. He had in that regard no beauty or stateliness that we should desire Him; His appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man, His form more marred than the sons of men (Isaiah 52:14; 53:2-3). Everything about Him was consistent with a man of sorrows. Nor was it the absolute, eternal glory of His divine nature that is meant — for no one can see that in this life, and what we will attain of it hereafter we do not yet know. What they saw was His glory as one full of grace and truth. They saw the glory of His person and His office in the administration of grace and truth. And how did they see this glory? By faith, and in no other way.

This privilege was granted only to those who received Him and believed on His name (John 1:12). This was the glory John the Baptist saw when, at Jesus' coming to him, he said to all who were present, 'Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world' (John 1:29-33).

Let no one deceive himself: whoever has no sight of the glory of Christ here in this life will never have any sight of it to his advantage hereafter. It is not profitable, therefore, to speak about beholding the glory of Christ in heaven by vision, until we first examine whether we see anything of it by faith in this life.

Second. Beholding Christ in glory is in itself too high, too magnificent, and too wonderful for us in our present condition. It has a splendor and brightness too great for our present spiritual capacity — just as looking directly at the sun darkens our sight rather than strengthening it. Therefore, the only way we can form any true spiritual understanding of what immediate vision actually is — what it means to see the glory of Christ in heaven — is through the view of that same glory that we have by faith in this life. Anything else that enters our minds on the subject is merely conjecture and imagination, as is the case with most people's thinking about heavenly things.

I have read something of the writings of learned men on the state of future glory. Some of these writings are filled with excellent insights and elegant expression that cannot help but stir the minds of those who thoughtfully consider them. But many readers find — and I have heard this complaint often — that in reading such discourses they are like a man who looks at his own face in a mirror and then immediately forgets what he looked like. The things discussed do not stay or become part of the mind. They

please and refresh briefly, like a rain shower in a dry season that does not soak down to the roots — their power does not enter into us. Is this not because their ideas about future things are not drawn from our actual experience of the beginnings of those things in this life? Without that connection, such ideas cannot make any lasting home in our minds or continue to influence our hearts. In fact, the soul is disturbed rather than built up when it tries to contemplate future glory through things it has no foretaste of, no sense of, and no experience of in this life. No one should expect anything in heaven that he does not in some way have some experience of here. If people were fully convinced of this, they might well exercise faith and love toward heavenly things far more than they currently do. As it is, they do not know what they are already enjoying, and they look forward to they know not what.

This is why people who are strangers to any experience of the beginnings of glory in themselves — as an effect of faith — have filled their worship with images, paintings, and music to create some representation of the glory they imagine to exist above. They have no access to what glory truly is, and they cannot have it, because they have no experience of its power in themselves and no taste of its goodness through its first fruits in their own minds. Therefore, only through the view of the glory of Christ by faith here in this world — and in no other way — may we reach such blessed conceptions of beholding His glory above by immediate vision that our hearts are drawn out in admiration of it and in longing for its full enjoyment.

Third. Our present growth in grace depends chiefly on this. In the present beholding of the glory of Christ, the life and power of faith are exercised most fully. And from this exercise of faith, love

for Christ chiefly — if not entirely — arises and flows. If we desire to have faith in its full strength, or love in its full power — giving rest, contentment, and satisfaction to our souls — we must seek them in the diligent practice of this duty; they will not be found elsewhere. I want to live in this; I want to die in this; I want to dwell on it in my thoughts and affections until all the painted beauties of this world wither and fade, until all things here below are crucified to me and become a dead and disfigured thing, in no way fit for loving embrace.

For these and similar reasons, I will first examine our beholding of the glory of Christ in this world by faith, and in doing so, seek to guide the souls of believers into the quieter pathways of faith, love, and holy meditation — the inner chambers where the King is held (Song of Solomon 7:5).

Since no benefit comes from contemplating this sacred truth apart from actually practicing the duty it calls us to — that is, the constant beholding of the glory of Christ by faith — I will first note a few of the advantages we may gain by doing so.

First. We will be made ready and fit for heaven. Not everyone who desires heaven and hopes for it is fit for it. Some are not only unworthy of it and shut out from it by reason of sin, but they are unfit for it and incapable of receiving any benefit from it. Every person naturally assumes they are fit enough for glory — what could stand in the way? — but only because they do not know what it actually is. People will not be clothed with glory against their will or without regard to whether they are suited for it. It must be received in the exercise of the soul's faculties, which many people simply have no capacity for. Music gives no pleasure to those who cannot hear; beautiful colors give no pleasure to those who cannot

see. It would do a fish no good to take it from the cold and dark depths of the ocean and place it under the rays of the sun — it is in no way fitted to receive any benefit from them. Heaven itself would be no more useful to people who have not been renewed by the Spirit of grace in this life.

The apostle therefore gives thanks to the Father who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light (Colossians 1:12). The beginning of this here, and its fullness in glory hereafter, are both given to believers by an almighty act of God's will and grace. Yet He has ordained ways and means by which we may be made fit and receptive for the glory that will be given to us. That this way and means is the beholding of the glory of Christ by faith will be made fully clear as we proceed. This therefore should drive us to this duty — for all our present glory consists in our preparation for future glory.

Second. No one can by faith take a real view of this glory without a transforming power proceeding from it — changing him into the same image (2 Corinthians 3:18). How this happens, and how we become like Christ by beholding His glory, will be fully explained as we proceed.

Third. The constant contemplation of the glory of Christ will give rest, satisfaction, and contentment to those who practice it. Our minds tend to be filled with a multitude of anxious thoughts, fears, worries, dangers, distress, disordered passions, and sinful desires, all of which make their various impressions on us and fill us with disorder, darkness, and confusion. But when the soul is fixed in its thoughts and meditations on this glorious object, it will be brought into and kept in a holy, peaceful, spiritual frame. For to be spiritually minded is life and peace. This happens because such

contemplation draws our hearts away from all excessive attachment to earthly things by showing us the surpassing worth, beauty, and glory of what we are occupied with. See Philippians 3:7-11. A lack of this contemplation is what makes many of us strangers to a heavenly life and causes us to live below the spiritual refreshment and satisfaction that the Gospel offers.

Fourth. The sight of the glory of Christ is the source and cause of our everlasting blessedness. We will be forever with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:17) — with Christ, which is best of all (Philippians 1:23) — for there we will behold His glory (John 17:24), and by seeing Him as He is, we will be made like Him (1 John 3:2), which is our everlasting blessedness.

The enjoyment of God through sight is commonly called the beatific vision, and it is the sole source of all our souls' activity in the state of blessedness — something the ancient philosophers knew nothing of, and which we ourselves do not yet know clearly or fully. What we do know is that God in His immense essence is invisible to our bodily eyes, and will always be so; and that He is also incomprehensible to our minds, for nothing can fully comprehend that which is infinite except what is itself infinite. Therefore, the blessed and beatifying sight we will have of God will always be in the face of Jesus Christ. There the manifestation of God's glory in His infinite perfections — and all their blessed operations — will so transform our souls as to fill us immediately with peace, rest, and glory.

We admire these things here, but we cannot fully comprehend them. We hardly know what we are saying when we speak of them. Yet in true believers there is already a foretaste and foresight of this glorious condition. At times, through the Word and Spirit,

there enters into their hearts such a sense of the uncreated glory of God shining forth in Christ that it fills and satisfies their souls with inexpressible joy. From this arises the peace of God that surpasses all understanding, guarding our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ (Philippians 4:7). Christ in believers — the hope of glory — gives them a taste of its first fruits; yes, sometimes they are able to immerse their souls in the fountain of life and drink from the rivers of pleasure at His right hand. Those who are completely unfamiliar with these experiences are carnal — blind, seeing nothing of what lies ahead. Such moments of enjoyment are rare and generally brief. But it is through our own laziness and spiritual darkness that we do not receive more of them, and that the dawning light of glory does not shine more brightly on our souls. These things should stir us to diligence in the duty before us.

I will therefore inquire: first, what is the glory of Christ that we do or may behold by faith? Second, how do we behold it? Third, in what way does our present beholding differ from the immediate vision we will have in heaven? Throughout all of this, we will seek to answer the question put to the bride by the daughters of Jerusalem in Song of Solomon 5:9: 'What is your beloved more than another beloved, O most beautiful among women? What is your beloved more than another beloved, that you charge us so?'

CHAP. II. THE GLORY OF THE PERSON OF CHRIST, AS THE ONLY REPRESENTATIVE OF GOD UNTO THE CHURCH.



The glory of Christ is the glory of the person of Christ. So He refers to it in John 17:24 — 'that glory which is Mine,' belonging to Me, to My person.

The person of Christ may be considered in two ways. First, absolutely in itself. Second, in the undertaking and carrying out of His office, and in what followed from it. His glory under these distinct headings is distinct and different, but all equally His own. How we may behold it by faith in both respects is what we are inquiring into.

The first aspect in which we may behold the glory of the person of Christ — God and man — which was given to Him by His Father, consists in His representation of the nature of God and of the divine person of the Father to the church. For we behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6). Apart from this, we do not know God, we do not see Him — we see nothing of Him. This is the way of seeing and knowing God that Scripture presents as both our duty and our blessedness. The glory of God

encompasses both the holy attributes of His nature and the purposes of His will, and we have the illuminating knowledge of these things only in the face or person of Jesus Christ. Whatever dim and imperfect notions we may form of them by other means, we cannot have the enlightening knowledge of the glory of God that shines into our hearts except in the face or person of Jesus Christ — for He is the image of God (2 Corinthians 4:4), the radiance of the Father's glory and the exact representation of His nature (Hebrews 1:3), the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15). I mention these things only briefly here, as I have treated them at length in my discourse on the Mystery of Godliness, or the Person of Christ, to which I refer readers for fuller explanation and defense. Christ is glorious in this: He is the great representative of the nature and will of God to us — a revelation that without Him would have been forever hidden and invisible to us, for no one has ever seen God at any time (John 1:18).

In His divine person considered absolutely, He is the essential image of God — even the Father: He is in the Father and the Father is in Him, in the unity of the same divine essence (John 14:10). He was with the Father (John 1:1). In the distinction of His person, He is His essential image (Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3). In His incarnation He becomes the representative image of God to the church (2 Corinthians 4:6), without whom our understanding can make no real approach to the divine excellencies — God remaining to us what He is in Himself: the invisible God. In the face of Jesus Christ, we see His glory.

This is the original glory of Christ given to Him by His Father, and which by faith we may behold: He, and He alone, declares, represents, and makes known to angels and to humanity the essen-

tial glory of the invisible God — His attributes and His will — without which, a permanent comparative darkness would have covered all creation, and especially this world below.

This is the foundation of our religion, the Rock on which the church is built, the ground of all our hopes of salvation, life, and immortality. Everything resolves into this: the representation of the nature and will of God made in the person and office of Christ. If this fails us, we are lost forever. If this Rock stands firm, the church is safe here and will triumph hereafter.

In this, then, the Lord Christ is exceedingly glorious. Those who cannot by faith behold this glory of His — as the great divine means of representing God to us — do not truly know Him. In their worship of Him, they worship only an image of their own invention.

In fact, the essential nature of unbelief — the kind that is inevitably destructive to the soul — consists precisely in ignorance and neglect of this. Anyone who does not perceive the representation of the glory of God in the person of Christ is an unbeliever. This was the condition of the unbelieving Jews and Gentiles of old: they did not, would not, and could not see the glory of God in Him, nor how He represented God. The apostle explains at length that this was both the cause and the essential character of their unbelief (1 Corinthians 1:21-25). Not to see the wisdom of God, and the power of God — and consequently all the other holy attributes of His nature — in Christ is to be an unbeliever.

The essence of faith consists in giving proper glory to God (Romans 4:20). This we cannot do without the divine excellencies being made known to us — excellencies in which He is glorious.

This is accomplished in Christ alone, so that we may glorify God in a saving and acceptable way. Anyone who does not perceive the glory of divine wisdom, power, goodness, love, and grace in the person and office of Christ — and in His way of saving sinners — is an unbeliever.

From the very beginning of the preaching of the Gospel, the great design of the devil has been to blind the eyes of people and fill their minds with prejudices, so that they might not see this glory. The apostle describes his success in this design (2 Corinthians 4:3-4): 'And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.' Through various methods of deception — using the reputation he had established as the god of this world, backed by pretensions of supernatural power and wisdom — the devil labored to blind people with prejudices against the glorious light of the Gospel that presented the Lord Christ as the only image of God. This blindness and darkness is cured in those who believe by the mighty power of God, for God who said 'Let light shine out of darkness' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6) — and this is what saving faith essentially is. The unbelieving world of Jews and Gentiles perished in this darkness, and such is the present condition of all who deny the divine person of Christ, for no mere creature can ever make a perfect representation of God to us. But we must inquire a little further into this mystery.

Since humanity fell from God through sin, it is no small part of their misery and punishment that they are shrouded in thick darkness and ignorance of the nature of God. They do not know Him; they have never seen Him. Hence that promise to the church in Christ (Isaiah 60:1-2): 'For behold, darkness will cover the earth and deep darkness the peoples; but the Lord will rise upon you and His glory will appear upon you.'

The ancient philosophers made great efforts of inquiry into the divine being and arrived at many ideas about its existence and nature. They adorned these ideas with elegant language to attract others into admiring them. They boasted of being the only truly wise men in the world (Romans 1:22). But we must accept the apostles' verdict on their inquiries: Paul assures us that the world, in all its wisdom — that is, these wise men by all their wisdom — did not know God (1 Corinthians 1:21). And he calls the authors of their best ideas men who were without God in the world (Ephesians 2:12).

First. They had no certain guide, rule, or light that, if followed, could lead them reliably into a knowledge of the divine nature. All they had were their own reasonings and imaginations, by which they made themselves the great arguers of the world. But in those very reasonings they became futile, and their foolish hearts were darkened (Romans 1:21). At best they could only feel after God, as people groping in the dark after something they cannot clearly see (Acts 17:27). Cicero's book *On the Nature of the Gods* gives us a precise illustration of what the apostle means by that expression. And today it is not a lack of intelligence, but a hatred of the mysteries of our religion, that causes so many to abandon supernatural revelation and take refuge in a religion based, as they suppose, on

reason and the light of nature — like bats and owls that, unable to bear the light of the sun, retreat to the twilight, to that borderland between light and darkness.

Second. Whatever rational ideas the ancient philosophers may have attained about invisible and incomprehensible things, they could never free themselves from such principles and practices in idolatry and flagrant sin as would have made their knowledge of any benefit — as the apostle so effectively demonstrates in Romans 1 that there is no need to dwell on it here.

People may say what they like about an inner light or about the power of reason to lead them to a knowledge of God sufficient to live by. But if they had nothing beyond that — if they did not borrow from a light that has its source and foundation in divine revelation alone — they would be no better off than those who, making the best use of their own reasoning, still did not know God but became futile in their speculations.

In view of this universal darkness — this ignorance of God, with the dreadful confusion that accompanies it in human minds — Christ is called the light of men, the light of the world, because in and through Him alone this darkness is driven away, as He is the Sun of Righteousness.

Second. This darkness in the minds of humanity — this ignorance of God, His nature, and His will — was the original source of all evil in the world, and it continues to be so.

First. On this darkness Satan erected his kingdom and throne, advancing his design until he effectively ruled as the god of this world and was regarded as such by most people. He elevated himself by virtue of this darkness — for he is the prince of darkness —

into the place and position of God as the object of human religious worship. For the things the Gentiles sacrificed, they sacrificed to demons and not to God (1 Corinthians 10:21; Leviticus 17:7; Deuteronomy 32:17; Psalm 106:37; Galatians 3:8). This is Satan's territory — indeed, the power and scepter of his kingdom in the minds of the disobedient. By it he maintains his dominion to this day over many nations and among countless individuals.

Second. This is the source of all wickedness and disorder among people. From this ignorance arose the flood of abominations in the ancient world that God swept away with a flood of destruction; from it came the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah that He punished with fire from heaven. In short, all the rage, bloodshed, confusion, devastation, cruelty, oppression, and villainy that has filled and continues to fill the world — by which the souls of men have been and are swept into eternal destruction — all of it has flowed from this corrupt fountain of ignorance of God.

Third. We are the descendants and offspring of people such as those described. Our forefathers in this nation were given over to as degraded a worship of the devil as any people under the sun. It is therefore an effect of infinite mercy that the day has dawned on us poor Gentiles, and that the rising sun from on high has visited us. See the glory of this grace expressed in Ephesians 3:5-10. God might have left us to perish in the blindness and ignorance of our forefathers, but of His own free will and by His own powerful grace alone He has transferred us out of darkness into His marvelous light. Yet the dreadful ingratitude of people for the glorious light of the Gospel, and their abuse of it, will bring a severe reckoning.

God was known under the Old Testament through the revelation of His Word and the institution of His worship. This was the glory and privilege of Israel, as the Psalmist declares (Psalm 147:19-20): 'He declares His word to Jacob, His statutes and His ordinances to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any nation.' The church of that era knew Him, yet with the sense that He dwelt in thick darkness where they could not see Him clearly (Exodus 20:21; Deuteronomy 5:22; 1 Kings 8:12; 2 Chronicles 6:1). God represented Himself in that darkness to instruct them in their incomplete state — a state in which they could not yet comprehend the glory that was afterwards to be revealed. For as He is now made known in Christ, we see that He is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.

Fourth. Until Christ's coming, darkness generally covered the earth and deep darkness the peoples as regards the knowledge of God — with only a twilight in the church. The day had not yet dawned, the shadows had not fled, and the morning star had not yet shone in human hearts. But when the Sun of Righteousness rose in His strength and beauty — when the Son of God appeared in the flesh and carried out His office — God Himself, in His being and His triune existence in three distinct persons, with all the glorious attributes of the divine nature, was brilliantly revealed to those who believed. The light of this knowledge swept away all the shadows that had remained in the church and shone into the darkness of the world, so that no one remained ignorant of God except those who refused to see (John 1:5, 15, 17-18; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

In this, the Lord Christ is glorious. And this is what I now want to address: how we may behold the glory of Christ in the representation and revelation of God and His glory that is made in His per-

son and office, to all who believe. For what is intended here is not so much a description of the nature of the things themselves in which Christ's glory consists, but rather our way and duty in beholding them.

He calls out to us: 'Look to Me, and be saved' (Isaiah 45:22). What is it that we see in Christ? What do we behold in Him? He raises the question about His church: 'What will you see in the Shulamite?' — to which He answers, as it were: the company of two armies (Song of Solomon 6:13) — the two churches of the Old and New Testament in their order and beauty. We may ask the same: what shall we — what do we — see in Him? Do we see Him as the image of the invisible God, representing God's nature, attributes, and will to us? Do we see Him as the exact representation of the Father's person, so that we no longer need to make Philip's request — 'Lord, show us the Father' — because, having seen Him, we have also seen the Father (John 14:9)?

This is our first saving sight of Christ — the first instance of beholding His glory by faith. To see Him in such a way that we see God in Him is to behold His glory, for this is where He is eternally glorious. This is the glory we ought to long for and pursue. If we do not see it, we are still in darkness — yes, even if we claim to see, we are blind like everyone else. So David longed and prayed for this sight, even when he could behold it only in types and shadows (Psalm 63:1-2): 'O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; my soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, to see Your power and Your glory, as I have seen You in the sanctuary.' For in the sanctuary there was an obscure representation of the

glory of God in Christ. How much more should we treasure the sight of it that we may now have with unveiled faces — though still as in a mirror (2 Corinthians 3:18)?

Moses, after having seen the great and marvelous works of God, was not satisfied with that alone. After all of it, he prayed that God would show him His glory (Exodus 33:18). He understood that the soul's ultimate rest, blessedness, and satisfaction lies not in seeing the works of God but the glory of God Himself. So he desired some immediate dawning of that glory upon him in this life: 'I pray You, show me Your glory.' If we have a right understanding of the coming state of blessedness, we cannot help but share the same desire to see more of His glory in this life. But the question is: how may we attain it? If we are left to ourselves in this quest — if our only recourse is to fix our thoughts directly on the immensity of the divine nature — every one of us must come to the same conclusion Agur reaches in a similar situation: 'Surely I am more stupid than any man, and I do not have the understanding of a man. Neither have I learned wisdom, nor do I have the knowledge of the Holy One. Who has ascended into heaven and descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has wrapped the waters in His garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name or His son's name? Surely you know!' (Proverbs 30:2-4).

It is in Christ alone that we may have a clear and distinct view of the glory of God and His excellencies, for God has appointed Him, and Him alone, as our representative of Himself (see John 1:18; 14:7-10; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Colossians 1:15-16; Ephesians 3:4-10; Hebrews 1:3). We will look at this briefly through one or two specific examples.

First. Infinite wisdom is one of the most glorious attributes of the divine nature — the attribute that guides all of God's external works and through which the glory of all His other excellencies is displayed. Therefore the manifestation of the whole glory of God flows originally from His infinite wisdom. But as Job asks, 'Where can wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?' (Job 28:12). 'Can you discover the depths of God? Can you discover the limits of the Almighty?' (Job 11:7). As an essential, eternal attribute of the divine nature, we can form no real understanding of wisdom in itself — we can only adore it from the infinite distance at which we stand from God. But in its operations and effects it may be discerned, for those are designed by God for the very purpose of displaying it. The greatest of these is the design of the great work of the salvation of the church — celebrated by the apostle in Ephesians 3:9-11: 'to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.'

If we have any true interest in God, if we have any hope of blessedness in beholding His glory for eternity, we cannot help but desire some view — as much as is attainable — of this infinite and many-faceted wisdom of God in this life. But it is in Christ alone that we can discern anything of it, for the Father has chosen and appointed Him to represent this wisdom to us. All the treasures of this wisdom are hidden, stored up, and displayed in Him — and this is where the essence and form of faith lies. Believers by faith

see the wisdom of God in Christ, in His person and office — Christ the wisdom of God. Unbelievers do not see it, as the apostle argues in 1 Corinthians 1:22-24.

In beholding the glory of this infinite wisdom of God in Christ, we also behold Christ's own glory — the glory given to Him by His Father. For this is His glory: that in and by Him, and through Him alone, the wisdom of God is manifested and represented to us. When God appointed Him as the great and only means for this purpose, He gave Him honor and glory surpassing the whole creation. For the works of creation declare only a little of the divine wisdom compared to what is manifested in Christ Jesus. We do not in any way deny or minimize the display of God's wisdom in the works of creation and providence. It is sufficient to expose the folly of atheism and idolatry, and was designed by God for that purpose. But Scripture abundantly testifies to its relative insufficiency — compared to what is revealed in Christ — for the purpose of truly knowing God and living for Him. And it was universally abused, as the apostle declares in Romans 1:20 and following. To see this wisdom clearly is itself our wisdom, and a proper understanding of it fills the souls of believers with joy inexpressible and full of glory.

Second. We may also take love as an example. The apostle tells us that God is love (1 John 4:8). Divine love is not to be understood only in its effects, but in its nature and essence — and so it is God Himself, for God is love. What a blessed revelation this is of the divine nature: it banishes envy, hatred, malice, and revenge — with all their fruits of rage, cruelty, relentlessness, persecution, and murder — into the territory of Satan. These things belong neither to God's nature nor to His ways, for God is love. So the same

apostle tells us that the one who killed his brother was of the evil one (1 John 3:12) — he was of the devil his father, and he did his father's works.

But the question arises, as before: how shall we gain a view of this love — of God as love? By what way or means shall we behold the glory of it? It is hidden from all living, in God Himself. The wise philosophers who spoke so much of the love of God knew nothing of the truth that God is love. Most natural ideas about God's love are distorted, and the best of them are weak and incomplete. The general tendency of people's thinking about it is that God is easy-going and accommodating — someone they can take liberties with in all their dealings, as the Psalmist observes (Psalm 50:21). Since His love must be learned through its effects, operations, and divine ways of manifestation, those who do not know Christ know nothing of these things. Moreover, many things in providence can obstruct our view of this love — for although God is indeed love, His wrath is revealed from heaven against human ungodliness. When everything around us today seems filled with evidences of His anger and displeasure, how then shall we know? Where shall we behold the glory of God in the fact that He is love? The apostle provides the answer in the following verse (1 John 4:9): 'By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him.' This is the only evidence we are given that God is love. It is by this alone that the divine nature as such is made known to us — in the mission, person, and office of the Son of God. Without this, everything remains in darkness as to the true nature and supreme expression of this divine love.

In this we behold the glory of Christ Himself, even in this life. This glory was given to Him by the Father — the glory of declaring and demonstrating that God is love — so that He might have first place in all things. We can see here how excellent, beautiful, glorious, and desirable He is, since in Him alone we have a true representation of God as He is love — which is the most joyful sight of God any creature can obtain. Anyone who does not behold the glory of Christ in this is utterly ignorant of these heavenly mysteries; he knows neither God nor Christ; he has neither the Father nor the Son. He does not know God because he does not know the holy attributes of His nature through the principal way infinite wisdom designed to reveal them. He does not know Christ because he does not see the glory of God in Him. Therefore, whatever ideas people may form — from the light of nature or from the works of providence — that there is love in God, however beautifully they may express them: no one from such sources alone can know that God is love. In the revelation of this truth, Christ has the preeminence, and no one can comprehend any part of it rightly except in Him. It is what the whole light of creation cannot discover, for it is the very center and source of the mystery of godliness.

These are among the deep things of God — belonging to that wisdom of God in mystery that those who are unspiritual cannot receive, as the apostle testifies (1 Corinthians 2:14). But the most humble believer who lives in the exercise of faith may understand them as far as is necessary for his love and obedience. The sum of the whole is this: if you want to behold the glory of Christ — as the great means of your sanctification and comfort, as the only preparation for beholding His glory in eternal blessedness — consider what of God is made known and represented to you in Him, in

those very things in which God purposed to glorify Himself through Him. This is everything that may be known of God in a saving way — especially His wisdom, His love, His goodness, grace, and mercy, on which the life of our souls depends. And since the Lord Christ has been appointed the only way and means of this knowledge, how exceedingly glorious must He be in the eyes of those who believe!

With these things established, I will close this first consideration of the glory of Christ that we behold by faith in this life, with some observations that may stir us to practice this great duty and make the most of this great privilege — the greatest we can share in on this side of heaven.

Some people give no thought to these things at all, but rather despise them. They never seriously consider obtaining a view of the glory of God in Christ — which is itself to be an unbeliever. They see Him as a teacher who came from God to reveal God's will and teach us His worship, and indeed He was that. But they say this was the sole purpose of His person in religion — which is simply Islam. The manifestation of all the holy attributes of the divine nature, and their representation to the angels above and to the church in this world — as He is the image of the invisible God, through the constitution of His person and the carrying out of His office — are things they ignore. Indeed, they despise and mock what is professed concerning these things, for pride and contempt of others have always been the safest cover for ignorance — otherwise it would be strange that people would openly boast of their own blindness. But these attitudes of mind are shaped by a disbelief in His divine person, which is wreaking havoc on Christianity in the world today.

I am speaking now to those whose minds are more favorably disposed toward heavenly things. To them I say: why do you love Jesus Christ? For so you profess to do. Why do you trust in Him? Why do you honor Him? Why do you desire to be in heaven with Him? Can you give a reason for the hope that is in you — an account of why you do all or any of these things? If you cannot, all that you claim toward Him is merely fancy and imagination; you fight uncertainly, like someone throwing punches at the air. Or is one of your reasons this: that in Him you see by faith the glory of God — the holy attributes of His nature and their chief operations for your salvation and blessedness — which otherwise would have been forever hidden from you? This is why He is precious to those who believe.

Let all of us who are spiritual be of this mind. Let us make use of this privilege with joy, and pursue this duty with diligence — for beholding the glory of Christ is both our privilege and our duty. The requirements of the law were a burden and a yoke; those of the Gospel are privileges and blessings.

It is a promise regarding the days of the New Testament that 'your eyes will see the King in His beauty' (Isaiah 33:17). We will behold the glory of Christ in its fullness and splendor. What is this beauty of the King of saints? Is it not that God is in Him, and that He is the great representative of God's glory to us? Therefore the principal exercise of faith consists in the contemplation of this glory. And who can express the wonder of this privilege — that we, who were born in darkness and deserved to be cast into outer darkness, have been brought into this marvelous light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ?

What are all the tainted glories and fading beauties of this world? What are all the kingdoms the devil showed our Savior from the mountain? What are any of them compared to one sight of the glory of God represented in Christ, and of the glory of Christ as His great representative?

The most destructive effect of unbelief under the preaching of the Gospel is that it works together with power from Satan to blind the eyes of people's minds, so that they cannot see this glory of Christ — and by this blindness they perish forever (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

Yet most of those who are called Christians today are strangers to this duty. Our Lord Jesus told the Pharisees that despite all their boasting about knowing God, they had never heard His voice or seen His form — that is, as Moses had. They had no real acquaintance with God and no spiritual sight of His glory. It is the same among us. Despite the general profession of knowing Christ, very few actually behold His glory in this way — and therefore very few are being transformed into His image and likeness.

Many people speak much of imitating Christ and following His example — and it would be good to see more of that in practice. But no one will ever become like Christ through mere imitation of His actions without that sight and contemplation of His glory which alone carries transforming power to change them into the same image.

The truth is, the best of us are sadly neglectful of this duty, and many are put off from it because the pretense of it in others has sometimes decayed into superstition. We are reluctant to engage

seriously in it and come to the exercise of our minds in it with only a grudging sort of willingness.

Thoughts of Christ's glory seem too high or too demanding for us — not something we can delight in for long. We turn away from them with a kind of weariness, even though they are of the same nature as our beholding of Christ's glory in heaven, where there will be no weariness or satiety throughout eternity. Is not the cause of this that we are unspiritual or carnal — that our thoughts and affections have been trained to entertain other things? This is the chief reason for our unreadiness and inability to occupy our minds with the great mysteries of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 3:1-3). It is also because we do not rouse ourselves with watchfulness and diligence to constantly exercise faith on this blessed object. This is what keeps many of us at such a low ebb in terms of spiritual vitality and joy.

If we were to abound in this duty and in this exercise of faith, our walk with God would be sweeter and more pleasant to us; our spiritual light and strength would grow daily; we would reflect the glory of Christ in our lives and conduct far more than we typically do; and death itself would be most welcome.

The angels themselves desire to look into the things of the glory of Christ (1 Peter 1:10, 12). These things contain matter for inquiry and instruction even for the highest and holiest spirits in heaven. The many-faceted wisdom of God in them is made known to rulers and authorities in heavenly places through the church (Ephesians 3:10). Shall we then neglect what angels themselves diligently seek to understand — especially considering that we are more closely concerned in it than they are?

Is Christ then glorious in our eyes? Do we see the Father in Him, or through seeing Him? Do we diligently and daily contemplate the wisdom, love, grace, goodness, holiness, and righteousness of God as they reveal and display themselves in Him? Do we sufficiently consider that the immediate vision of this glory in heaven will be our everlasting blessedness? Does the imperfect view we have of it here increase our desire for the perfect sight of it above? With these questions in mind, I will speak briefly to several kinds of people.

Some will say they do not understand these things or see that they have any relevance to them. Even if they are true, they are notions that one can safely live without — for as far as they can see, they have no bearing on Christian practice or moral duties. And preaching these things only draws people's minds away from more necessary concerns. But if the Gospel is hidden, it is hidden to those who are perishing. To this objection I say:

First. Nothing is more fully and clearly revealed in the Gospel than this: that Jesus Christ is to us the image of the invisible God, the exact representation of the Father's person, so that in seeing Him we also see the Father, and that we have the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in His face alone — as has been demonstrated. This is the principal and foundational mystery and truth of the Gospel. If it is not received, believed, and embraced, all other truths are useless to our souls. To refer all the testimonies given to this truth to the teaching He gave — as distinct from His person actively carrying out His office — is anti-evangelical and antichristian, turning the entire Gospel into a fable.

Second. The light of faith is given to us primarily to enable us to behold the glory of God in Christ — to contemplate it in line with all the purposes for which it is displayed. This is expressly stated in 2 Corinthians 4:6. If we do not have this light, as it is given by God's power to those who believe (Ephesians 1:17-19), we must be strangers to the whole mystery of the Gospel (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

Third. In beholding the glory of God in Christ, we also behold Christ's own glory. For this is where He is infinitely glorious above the whole creation: in and through Him alone, the glory of the invisible God is represented to us. This is where our souls live. This is the means by which the image of God is renewed in us and we are made like the firstborn.

Fourth. So far from being unnecessary to Christian practice and moral duty, anyone who imagines these things can be performed acceptably without this truth neither knows Christ, nor the Gospel, nor the faith of the universal church. This is the root from which all other Christian duties grow — the thing that distinguishes them from the works of pagans. No one is truly a Christian who does not believe that faith in the person of Christ is the source of all Christian obedience, or who does not know that this faith looks to the revelation of the glory of God in Him.

If these things are true — and they are among the most important truths of the Gospel, truths whose denial overturns the foundation of faith and is ruinous to the Christian religion — then we are certainly obligated to live in the constant exercise of faith with respect to this glory of Christ. And we have sufficient experience of the kind of morality that ignorance of it produces.

There are others who may be unfamiliar with this mystery but are in no way hostile to it or to the practical exercise of faith in it. To such I will offer the following directions.

First. Settle it in your minds that this beholding of the glory of Christ — seeing the glory of God and all His holy attributes in Him — is the greatest privilege we can enjoy in this life. The dawning of heaven is in it, along with the first fruits of glory, for this is eternal life: to know the Father and the One He sent, Christ Jesus (John 17:3). Unless you value it as such a privilege, you will not experience it; and what is not valued according to its worth is despised. It is not enough to think of it as simply a privilege or advantage — it must be valued above all other things in proportion to its true greatness and excellency. 'Destruction and death say, we have heard a rumor of it with our ears' (Job 28:22). If we do no more than hear about it, we will die as strangers to it. We must cry out for this knowledge and lift up our voice for this understanding if we truly intend to attain it.

Second. Since this is a great privilege that requires proper valuation, it is also a great mystery that requires much spiritual wisdom to understand rightly and to guide us in its practice (1 Corinthians 2:4-5). Flesh and blood will not reveal it to us — we must be taught by God to grasp it (John 1:12-13; Matthew 16:16-17). Mere unregenerate reason will never enable us to discover or pursue this duty. People are not so foolish as to hope for skill and understanding in some worldly craft or trade without making diligent use of the means by which it may be learned. Shall we then suppose that we may be equipped with spiritual skill and wisdom in this sacred mystery without diligence in the means God has appointed for obtaining it? The chief of these means is fervent

prayer. Pray therefore with Moses that God would show you His glory; pray with the apostle that the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened to behold it; pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may grant you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. Fill your minds with spiritual thought and purpose about these things. Lazy, indifferent souls never obtain one glimpse of this glory; a lion in the road turns them back before they even try. Being unspiritual, they resist all diligent use of spiritual means — prayer and meditation on things that are uncomfortable, unappealing, and difficult. For others, the way shares the character of the destination: the means of obtaining a sight of the glory of Christ are of the same kind and the same pleasantness as that sight itself, each in its proper proportion.

Third. Learn how to pursue this glory by observing how contrary vicious habits operate. When people's minds are intensely set on pursuing their sinful desires, they constantly dwell on the objects of those desires and devise countless ways to satisfy them — until their eyes are 'full of adultery' and they cannot stop sinning, as the apostle describes. The objects of their desires have formed an image of themselves in their minds and transformed those minds into their own likeness. Is this what the people who go down to the chambers of death do? Do they shape their souls and make them fit for destruction until their words, gestures, and actions proclaim the condition of their minds to everyone around them? Shall we then be lazy and indifferent about contemplating that glory which transforms our minds into its own image — the

glory that would keep our minds' eyes continually filled with Christ, until we see and behold Him without ceasing and never stop the holy acts of delight and love toward Him?

Fourth. If we would behold the glory of God — as He manifests it in and through the holy attributes of His nature, with their blessed operations and effects, without which we have no real power of religion in us, whatever we may claim — this is the only way. Go to the whole creation and all things in it; they can say no more than this: we have heard a report of these things, and what we have heard we declare — but it is only a small portion of them that we know. The heavens do indeed declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handiwork. God's invisible attributes — His eternal power and divine nature — are understood through what has been made. But comparatively, what we can learn from creation is only a little of what we may see of these things in Christ Jesus. How blind, in comparison, was the greatest philosopher compared to the least of the apostles — yes, even compared to the least in the kingdom of heaven?

But here it is required that we not rest merely in the idea of this truth, or in bare intellectual agreement with its doctrine. What we should aim for is its powerful effect on our hearts. In what does the blessedness of the saints above consist? Is it not in this: that they behold and see the glory of God in Christ? And what is the effect of this upon those blessed souls? Does it not change them into the same image — make them like Christ? Does it not fill and satisfy them with joy, rest, delight, contentment, and inexpressible satisfaction? Do we look for and desire the same state of blessed-

ness? Our present sight of the glory of Christ is our initiation into that state — if we are exercised in it until we have experience of its transforming power in our souls.

These things may be of little use to some. Those who are babes in spiritual knowledge and understanding — whether because they are still unspiritual (1 Corinthians 3:1-2) or sluggish in learning (Hebrews 5:12-14) — are not yet capable of receiving these divine mysteries. The apostle therefore set forth this wisdom of God in a mystery especially to those who were mature (1 Corinthians 2:6-7) — those who were more advanced in spiritual knowledge and had their senses trained to discern good and evil. These things are precious to those who are practiced in contemplating unseen realities and who delight to walk in the more quiet paths of faith and love.

A few conclusions drawn from everything that has been said will bring this part of our discussion to a close.

First. The holy attributes of the divine nature are displayed to our faith in Christ not only in their own essential glory, but as they are actively engaged for the salvation of the church. In Him we behold the wisdom, goodness, love, grace, mercy, and power of God working together in the planning, design, and powerful accomplishment of the great work of our redemption and salvation. This adds, as far as we are concerned, an inexpressible luster to the native beauty of the divine excellencies. The wisdom and love of God are infinitely glorious and infinitely lovable in themselves; nothing can be added to them, and their essential glory admits of no increase. Yet while they eternally reside in the divine nature and are absolutely identical with it, we cannot comprehend them in a way that gives us an endearing, satisfying vision of their glory. But as they are expressed in the work of redemption and salvation of the

church — communicating their blessed effects to the souls of those who believe, which happens only in Christ — the beams of their glory shine upon us with unspeakable refreshment and joy (2 Corinthians 4:6). Hence the apostle, meditating on the holy attributes of God at work in this blessed redemptive work, breaks into this contemplation: 'Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen' (Romans 11:33-36).

Second. In and through Christ we believe in God (1 Peter 1:21). This is the very life of our souls. God Himself in the infinite perfections of His divine nature is the ultimate object of our faith — but He is not the immediate object here. Rather, the divine means and way by which He manifests Himself and His perfections to us is the immediate object. Through Christ we believe in God. By believing in Christ, we come at last to place our faith in God Himself, and we can do this in no other way than by beholding the glory of God in Him, as has been explained.

Third. This is the only way by which we may attain the saving, sanctifying knowledge of God. Without this, every ray of divine light that shines on us from outside — every flash of it that breaks through as light shines into darkness when the darkness does not comprehend it (John 1:5) — and every spark arising from the remains of natural light within us, only bewilders the minds of people rather than leading them to the saving knowledge of God. Just as a brief flash of light in a dark night, giving a momentary glimpse

of various objects before disappearing, bewilders a traveler rather than guiding him and leaves him more lost than before — so it is with all the ideas about the divine being and its excellencies that those who considered themselves the wise of the world embraced and developed. Those ideas merely fluctuated in their minds; they did not transform those minds into the image and likeness of God, as the saving knowledge of Him does (Colossians 3:10).

The apostle expresses this truth: 'Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God' (1 Corinthians 1:20-24).

Once it became clear to all that the world — the wise, the learned, the contemplative — having been placed by God's wisdom in the very conditions where they were left to themselves and their own reasoning and natural light, could not come to the saving knowledge of God, but were only puffed up in contempt for the one true way of His self-revelation, dismissing it as weakness and foolishness: God then saw fit to expose all their supposed wisdom as folly, and to establish the only true means of the knowledge of Himself in Christ Jesus.

CHAP. III. THE GLORY OF CHRIST IN THE MYSTERIOUS CONSTITUTION OF HIS PERSON.



The second aspect in which we may behold the glory given to Christ by His Father is in the mysterious constitution of His person — the fact that He is God and man in one single, individual person. In that one person there exist two distinct natures: one eternal, infinite, immeasurable, and almighty — the form and essence of God; the other beginning in time, finite, limited, confined to a particular place — our nature, which He took on when He was made flesh and dwelt among us. A full explanation of this glory belongs to my discourse on the Person of Christ, to which I refer the reader; my purpose here is different.

This is a glory whose radiance is so brilliant that the blind world cannot bear its light and beauty. Multitudes are beginning openly to deny the incarnation of the Son of God — the personal union of God and man in their distinct natures. They deny that there is either glory or truth in it. And it will soon become clear — it is already beginning to show itself — how many more there are who do not yet openly reject the doctrine, who dare not yet, but

who in truth do not believe it and see no glory in it. Yet this glory is the glory of our religion, the glory of the church, the sole Rock on which it is built, the only source of present grace and future glory.

This is the glory that the angels themselves desire to behold — the mystery they bend down to look into (1 Peter 1:12). Their longing was represented by the cherubim in the most holy place of the tabernacle, for they were a shadow of the ministry of angels in the church. The ark and the mercy seat were a type of Christ in the exercise of His office, and these cherubim were made standing above them — positioned as if in the heaven above — yet earnestly bending down to gaze upon them in reverence and adoration. So they did in ages past, and in their present contemplation of it consists no small part of their eternal blessedness.

On this foundation rests the ruin of Satan and his kingdom. His sin, as far as we can understand, consisted of two parts. First, pride against the person of the Son of God, by whom he was created — for by Him were all things created that exist, or existed when first created, in heaven, whether thrones, dominions, rulers, or authorities (Colossians 1:16) — and against Him Satan lifted himself up, which was the beginning of his transgression. Second, envy against mankind, made in the image of God, of the Son of God the firstborn. This completed his sin; nothing remained on which to act out his pride and malice. In infinite wisdom, God unites both natures Satan had sinned against — in the one person of the Son, the very first object of Satan's pride and malice — bringing his destruction with everlasting shame, exposing the folly of one who dared to contend with infinite wisdom, and assuring his ruin through the power of the two natures united in one person.

Here lies the foundation of the church. The foundation of all the original creation was laid by an act of absolute sovereign power — by which God hung the earth on nothing. But the foundation of the church rests on this mysterious and immovable Rock: 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God' — the most intimate union of two natures, the divine and the human, each infinitely distant from the other in themselves, joined in the same person.

We may cite one place where this is gloriously displayed (Isaiah 9:6): 'For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.' Before this, the whole church must fall down and worship the Author of this wonderful design, captivating their understanding in the obedience of faith and humbly adoring what they cannot comprehend.

This mystery was presented obscurely to the church of old (Exodus 3:2-6): 'The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed. So Moses said, I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up. When the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, Moses, Moses! And he said, Here I am. Then He said, Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground. He said also, I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham,' etc.

This fire was a type and representation of the presence of God in the person of the Son. In relation to the Father, He is called an angel — the Angel of the Covenant — but absolutely in Himself, He

was the Lord, the God of Abraham, etc. And the fire was a fitting representation of His presence. For in His nature He is as a consuming fire, and His present work was the deliverance of the church out of a fiery trial. This fire settled in a bush and burned there, yet the bush was not consumed. And though the fire remained in the bush only for a short time as a present appearance, God is yet said to dwell in the bush: 'the favor of him who dwelt in the bush' (Deuteronomy 33:16). This is said because the presence of the fire in the bush for a season was a type of the One in whom the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily — and forever (Colossians 2:9). Of the One who was made flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). The eternal fire of the divine nature dwells in the bush of our frail nature, yet is not consumed by it. So God dwells in this bush with all His goodwill toward sinners.

Moses looked on this sight as something marvelous and astonishing. If it was so in the type, what is it in the truth, substance, and reality?

And by the instruction to remove his sandals, we are taught to cast aside all fleshly imaginations and carnal desires, so that by pure acts of faith we may behold this glory — the glory of the only Son from the Father.

My intention here is not to explain or defend this glorious truth about the constitution of Christ's person in and through His incarnation. What I can grasp and believe concerning it, I have fully set out in a dedicated treatise. Here I take the truth itself as known, or as it may be learned from that work. My present concern is only to stir the minds of believers to a proper contemplation of the glory of Christ in the sacred, mysterious constitution of His person — God and man in one. To the degree that we remain in this contempla-

tion, we live by the faith of the Son of God. And God can, by a Spirit of wisdom and revelation, open the eyes of our understanding so that we may behold this glory to our inexpressible comfort and joy. Toward the diligent pursuit of this duty, I offer the following directions.

First. Let us settle it in our souls and minds that the glory of Christ in the divine constitution of His person is the best, noblest, most useful, and most beneficial object we can occupy our thoughts with or cling to in our affections.

What are all other things compared to the knowledge of Christ? In the great apostle's judgment, they are but loss and rubbish (Philippians 3:8-10). So they were to him, and if they are not so to us, we are unspiritual.

What is the world, and what are the things of it on which most people spend their thoughts and fix their affections? The Psalmist states his judgment about them in comparison to a view of Christ's glory (Psalm 4:6): 'Many say, Who will show us any good?' Who will help us secure enough of this world to give our minds rest and satisfaction? That is the good they are seeking. 'But,' he says, 'Lord, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us.' The light of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus — that is the only satisfying good I desire and pursue.

Scripture reproaches the vanity and folly of the human mind when it spends its resources on what is not bread, and its labor on what gives no lasting profit. People pour the energy of their spirits into perishable things when durable and eternal riches are being offered to them.

How do most people exercise their minds? What are their thoughts occupied with?

Some use their thoughts to make provision for the flesh and fulfill its sinful desires (Romans 13:14). They range continually in their minds for objects suited to their lusts and carnal desires, shaping and stamping them in their imaginations. They fix their eyes with pleasure on toads and serpents and every vile and filthy object, while refusing to look at the beauty and glory of the light of the sun. So it is with all who spend their thoughts on the objects of sinful pleasure while refusing to look up even once for a view of the glory of Christ.

Others keep their thoughts constantly occupied with the things of this world — the gains and advantages they expect from them. By this they are conformed to the image of the world, becoming earthly, unspiritual, and hollow. Is it because there is no God in Israel that people turn to the idol of Ekron for guidance? Is there no glory, nothing desirable in Christ worth seeking and fixing one's mind upon? Oh the blindness, the darkness, the folly of poor sinners! Whom do they despise, and for what?

Some with more refined tastes and contemplative minds rise to diligent meditation on the works of creation and providence. From this have come many excellent discourses on the subject, adorned with eloquence, published among us. This is a work worthy of our nature and suited to our rational capacities — indeed, it is the first end for which those capacities were given us. But in all these things there is no glory comparable to what is set before us in the mysterious constitution of the person of Christ. The sun has no glory, the moon and stars no beauty, the order and influence of the heavenly bodies no excellence in comparison with it.

This is what the Psalmist intends to declare in Psalm 8: 'O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth, who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens! When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; what is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him? Yet You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You crown him with glory and majesty; You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet.'

The Psalmist is engaged in contemplating the glory of God in His works, and he concludes that the frame of heaven with the moon and stars — which he observed during his night meditation — is exceedingly glorious and greatly to be marveled at. This leads his thoughts to the poor, weak, frail nature of humanity, which seems like nothing in comparison to those glories above. But then immediately he falls into wonder at the wisdom, goodness, and love of God that has exalted that same human nature incomparably above all the works of creation in the person of Jesus Christ — as the apostle explains in Hebrews 2:5-6.

This, therefore, is the highest, best, and most useful object for our thoughts and affections. Anyone who has had a real view of this glory — even knowing himself to be a poor, sinful, dying creature of the earth — would not trade places with an angel in heaven if doing so would cost him the sight of it, for this is the center where all the lines of the manifestation of divine glory meet and rest.

Consider the things of this world: wives, children, possessions, estates, power, friends, and honor — how lovable they are, how desirable to the thoughts of most people! But the one who has gained

a view of the glory of Christ will, in the midst of all these things, say, 'Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth' (Psalm 73:25). 'For who in the heavens is comparable to the Lord? Who among the sons of the mighty is like the Lord?' (Psalm 89:6).

He Himself, out of infinite love and inexpressible condescension, upon beholding His church and the graces with which she is adorned, says: 'You have captivated my heart, my sister, my bride; you have captivated my heart with a single glance of your eyes, with a single jewel of your necklace' (Song of Solomon 4:9). How much more ought a believing soul, upon a view of the glory of Christ — in whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell — to say: 'You have captured my heart, taken it away from me, O You whom my soul loves; one glance of Your glorious beauty upon me has completely overwhelmed me and left my heart with no room for the things of this world'? If this is not frequently our experience — if we do not value this object of our minds and affections, if we are not diligent in looking up to behold His glory — it is because we are unspiritual, and not genuinely sharing in the promise that our eyes shall see the King in His beauty.

Second. Our second direction toward the same end is to study the Scriptures diligently, and the revelations of Christ's glory contained in them. Beholding this glory is not a work of fancy or imagination. It is not dwelling on an image made by human art or shaped by our own imagination — it is faith exercised on divine revelation. This direction Christ gives us Himself (John 5:39): 'You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have

eternal life; it is these that testify about Me.' The way in which this is done is laid out fully in the example of the holy prophets under the Old Testament (1 Peter 1:11-13).

We must always keep this principle fixed in our minds when reading Scripture: the revelation and doctrine of the person of Christ and His office is the foundation on which all the other instructions of the prophets and apostles for the building up of the church are built, and into which they are resolved — as declared in Ephesians 2:20-22. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself makes this abundantly clear (Luke 24:26-27, 45-46). Set this aside, and the Scriptures are not what they claim to be — a revelation of the glory of God in the salvation of the church. This is why the Old Testament is not that to the Jews today who reject this principle (2 Corinthians 3:13-16). There are therefore revelations of the person and glory of Christ stored up throughout Scripture — from beginning to end — that can occupy the faith and contemplation of believers for a lifetime without ever being fully discovered or understood. Much of the life of faith consists in meditating devoutly on these revelations.

There are three ways in which the glory of Christ is presented to us in Scripture. First, through direct descriptions of His glorious person and incarnation. See, among other places: Genesis 3:15; Psalm 2:7-9; Psalm 45:2-6; Psalm 68:17-18; Psalm 110; Isaiah 6:1-4; Isaiah 9:6; Zechariah 2:8; John 1:1-3; Philippians 2:6-8; Hebrews 1:1-3; Hebrews 2:14-16; Revelation 1:17-18. Second, through prophecies, promises, and explicit teachings about Him — all pointing toward the contemplation of His glory — which are countless. Third, through the sacred institutions of divine worship

under the Old Testament, for all of them were designed to represent to the church the glory of Christ in the discharge of His office, as we will see later.

We may take note of one example of this from the Old Testament, and one or two from the New.

Christ's personal appearances under the Old Testament carried in them a demonstration of His glory. Such was the vision Isaiah had, when he saw His glory and spoke of Him (Isaiah 6:1-2): 'I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him,' etc. This was a representation of the glory of Christ's divine presence filling His human nature — the temple of His body — with an array of glorious graces. And if this symbolic representation of it was so glorious that the seraphim could not steadfastly behold it but covered their faces at its appearance (Isaiah 6:2), how exceedingly glorious must it be in itself, as it is openly revealed in the Gospel!

The same is true of the direct testimonies given to Him from heaven in the New Testament. The apostle tells us that Christ received honor and glory from God the Father when there came such a voice to Him from the majestic glory: 'This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased' (2 Peter 1:17). The apostle is referring to the time of His transfiguration on the mountain, as he adds in verse 18: 'And we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.' However, at various other times He received the same or a similar testimony from the Father in heaven. In this God gave Him honor and glory that all who believe in Him should behold and marvel at. Not only those who heard this testimony with their own ears, but all to whom it is testified in Scripture, are bound to look to and contem-

plate the glory of Christ as thus revealed and presented. From the throne of His majesty — by audible voices, by visible signs, by the opening of the heavens above, by the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Him — God bore witness to Him as His eternal Son and gave Him honor and glory. Meditating on this divine testimony and the glory of Christ in it has often filled many hearts with joy and delight.

This is what we ought to search for and attend to with all diligence in reading and studying Holy Scripture — as the prophets of old did (1 Peter 1:11-12) — if we intend to be made wise for salvation through it.

In this we should be like the merchant seeking fine pearls: he seeks all kinds of pearls, but when he finds one of great value, he gives up everything to make it his own (Matthew 13:45-46). Scripture is the field, the place, the mine where we search and dig for pearls (see Proverbs 2:1-5). Every sacred truth that is made effective for the good of our souls is a pearl by which we are enriched. But when we come upon this pearl of great price — the glory of Christ — this is what the soul of a believer clings to with joy.

We find true nourishment for our souls in the Word of truth, we taste that the Lord is gracious in it, and Scripture becomes a spring of refreshment and living water to us, when we are drawn into blessed views of the glory of Christ within it. And we are in the best disposition for duty when the chief motive in our minds for holding tightly to Scripture — against all who would take it from us or discourage us from daily, diligent searching of it — is this: that they would deprive us of the only mirror in which we may behold the glory of Christ. This is the glory of Scripture: it is the great and

only outward means of representing to us the glory of Christ. He is the sun in its firmament — the one who has light in Himself and communicates it to everything else.

Third. Another direction to the same end is this: having received the light of the knowledge of the glory of Christ from Scripture, or through the preaching of the Gospel, we should regard it as our duty to meditate on it frequently.

The lack of this is the foundational mistake that keeps many of us so low in grace and so indifferent to our privileges. They hear these things and agree with them — or at least do not dispute them — but they never seriously meditate on them. They regard meditation as a work above them, or they are completely ignorant of it, or they consider it not much their concern, or they dismiss it as fanaticism. For no consideration can move a carnal mind to delight in it. The mind must be spiritual and holy — freed from earthly attachments and distractions, lifted above the things of this world — to meditate rightly on the glory of Christ. Most people are therefore strangers to this duty because they will not pay the price of mortifying earthly desires, uprooting sensual inclinations, and withdrawing from the distractions of daily life that such meditation requires. See the Treatise on Spiritual-mindedness.

It is to be feared that some who profess religion with an appearance of seriousness never set aside time from everything else to meditate on Christ and His glory. Yet with a strange inconsistency, they will profess that they desire nothing more than to behold His glory in heaven forever. But it is clear even by simple reason that these two things cannot be reconciled. It is impossible that someone who never meditates with delight on the glory of Christ in this life — who does not labor to see it by faith as it is re-

vealed in Scripture — could ever have any real, genuine desire to behold it in heaven. They may love and desire the satisfaction of their own imaginations, but they cannot genuinely desire the glory of Christ of whom they are ignorant and with whom they are unacquainted. It is therefore worth lamenting that people find time and inclination to think and meditate on other things — sometimes on earthly and vain things — but have neither the heart, the inclination, nor the time to meditate on this glorious object. What is the faith and love that such people profess? How deceived they will find themselves in the end!

Fourth. Let your passing thoughts of Christ be many, multiplied throughout every day. He is not far from us; we may reach Him quickly at any time. The apostle tells us (Romans 10:6-8): 'Do not say in your heart, Who will ascend into heaven? that is, to bring Christ down; or, Who will descend into the abyss? that is, to bring Christ up from the dead. But what does it say? The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart.' The things Christ did were done at a distance from us and are long since past. But the apostle says the word of the Gospel — in which these things are revealed and by which they are applied to our souls — is near us, even in our hearts. That is the case if we are true believers who have received the word with faith. And in that way, the word presents Christ and all the benefits of His mediation to us. If this word is in our hearts, then Christ is near to us. If we turn inward at any moment to commune with the word that dwells in us, we will find Him there, ready to receive us into fellowship with Himself. That is, in the light of the knowledge of Christ given to us through the Word, we may have quick, passing thoughts of Him at any moment throughout the day. When our minds and affections are so

filled with other things that we are not ready to commune with Him who is thus near to us through the Word, we are in a spiritually unhealthy state.

To show how near He is to us, it is said that He stands at the door and knocks (Revelation 3:20) — continuously offering Himself and His grace to our souls. He always comes accompanied by His graces, and if those are not received, neither is He. It is pointless to boast in Christ if we have no evidence of His graces in our hearts and lives. But to those for whom He is the hope of future glory, He is also the life of present grace.

There are times when He may seem withdrawn from us — times when we cannot hear His voice, see His face, or sense His love, even though we seek Him diligently. In that state, all our thoughts and meditations about Him will be barren and fruitless, bringing no spiritual refreshment to our souls. And if we settle for such lifeless, unfeeling thoughts of Him — thoughts that bring no experience of His love and give us no real sight of the glory of His person — we will wither away in all the power of real religion.

What our duty is in this case is so fully expressed by the bride in the Song of Solomon as to make it plain to the minds of believers who have any experience of these things (Song of Solomon 3:1-5): 'On my bed night after night I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him but did not find him. I must arise now and go about the city; in the streets and in the squares I will seek him whom my soul loves. I sought him but did not find him. The watchmen who make the rounds in the city found me, and I said, Have you seen him whom my soul loves? Scarcely had I left them when I found

him whom my soul loves; I held on to him and would not let him go.' She gives a similar account of herself and her conduct in a similar situation in Song of Solomon 5:2-8.

This is the substance of what this example instructs us in. The Lord Christ sometimes chooses to withdraw Himself from the spiritual experience of believers — withdrawing any refreshing sense of His love or fresh communications of comforting grace. Those who have never experienced anything of this kind — who have never had any refreshing fellowship with Him — cannot feel His absence, for they were never aware of His presence. But those He has visited, to whom He has given of His love, in whom He has made His home, whom He has refreshed, relieved, and comforted, in whom He has lived in the power of His grace — they know what it is to feel forsaken by Him, even for a moment. Their distress is increased when they seek Him diligently through the accustomed means and cannot find Him. Our duty in that case is to persevere in seeking Him through prayer, meditation, mourning, reading and hearing the Word, all the ordinances of divine worship both private and public, and diligent obedience — until we find Him or He returns to us as in former days.

It would be well if all churches and professing believers today showed the same diligence as the church in this example. Many of them — if they are not hardened by the deceitfulness of sin — cannot help but sense that the Lord Christ has in various ways withdrawn from them, if they ever had experience of the power of His presence. Yet the majority of them are far from the condition of heart described in the bride, for they are lazy, careless, and negli-

gent — not stirring themselves to seek Him or to pray for His return to their souls. So it was with Laodicea of old; so it was with Sardis; and so it is to be feared it is with many today. But to return.

Generally, Christ is near to believers and readily accessible, and the principal activity of the life of faith consists in the frequency of our thoughts about Him — for by this Christ lives in us, as Scripture says (Galatians 2:20). We cannot experience this unless we think of Him often and commune with Him. It is commonly said among people that one person 'lives in' another — and this can only be when one's affections for the other are so strong that he thinks of him day and night, and is as though present with him in that way. So it ought to be between Christ and believers. He dwells in them by faith, and the activities of that life in them — for wherever life is, it will express itself in action — are proportionate to the frequency and delight of their thoughts of Him.

If therefore we want to behold the glory of Christ, the present direction is this: on all occasions, and frequently when there is no particular occasion requiring it, we should abound in thoughts of Him and His glory. I am not referring here to fixed and deliberate meditation, which was addressed earlier, but to more passing thoughts, suited to whatever opportunities we have. It should be a serious rebuke to us whenever Christ has been long absent from our minds during any day. The bride says that before she was aware, her soul made her like the chariots of Amminadib (Song of Solomon 6:12). It happened that, without any prior intention or plan to draw near to Christ, she found herself suddenly drawn and made willing. So it will be with those who love Him sincerely.

Their own souls — without premeditated plans or outward occasions — will frequently carry them into holy thoughts of Him. This is the most outstanding mark of a truly spiritual Christian.

Fourth. The next direction is that all our thoughts about Christ and His glory should be accompanied by wonder, worship, and thanksgiving. For this is an object of our thoughts and affections that we can never fully comprehend in this life — an ocean whose depths we cannot see into. If we are spiritually renewed, all the faculties of our souls are enabled by grace to direct their respective powers toward this glorious object. This must be done through various exercises, employing various graces as they are called forth by the distinct powers of our minds. This is what is meant when we are commanded to love the Lord with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength. All the distinct powers of our souls are to be engaged by distinct graces and duties in cleaving to God by love. In heaven, when we have come to our center — that state of rest and blessedness our nature is ultimately made for — nothing but one infinite, unchanging object of our minds and affections received by direct vision can sustain that uninterrupted and unchangeable state. But while we are here, we know and see only in part, and we must exercise our faith and love on portions of that glory that are not all presented to us at once and that we cannot yet fully comprehend. Therefore we must exercise many different graces in great variety about it — some at one time, some at another — according to all the powers of our renewed faculties. Among these are the responses of wonder, worship, and thanksgiving — the expressions of our minds where all others arrive when the object is beyond full comprehension — and these we are enabled to offer by grace.

One purpose of Christ's glorious coming at the final judgment is that He may be marveled at in all who believe (2 Thessalonians 1:10). Even believers themselves will be overwhelmed with wonder at His glorious appearing. Or if the meaning is not that He will be marveled at by them, but marveled at in them — because of the mighty works of His grace and power in their redemption, sanctification, resurrection, and glorification — the point is the same: He comes to be marveled at. And our sense of wonder should be proportionate to the prospect we now have of that glory.

This wonder will express itself in worship and thanksgiving, of which we have a striking example in the entire redeemed church (Revelation 5:9-14): 'And they sang a new song, saying, Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth. Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing. And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.'

The aim of this discussion is simply this: when by faith we have gained a sight of the glory of Christ in our contemplation of His person, we should not pass it by as a mere truth we agree with —

that He is glorious in Himself — but should labor to let it move our hearts, as something in which our own chief interest lies, so that it may powerfully transform our souls into His image.

But some — and I fear some may say this honestly — will say that these things do not apply to them, that they have never received any benefit from them. They hope to be saved as well as others through the mediation of Christ, but as for this beholding of His glory through constant meditation and active faith — they know nothing of it and feel no concern about it. They give their assent to the doctrine about the person of Christ that they are taught from Scripture, but as for His glory, they hope to see it in another world; in this world they have never sought it.

So it will be. Let us hope these things are not only neglected because the minds of such people are unspiritual and cannot perceive spiritual realities, but also despised because they are hostile to them. These quiet paths are not for everyone. They are not for those who are negligent and lazy, whose minds are earthly and unspiritual. Nor can those who, like Martha, are burdened and preoccupied with many things in this world, sit at Christ's feet with Mary, who chose the better part. Those whose chief aim is to accumulate present pleasures and satisfactions — in the middle of pursuing which they are commonly cut off, so that all their plans come to nothing — will never understand these things. Still less will those understand them whose entire occupation is making provision for the flesh and satisfying its sinful desires.

Only those who make it their aim to be heavenly-minded will find real taste and delight in these things. Those who are strangers to holy meditation in general will be strangers to this mystery in a particular way.

Some people can think about the world, their relationships, and the many concerns of daily life — but as for the things that are above and within the veil, those hold no interest for them.

With others it is different. They profess a desire to behold the glory of Christ by faith, but they find it — as they complain — too high and difficult. Their minds are at a loss, even overwhelmed, when they begin to try to see His glory. They are like the disciples who witnessed His transfiguration: they were filled with amazement and did not know what to say, or said things they did not understand. I do acknowledge that the weakness of our minds in comprehending this eternal glory of Christ — and their inability to sustain meditation on it, so that we cannot look at it steadily or long — gives us a humbling and sobering awareness of our present condition. And I will say only this to that case: when faith can no longer hold open the eyes of our understanding to behold the Sun of Righteousness shining in His beauty, or maintain ordered thoughts about this incomprehensible object, it can retreat to that holy wonder we have already spoken of, and in that wonder it will express itself in pure acts of love and delight.

CHAP. IV. THE GLORY OF CHRIST
IN HIS SUSCEPTION OF THE OFFICE
OF A MEDIATOR. FIRST IN HIS
CONDESCENTION.



The things we have discussed so far — concerning the person of Christ in itself — may seem somewhat difficult to those whose minds are not regularly exercised in the contemplation of heavenly things. To others, these truths are clear in their own experience, and instructive to those willing to learn. What remains will be more readily understood by even the simplest believer. This is the glory of Christ in His office as Mediator, and in the carrying out of that office.

The principal exercise of faith in this life consists in beholding the glory of Christ in His mediatorial work. So the apostle declares (Philippians 3:8-12): 'Yes, indeed, and I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord... that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.' This therefore we must treat at somewhat greater length.

'For there is one God,' says the apostle, 'and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus' (1 Timothy 2:5). In the great conflict between God and humanity — brought on by our sin and our turning away from Him — which left to itself could issue in nothing but the total ruin of the entire human race, there was no one in heaven or earth, in their original nature and powers, who was fit or able to establish a righteous peace between them. Yet it had to be done by a Mediator, or it would never be done at all.

This Mediator could not be God Himself considered absolutely, for a mediator does not represent one party alone — but God is one (Galatians 3:20). Whatever God might do here through sovereign grace, He could not do it in the way of mediation, which was nonetheless necessary for His own glory, as we have explained at length elsewhere.

As for creatures, there was none in heaven or earth fit to take on this office. 'If one man sins against another, God will mediate for him; but if a man sins against the Lord, who will intercede for him?' (1 Samuel 2:25). 'There is no mediator between us, who may lay his hand upon us both' (Job 9:33).

In this situation, the Lord Christ as the Son of God said: 'Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God; sacrifice and whole burnt offering You have not desired, but a body You have prepared for Me... behold, I have come to do Your will' (Hebrews 10:5-9). By taking our nature into union with Himself in His one divine person, He became in every way qualified to carry out this office, and He undertook it accordingly.

What we are inquiring into now is the glory of Christ in this work, and how we may behold that glory. There are three aspects in which we may catch a glimpse of it.

1. In His undertaking of this office. 2. In His carrying out of it. 3. In the outcome and consequences — what followed from it.

In the undertaking of this office, we may behold the glory of Christ in two things. First, in His condescension. Second, in His love.

First. We may behold His glory in His infinite condescension in taking this office upon Himself, and taking our nature as His own for that purpose. This did not come to Him by lot or chance; it was not forced upon Him against His will; it did not belong to Him by any necessity of nature or circumstance; He had no need of it; it was no addition to Him. Rather, of His own free will and accord He graciously condescended to undertake and carry out this office.

The apostle expresses this (Philippians 2:5-8): 'Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.'

It was the mindset that was in Jesus Christ — set before us for consideration and imitation. It was what He was inclined and disposed toward from Himself and His own will alone. And the general thing attributed to Him is self-emptying: He emptied Himself.

The ancient church called this His condescension — an act of which kind in God is also called His humbling Himself (Psalm 113:6).

Therefore the taking on of our nature for the exercise of the office of mediation was an infinite condescension in the Son of God — one in which He is exceedingly glorious in the eyes of believers.

I will do three things: first, show in general the greatness of this condescension; second, explain what it specifically involved; and third, take whatever view we can of the glory of Christ in it.

First. The transcendent excellency of the divine nature is such that it is said of God that He dwells on high and humbles Himself to behold the things that are in heaven and on earth (Psalm 113:5-6). He condescends from the prerogative of His excellence to notice, look upon, and take account of even the most glorious things in heaven above and the greatest things on earth below. All His regard for the creatures — even the most glorious of them — is an act of infinite condescension. And this is so for two reasons.

First. Because of the infinite distance between His essence, nature, and being, and that of all creatures. All nations before Him are as a drop in a bucket and are counted as the dust on the scales. Yes, they are as nothing — accounted as less than nothing, and emptiness. All true being is essentially in Him, and in comparison with that, all other things are as nothing. There are no measures, no proportion between infinite being and nothing — nothing that would naturally call for regard from the one to the other. Therefore the infinite, essential greatness of God's nature — with its infinite distance from the nature of all creatures — means that all His dealings with them take the form of condescension, of His humbling

Himself. So it is expressed (Isaiah 57:15): 'For thus says the high and exalted One who lives forever, whose name is Holy, I dwell on a high and holy place, and also with the contrite and lowly of spirit in order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.' He is so high and exalted, and so inhabits eternity in His own eternal being, that it is an act of pure grace for Him to take notice of things below — and therefore He does so in a special way toward those whom the world most despises.

Second. This condescension also arises from God's infinite self-sufficiency for all the acts and ends of His own eternal blessedness. When we regard, desire, or seek something, it is because we expect it to add to our satisfaction. This is how it is — how it must be — for every creature, for no creature is self-sufficient for its own blessedness. Even the human nature of Christ in heaven is not self-sufficient; it lives in God and God in it, in full dependence on God and in receiving blessed and glorious communications from Him. No rational creature — angel or human — can do, think, or accomplish anything except in view of adding to its own perfection and satisfaction; they are not self-sufficient. God alone lacks nothing, needs nothing, and can have nothing added to Him, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things (Acts 17:25). The whole creation in all its excellence cannot contribute one fraction to the satisfaction or blessedness of God. He possesses all of it in infinite perfection from Himself and His own nature. Our goodness does not reach Him; a person cannot benefit God as he might benefit a neighbor. 'If you have sinned, what do you accomplish against Him? And if your transgressions are many, what do you do to Him? If you are righteous, what do you give to Him, or what

does He receive from your hand?' (Job 35:6-8). From this it also follows that all of God's engagement with the creation is an act of condescension.

How glorious, then, is the condescension of the Son of God in undertaking the office of mediation! If the divine nature is so perfect, and its distance from all creation so absolutely infinite — and if God is so entirely self-sufficient for His own eternal blessedness that nothing can be taken from Him and nothing added to Him, so that every act of regard toward any creature is an act of self-humbling and condescension — what heart can conceive, and what tongue can express, the glory of that condescension in the Son of God by which He took our nature upon Himself, made it His own, in order to carry out the office of mediation on our behalf?

But so that we may better behold the glory of Christ in this, let us briefly consider what this condescension specifically involved and what it consisted in.

Since not only the denial of this truth but also misunderstandings of it have troubled the church of God in every age, we must first set aside the errors and then declare the truth.

First. The condescension of the Son of God did not consist in laying aside, parting with, or being separated from the divine nature — as if He ceased to be God by becoming man. The very foundation of His condescension lay in the fact that He was in the form of God and considered equality with God not something to be held onto (Philippians 2:6). That is, being truly and essentially God in His divine nature, He professed Himself to be equal with God — equal with the Father. He was in the form of God — meaning He was God, a participant of the divine nature, for God has no form

apart from His own essence and being — and so He was equal with God in authority, dignity, and power. Because He was in the form of God, He must be equal with God, for while there is order among the divine persons, there is no inequality in the divine being. The Jews understood this: when He said that God was His Father, they recognized that He was making Himself equal with God. By saying so, He claimed equal power with the Father in all divine operations: 'My Father is working until now,' He said, 'and I Myself am working' (John 5:17-18). Those who deny His divine nature thereby strip this condescension of Christ entirely from our religion, as something with no real substance. But we will speak of them later.

Being in this state, it is said that He took the form of a servant and was found in appearance as a man (Philippians 2:7). This is His condescension. It is not said that He ceased to be in the form of God; rather, while continuing to be so, He took the form of a servant in our nature. He became what He was not, without ceasing to be what He was. So He testifies of Himself (John 3:13): 'No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man who is in heaven.' Although He was at that moment on earth as the Son of Man, He had not ceased to be God; in His divine nature He was also still in heaven.

He who is God can no more cease to be God than he who is not God can become God. Our difference with the Socinians on this point is precisely this: we believe that Christ, being God, was made man for our sakes; they say that being only a man, he was made a kind of god for his own sake.

This, then, is the foundation of the glory of Christ in His condescension — the life and soul of all heavenly truth and mystery: the Son of God, becoming in time what He was not — the Son of Man — did not thereby cease to be what He eternally was — the eternal Son of God.

Second. Much less did this condescension consist in a conversion of the divine nature into the human — an idea imagined by some of the Arians of old, and one which (to my own knowledge) some still follow today. They say that the Word which existed in the beginning, through whom all things were made — being itself an effect of the divine will and power — was in the fullness of time turned into flesh. That is, its substance was changed, just as the water in our Savior's miracle was turned into wine; by an act of His divine power it ceased to be water substantially and became wine alone — not water mixed with wine. These people suppose a substantial change from one nature into the other, from the divine nature into the human, similar to what Roman Catholics imagine in transubstantiation. In this way they say God was made man by having His essence converted into that of a man.

But this understanding has nothing to do with Christ's condescension. We may call it Ichabod — there is no glory in it. It destroys both natures and leaves us a person in whom we have no stake. For according to this view, the divine nature in which He existed in the form of God ceased to exist in its own form — indeed, was utterly destroyed — being substantially changed into the nature of man, just as the water ceased to exist when it became wine. And the human nature produced by this change has no connection or kinship to us or our nature, since it was not made of a woman but out of the substance of the Word.

Third. This condescension involved not the slightest change or alteration in the divine nature. Eutyches and his followers of old imagined that the two natures of Christ — the divine and the human — were blended and compounded into one. But this could not happen without an alteration in the divine nature, since it would mean the divine nature was made to be essentially what it was not — for one nature has only one essence.

But as we said before: although the Lord Christ Himself in His person was made to be what He was not before — in that our nature was made His own — His divine nature was not changed. In it there is neither variation nor shadow of change. It remained the same in Him in all its essential attributes, activities, and blessedness, just as it was from eternity. It neither did, acted, nor suffered anything except what belongs to the divine being. The Lord Christ did and suffered many things in His life and death — in His own person, through His human nature — in which the divine nature neither acted nor suffered anything at all. Yet in doing those things, His person is spoken of in terms of that nature: 'God purchased His own church with His blood' (Acts 20:28).

Fourth. Someone may ask: then what did the Lord Christ do, with respect to His divine nature, in this condescension? The apostle tells us He humbled Himself and emptied Himself (Philippians 2:7-8). He veiled the glory of His divine nature in ours — and what He did in our nature — so that there was no outward appearance or manifestation of it. As a result, the world was so far from regarding Him as the true God that they did not even believe He was a good man. They could never bear the slightest suggestion of His divine nature, supposing themselves safe from any such claim, because with their own eyes they saw Him to be a man — just as truly

and really as any one of themselves. So when He testified of Himself, 'Before Abraham was born, I am' — asserting a pre-existence from eternity in a nature other than the one they saw — they were filled with rage and took up stones to throw at Him (John 8:58). They gave their reason (John 10:33): that He, being a man, was making Himself out to be God. This was something, they thought, that no wise and sober man could ever claim — that while being and acknowledging Himself to be a man, He should also say He was God. This is something no human reason can grasp, nothing in nature can parallel or illustrate: that one and the same person is both God and man. This remains the primary objection of the Socinians today, who through the followers of Muhammad continue the Jewish opposition to the divine nature of Christ.

But all this difficulty is resolved by the glory of Christ in His condescension. Although in Himself — in His own divine person — He is God over all, blessed forever, He humbled Himself for the salvation of the church and the eternal glory of God to take our nature upon Himself and be made man. Those who cannot see divine glory in His doing so neither know Him, nor love Him, nor believe in Him, nor belong to Him in any way.

So it is with those who hold such wicked views. Because they cannot see the glory of this, they deny the foundation of our religion — the divine person of Christ. Since He chose to be made man, they will esteem Him as nothing more than a man. In doing so they reject that glory of God — His infinite wisdom, goodness, and grace — in which God is more directly concerned than in the whole creation. And they tear up the root from which all the truths of the Gospel grow as branches.

It is true — and must be openly acknowledged — that in this very matter our Lord Jesus Christ is a stumbling stone and a rock of offense to the world. If we confessed Him only as a prophet, a man sent by God, there would be little dispute or opposition to Him. The Muslims all acknowledge that much, and the Jews would not long deny it — for their hatred toward Him was, and is, solely because He claimed to be God and was believed on as such throughout the world. Today, partly through the influence of the Socinians and partly from the power of their own blindness and unbelief, multitudes are willing to grant that He was a prophet sent by God, while refusing to believe the mystery of this condescension in His taking on our nature, or to see the glory in it. But remove this, and all our religion is taken away with it. Farewell to Christianity — to its mystery, its glory, its truth, its power — and let a refined paganism take its place. But this is the Rock on which the church is built, against which the gates of hell will not prevail.

Fourth. This condescension of Christ was not merely a phantom or an appearance. One of the first heresies to trouble the church immediately after the apostolic age was the claim that everything Christ did and suffered as a man was not the action or suffering of one who was truly and really a man, but an outward representation of things — like the appearances of angels in human form, eating and drinking under the Old Testament. In keeping with this, some in our own day have said that there was only an appearance of Christ in the man Jesus at Jerusalem, and that He suffered in Him no more than He does in other believers. But the early Christians told those men the truth: just as they had imagined a fictitious Christ, so they could expect only a fictitious salvation.

The true nature of this divine condescension consists in these three things.

First. The eternal person of the Son of God — or the divine nature in the person of the Son — by an inexpressible act of His divine power and love, assumed our nature into an individual existence in or with Himself. That is, He made it His own, just as the divine nature is His. This is the unshakeable foundation of faith, even for those who can understand very little of these divine mysteries. They can and do believe that the Son of God took our nature as His own — so that whatever was done in that nature was done by Him, just as it is with every other person. Every human being has human nature made personally his own through individual existence, by which he becomes the particular person he is, and not another. That nature which is common to all becomes in him peculiarly his own, as if no one else shared it. Adam at his first creation, when all human nature resided in him alone, was no more uniquely the individual man he was than every man today is the particular man he is through his own individual existence. So the Lord Christ, taking the nature common to all into a unique subsistence in His own person, made it His, and became the man Christ Jesus. This was the mindset that was in Him.

Second. By reason of this taking on of our nature — and His doing and suffering in it, whereby He was found in appearance as a man — the glory of His divine person was veiled, and He emptied Himself of reputation. This also belongs to His condescension, as its first and immediate result. But we have already spoken of this.

Third. It should also be noted that in taking our nature as His own, He did not transform it into something divine and spiritual, but preserved it intact in all its essential attributes and functions.

As a result, that nature genuinely did and suffered, was tried, tempted, and forsaken, just as the same nature in any other person can do and be. That nature as specifically His own — and therefore He Himself in that nature — was exposed to all the temporal evils to which the same nature is subject in any other person.

This is a brief general view of the Son of God's incomprehensible condescension, as the apostle describes it in Philippians 2:5-8. And this is what we are especially to behold by faith as the glory of Christ while we remain in this world.

But even with the tongues of men and angels, we would not be able to express the glory of this condescension as it deserves. For it is the most inexpressible effect of the divine wisdom of the Father and the love of the Son — the highest evidence of God's care for mankind. What can equal it? What can be compared to it? It is the glory of the Christian religion and the animating soul of all the truths of the Gospel. It carries the mystery of God's wisdom beyond the reason or understanding of men and angels, to be the object of faith and wonder alone. It is a mystery befitting the greatness of God and His infinite distance from all creation — a mystery that makes it fitting that all His ways and works should be beyond the full understanding of any creature (Job 11:4-9; Romans 11:34-36).

He who was eternally in the form of God — essentially and truly so, God by nature, equally sharing the same divine nature with God the Father, God over all blessed forever, who humbles Himself to look upon the things that are in heaven and earth — took on the nature of man and made it His own. By this He was no less truly man in time than He was truly God from eternity. And to heighten the wonder of this mystery further, because it was neces-

sary for the purpose He had in mind, He so humbled Himself in this assumption of our nature as to make Himself of no reputation in this world — yes, to such a degree that He said of Himself that He was a worm and no man, compared to those who held any standing.

We speak of these things in a poor, halting, inadequate way. We teach them as they are revealed in Scripture. We labor by faith to hold on to them as revealed. But when we come to a steady, direct contemplation of the thing itself, our minds fail, our hearts tremble, and we find no rest except in a holy wonder at what we cannot comprehend. Here we are at a loss, and we know we will be so as long as we are in this world. But all the inexpressible fruits and benefits of this truth are given to those who believe.

It is with reference to this that the great promise concerning Christ is given to the church (Isaiah 8:14): 'He shall be a sanctuary' — that is, to all who believe, as it is explained in 1 Peter 2:8 — 'but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to those who stumble at the word, being disobedient, to which they were also appointed.'

He is in this a sanctuary — a sure refuge for all who flee to Him. What does anyone in distress, who runs to a sanctuary, look for there? Supply for all his needs, deliverance from all his fears, and protection against all his dangers are offered there. So the Lord Christ is to souls distressed by sin: He is a refuge in all spiritual distresses (Hebrews 6:18). Are we burdened by the weight of sin? Are we perplexed by temptations? Are we bowed down under the oppression of some spiritual enemy? Do we on any of these accounts walk in darkness and have no light? One sight of the glory of Christ in this condescension is sufficient to uphold and relieve us.

When we turn to someone for relief in any situation, we have regard only to their will and their power. If they have both, we can be certain of relief. What then should we fear about the will of Christ in this regard? What will He not do for us? He who so emptied and humbled Himself — who descended so infinitely from the prerogative of His glory, His self-sufficient being, to take on our nature for the sake of carrying out the office of Mediator on our behalf — will He not relieve us in all our distresses? Will He not do all we need in order to be eternally saved? Will He not be a sanctuary to us?

Nor do we have any reason to fear His power in this regard: by this infinite condescension to become a suffering man, He lost nothing of His power as almighty God, nothing of His infinite wisdom or glorious grace. He could still do all that He could do as God from eternity. If anything could combine infinite power with infinite condescension to constitute a sanctuary for distressed sinners, all of it is found in Christ Jesus. And if we do not see Him as glorious in this, it is because there is no light of faith in us.

This, then, is the rest that causes the weary to rest, and this is the refreshment. In this He is a shelter from the wind and a refuge from the storm, as streams of water in a dry land and as the shadow of a great rock in a parched and weary land. On this account He says, 'I have satisfied the weary and refreshed everyone who was sorrowful.' Under this consideration He is, in all the Gospel's promises and invitations to come to Him, set before distressed sinners as their only sanctuary.

In this He is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to the unbelieving and disobedient who stumble at the word. They cannot and will not see the glory of this condescension; they neither

desire nor seek to do so. Yes, they hate it and despise it. Christ in it is a stumbling stone and a rock of offense to them. Therefore they would rather deny His divine person entirely than acknowledge that He so abased Himself for our sake. Rather than accept this glory, they will allow Him no glory at all. A man, they say, He was and nothing more — and that was His glory. This is the principle of darkness and unbelief that works powerfully in many minds today. They think it as absurd as the Jews did of old — that He, being a man, should also be God; or on the other hand that the Son of God should so descend as to take our nature upon Himself. In this they see no glory, no relief, no refuge, no refreshment for their souls in any of their distresses — and so they deny His divine person. Here faith triumphs over them, finding in what they cannot see at all a glorious sanctuary.

But I am not so much engaged here in explaining or defending this glory of Christ as in urging its practical contemplation through faith. And I know that among many it is too much neglected. Of all the evils I have witnessed in the days of my pilgrimage — now drawing to their close — none is so grievous as the public contempt of the principal mysteries of the Gospel among those called Christians. Religion, in the profession of some, has withered in its vital principles, grown weak in its strength and sinews, but is thought to be adequately sustained by outward display and ceremony.

But my exhortation is to diligence in contemplating this glory of Christ and exercising our thoughts about it. Unless we are diligent in this, it is impossible to be steady in the principal acts of faith or ready for the principal duties of obedience. The principal act of faith concerns the divine person of Christ — as all Christians

must acknowledge. We can never maintain this act of faith, as has been shown, if we do not see His glory in this condescension, and whoever tests his ideas against experience will find that his faith stands or falls here. The principal duty of our obedience is self-denial and readiness for the cross. For this, the contemplation of Christ's condescension is the chief Gospel motive and the ground on which our obedience in it must rest — as the apostle declares (Philippians 2:5-7). No one denies himself rightly who does not do so in light of the self-denial of the Son of God. And this is a powerful motive. What are the things in which we are called to deny ourselves and give up what we think we have a right to? Our possessions, our freedoms, our relationships, our lives. And what are any or all of these — considered in themselves, or in light of our condition and the purpose for which we were made? They are perishing things from which death — whether we are willing or not — will give us an eternal separation within a few days. Things that a fever or a sickness can strip away from us at any moment. How incomparably greater is the condescension of Christ, as we have described it! Therefore, if we find ourselves reluctant or evasive in our minds when we are called to these duties, one sight by faith of the glory of Christ in this condescension — and of what He set aside when He made Himself of no reputation — will be an effective cure for that sinful condition.

Here then, I say, we may by faith behold the glory of Christ, as we will one day behold it by sight. If we see no glory in it — if we fail to perceive in it what deserves eternal wonder — we walk in darkness. It is the most inexpressible effect of divine wisdom and grace. Where are our hearts and minds if we can see no glory here? I know that in contemplating it, our reason will quickly be over-

whelmed and our understanding will be brought to its limits. But this is exactly the limit I desire to reach every day. For when faith can no longer comprehend, when it finds the object it is fixed upon too great and glorious to be brought within the range of our minds and capacities, it will issue — as we said before — in holy wonder, humble worship, and joyful thanksgiving. And in those acts, faith fills the soul with joy inexpressible and full of glory.

CHAP. V. THE GLORY OF CHRIST IN HIS LOVE.



In the Son of God's taking up and carrying out the mediatorial office, Scripture most prominently presents His love as the sole driving and guiding cause of it (Galatians 2:20; 1 John 3:16; Revelation 1:5).

In this He is glorious in a way that is beyond comprehension, for in the glory of divine love the chief brilliance of glory consists. There is nothing of dread or terror in it — only grace and infinite refreshment. To take a view of the glory of Christ in this love by faith, we must first inquire into its nature.

First, the eternal and decisive cause of the whole work in which the Lord Christ engaged by taking up this office — for the redemption and salvation of the church — is the love of the Father. To this it is consistently attributed in Scripture. This love of the Father expressed itself in His eternal decrees before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4), and afterward in the sending of His Son to make it effectual (John 3:16). At its origin, it is His eternal election of a portion of humanity to be brought into the enjoyment of

Himself — through the mystery of the blood of Christ and the sanctifying work of the Spirit (2 Thessalonians 2:13, 16; Ephesians 1:4-9; 1 Peter 1:2).

This eternal act of God the Father's will does not involve an approval or delight in the actual state and condition of those who are elected, but only designates the One on whose account they will be accepted and approved. And it is called His love for several reasons.

First, because it is an act suited to that glorious excellence of His nature in which He is love — for God is love (1 John 4:8-9). The first expression of the divine attributes must therefore be in an act of self-communicating love. And since election, being an eternal act of God's will, can have no motivating cause but what is in God Himself, if we could look into all the treasures of the divine excellencies, we would find none to which it could more fittingly be attributed than to love. Therefore:

Second, it is called love because it was free and entirely undeserved on our part. Whatever good is done to someone entirely without deserving — if done with the design of their benefit and advantage — is an act of love and can have no other cause. So it is with us in regard to eternal election. There was nothing in us, nothing foreseen in us that would come from us, that could in any way move God's will to this election — for whatever is good in the best of people is itself an effect of it (Ephesians 1:4). Since therefore election tends to our eternal good, its source must be love. And:

Third, the fruits and effects of it are inconceivable acts of love. It is made effectual through repeated and multiplied acts of love (John 3:16; Jeremiah 31:5; Ephesians 1:3-6; 1 John 4:8-9, 16).

This is the eternal spring that flows to the church through the mediation of Christ. What put this entire design of the Father's eternal love into execution and worked it out to completion was the love of the Son, which we now inquire into. Some light may be given to it through the following observations.

First, the whole company of the elect were creatures made in the image of God and thereby in a state of love and friendship with Him. All that they were, had, or hoped for were effects of divine goodness and love. And the life of their souls was love toward God. It was a blessed state, prepared as a foretaste of the eternal life of love in heaven.

Second, from that state they fell through sin into a state of enmity with God — which encompasses all misery, both temporal and eternal.

Third, despite this tragic fall from their first state, our nature was — on many grounds — capable of being restored to the enjoyment of God, as I have explained at length elsewhere.

Fourth, in this condition the first act of Christ's love toward us was pity and compassion. A creature made in the image of God, fallen into misery, yet capable of recovery, is the proper object of divine compassion. What Scripture so frequently celebrates as the tender mercies, the pity, and the compassion of God is the expression of divine love toward us as He considers our distress and misery. But all compassion ceases toward those whose condition is be-

yond recovery. Therefore the Lord Christ did not have pity on the angels who fell, because their nature was not capable of being restored (Hebrews 2:14-16; Isaiah 63:9).

Fifth, as He looked upon us in our misery, we were the objects of His pity and compassion; but as He saw us as capable of deliverance from that state, His love also worked through delight. It was an inconceivable delight to Him to contemplate the deliverance of humanity to the glory of God — which is itself an act of love — as this is beautifully expressed in Proverbs 8:30-31, as that passage has been explained elsewhere.

Sixth, if we ask from what source this compassion and delight in Him arose — what could cause the One who was eternally blessed in His own all-sufficiency to so deeply concern Himself with our lost and hopeless condition — I say it arose entirely from the infinite love and goodness of His own nature, with no inducement or prompting from us or anything in us (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Seventh, in this state of readiness, willingness, and delight — flowing from love and compassion — God's plan for the way of our recovery was, as it were, set before Him. Now this was a way filled with great difficulties and hardships for Himself — that is, for His person as it was to be constituted. For the divine nature nothing is grievous, nothing is difficult. But He was to take on another nature in which He would bear the full weight of the difficulties of this work. He was required to show us pity until He had none left for Himself when He was in need of it — until His own soul was heavy and sorrowful to the point of death. He was required to pursue His delight in saving us until He had borne the very sufferings we deserved. Yet He was not in the least deterred from undertaking this work of love and mercy. Indeed, His love rose at this proposal like

the waters of a mighty river against opposition. For then He said, 'Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God; I delight to do it' (Hebrews 10:5-7; Isaiah 50:4-7).

Eighth, being thus inclined, disposed, and ready — in the eternal love of His divine person — to undertake the office of mediation and the work of our redemption, a body was prepared for Him. In this body, or human nature made His own, He was to make this love effectual in all its inclinations and expressions. It was provided for Him for this very purpose, filled immeasurably with all grace — especially with fervent love toward humanity. By this it became a fitting instrument through which to actuate His eternal love in all its fruits.

Ninth, from this it is clear that the glorious love of Christ does not consist only in the eternal acts of His divine person, or of the divine nature in His person. Such indeed is the love of the Father — His eternal purpose to communicate grace and glory, together with His delight in that purpose. But there is more in the love of Christ. For when He exercised this love, He was also man and not God only. And none of those eternal acts of love could involve or concern the human nature of Christ. Yet the love of the man Christ Jesus is celebrated in Scripture.

Tenth, therefore this love of Christ that we are inquiring into is the love of His person — that is, the love He in His own person expresses through and by His distinct natures, according to their distinct essential attributes. The acts of love in these distinct natures are infinitely distinct and different from one another, yet they are all acts of one and the same person. So whether the act of love in Christ we are considering is an eternal act of the divine nature in the person of the Son of God, or whether it is an act of the human

nature performed in time through the gracious faculties and capacities of that nature, it is still the love of one and the same person, Christ Jesus.

That He assumed our nature was an act of inexpressible love in Him (Hebrews 2:14, 17). But it was an act of His divine nature alone, for it was prior to the existence of His human nature, which therefore could have no part in it. His laying down His life for us was an act of incomprehensible love (1 John 3:16), yet it was only an act of the human nature in which He offered Himself and died. But both acts were acts of His one divine person — so that it is said God laid down His life for us and purchased the church with His own blood.

This is the love of Christ in which He is glorious, and in which we are by faith to behold His glory. A great part of the blessedness of the saints in heaven and their rejoicing consists in beholding this glory of Christ in thankful contemplation of its fruits (Revelation 5:9-10).

The radiant brightness with which this glory shines in heaven, and the fully satisfying sweetness that the sight of it gives to the souls of the glorified saints — these are beyond our power to conceive or express. Here this love surpasses knowledge; there we will grasp its full dimensions. Yet even here, if we are not lazy and unspiritual, we may have a refreshing glimpse of it. And where comprehension falls short, let wonder take its place.

My present task is to urge others to the contemplation of this love — though I can conceive only a little of it, a very little, a small portion; and even less than that very little can I express. Yet it may

be my duty to stir up not only myself but others as well to seek it diligently, and toward that end I offer the following.

First, labor to have your minds continually prepared and ready for such heavenly contemplations. If they are unspiritual and sensual, or filled with earthly concerns, a proper sense of this love of Christ and its glory will not take root in them. Virtue and vice in their highest degrees are not more sharply opposed in the same person than a habitual pattern of worldly, sensual thinking and a true contemplation of the glory of Christ's love. Indeed, even an anxious spirit filled with constant thoughts about the lawful concerns of life is an obstacle to genuine communion with the Lord Jesus Christ in this.

Few people have minds adequately prepared for this duty. The words and conduct of most give evidence of what their souls are like inwardly. Their thoughts wander, constantly led by their affections to the far corners of the earth. It is pointless to call such people to contemplate the glory of Christ in His love. What is required is a holy composure of mind through spiritual principles, an inclination to seek refreshment in heavenly things and to bathe the soul in their fountain, together with a sustained sense of the excellence of this divine glory.

Second, do not be satisfied with vague and general ideas about the love of Christ that present no real glory to the mind — and with which many deceive themselves. All who believe in His divine person profess to value His love, and consider those who do not to be no Christians. But they have only general notions and no clear understanding of what that love actually is. To free us from this trap, careful meditation on its principal dimensions is required of us. Such as:

First, whose love it is — namely, the love of the divine person of the Son of God. He is expressly called God in connection with the exercise of this love, so that we might always consider whose it is (1 John 3:16): 'By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us.'

Second, the ways and means by which this remarkable love of the Son of God expresses itself — in the divine nature through eternal acts of wisdom, goodness, and grace proper to it; and in the human nature through acts of pity and compassion in time, with all their fruits in doing and suffering for us (Ephesians 3:19; Hebrews 2:14-15; Revelation 1:5).

Third, the complete freedom of it as to any merit on our part (1 John 4:10). What we deserved in ourselves was hatred, not love — a consideration designed to fill the soul with self-abasement, which is the best frame of heart for contemplating the glory of Christ.

Fourth, the power of this love in its fruits and effects — along with many other considerations of the same kind. By distinctly viewing and marveling at these things, the soul may walk in this garden of God and gather here and there a heavenly flower, breathing to it a sweet fragrance of the love of Christ (Song of Solomon 2:2-4).

Furthermore, do not be satisfied with having right ideas about the love of Christ in your mind unless you also attain a gracious taste of it in your heart — any more than you would be satisfied to see a richly prepared feast and receive nothing from it for your refreshment. This love is of such a nature that we may have a spiritual sense of it in our minds, which is why the bride compares it to

apples and flagons of wine. We may taste that the Lord is gracious. And if we find no savoring of it in our hearts, we will not long hold onto the idea of it in our minds. Christ is the food and nourishment of our souls. Nothing in Him provides higher spiritual nourishment than His love, which we should always desire.

In this love He is glorious — for it is a love that no creatures, angels or human beings, could have had the faintest conception of before it was made known through its effects. And even after its manifestation, it remains in this life absolutely beyond full comprehension.

CHAP. VI. THE GLORY OF CHRIST IN THE DISCHARGE OF HIS MEDIATORY OFFICE.



Just as the Lord Christ was glorious in taking up His office, so also was He glorious in carrying it out. An unseen glory accompanied Him in everything He did and in everything He suffered. Unseen it was to the eyes of the world, but not to the One who alone can rightly judge of it. Had people truly seen it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. Yet to some it was made plain. So they testified that in the discharge of His office they 'beheld His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father' (John 1:14) — even while others could see no beauty or desirability in Him (Isaiah 53:2). So it is to this day. I will make only a few observations: first, on what He did in obedience, and then on what He suffered in the discharge of His office.

First, everything He did — every act of obedience He rendered to the law of God in the discharge of His office (concerning which He said, 'Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God; Your law is within My heart') — sprang entirely from His own free choice. It is our duty to seek freedom, willingness, and cheerfulness in all our obedience. Obedience has its essential character from our wills —

as much of our will as there is in what we do toward God, that much is obedience and no more. Yet prior to any act of our own will, we are obligated to everything called obedience. By the very constitution of our natures, we are necessarily subject to the law of God. All that is left to us is voluntary compliance with unavoidable commands. With Him it was not so. An act of His own will and choice preceded all obligation as to obedience. He obeyed because He chose to, before He obeyed because He was obligated. He said, 'Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God,' before He was bound to do that will. By His own free choice — an act of infinite condescension and love, as we have shown — He was made of a woman, and thereby made under the law. In His divine person He was Lord of the law, above it, no more subject to its commands than to its curse. Nor was He afterward exempt from its curse merely because He was innocent, but also because in every way He was above the law itself and all its power.

This was the original glory of His obedience. The wisdom, grace, love, and condescension that were in this choice gave life and color to every act and duty of His obedience, making it beautiful in the sight of God and beneficial to us. So when He went to John to be baptized — John, who knew He had no need of it for His own sake, would have declined to administer it to Him — He replied, 'Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness' (Matthew 3:15). In effect: 'This I have undertaken willingly and of My own accord, without any need of it for Myself, and therefore I will carry it through.' For the One who is Lord of all to submit Himself in this way to universal obedience carries with it clear evidence of glorious grace.

Second, this obedience — as to its purpose and benefit — was not for Himself but for us. We were obligated to it and could not perform it; He was not obligated to it by anything except a free act of His own will, and He performed it. God gave Him the honor that He should obey on behalf of the whole church, so that by His obedience we would be made righteous (Romans 5:19). In this, I say, God gave Him honor and glory: that His obedience would stand in the place of the perfect obedience of the church in justification.

Third, His obedience — being absolutely universal and absolutely perfect — was the supreme representation of the holiness of God in the law. It was displayed gloriously when the Ten Commandments were written by the finger of God on stone tablets; it appears yet more fully in the spiritual writing of the law on the hearts of believers; but absolutely and perfectly it is exemplified only in the holiness and obedience of Christ, which met the law's demands completely. And this is no small part of His glory in obedience — that the holiness of God in the law was there, and there alone in that one instance in human nature, fully represented.

Fourth, He worked out this obedience against every difficulty and obstacle. Although He was completely free from the internal disorder that has invaded our entire natures — the disorder that makes all obedience difficult and perfect obedience impossible for us — He faced far more external opposition, in the form of temptations, sufferings, reproaches, and contradictions, than all of us combined. Hence that glorious statement: 'Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered' (Hebrews 5:8). But:

Fifth, the glory of this obedience arises chiefly from the person who rendered it to God. He was none other than the Son of God made man — God and man in one person. He who was in heaven, above all, Lord of all, at the same time lived in the world in a condition of no reputation, walking in the strictest obedience to the whole law of God. He to whom prayer was made prayed Himself, night and day. He whom all the angels of heaven and all creatures worshiped was continually engaged in all the duties of the worship of God. He who was Lord over the household diligently fulfilled the humblest role in the household. He who made all people — in whose hand they all are as clay in the hand of the potter — observed among them the strictest rules of justice, giving to everyone what was due, and of charity, giving good things that were not owed. This is what makes the obedience of Christ in the discharge of His office both mysterious and glorious.

Second, the glory of Christ is also set before us in what He suffered in the discharge of the office He had undertaken. His office certainly entailed victory, triumph, and great glory (Isaiah 63:1-5), but sufferings were required of Him as the necessary path to that. 'Was it not necessary for Christ to suffer these things and then enter into His glory?'

But the sufferings of Christ are such that in contemplating them, our minds quickly pull back with a sense of how inadequate they are to grasp them rightly. No one has ever launched his meditations into this ocean without soon finding himself unable to sound its depths. I will not undertake a full inquiry into them here. I will only point toward this spring of glory and leave it under a veil.

We might look on Him bearing the weight of the wrath of God and the curse of the law, taking upon Himself and upon His whole soul the full measure of evil that God had ever threatened against sin and sinners. We might look on Him in His agony and bloody sweat, in His strong cries and prayers, when He was sorrowful to the point of death and began to be overwhelmed in anticipation of what was coming upon Him — that dreadful trial He was entering. We might look on Him wrestling with all the powers of darkness and the rage and madness of men, suffering in His soul, His body, His name, His reputation, and His life — some of these sufferings coming directly from God above, others from devils and wicked men acting according to God's determined purpose. We might look on Him praying, weeping, crying out, bleeding, dying — in all of it making His soul an offering for sin. 'He was taken from prison and from judgment; and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people,' says God, 'He was stricken' (Isaiah 53:8). But I will not dwell on these particulars individually, but leave them under a veil that still offers enough of a glimpse to fill our souls with holy wonder.

Lord! What is man that You are thus mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? Who has known Your mind, or who has been Your counselor? O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable His ways! What shall we say to these things — that God did not spare His only Son but gave Him up to death and all the evils involved in it, for such poor, lost sinners as we were? That

for our sakes the eternal Son of God submitted Himself to all the evils to which our nature is subject and which our sins had deserved, so that we might be delivered?

How glorious is the Lord Christ on this account in the eyes of believers! When Adam had sinned and thereby — according to the sentence of the law — eternally ruined himself and all his descendants, he stood ashamed, afraid, and trembling, as one ready to perish forever under the displeasure of God. Death was what he had deserved, and immediate death was what he expected. In this condition the Lord Christ comes to him in the promise and says: 'Poor creature! How wretched is your condition! How disfigured is your appearance! What has become of the beauty and glory of that image of God in which you were created? How you have taken on the monstrous likeness of Satan! And yet your present misery — your entry into dust and darkness — is nothing compared to what lies ahead. Eternal ruin is at the door. But look up once more and see Me, that you may have some glimpse of what lies within the designs of infinite wisdom, love, and grace. Come out from your vain shelter, your hiding place. I will put Myself in your condition. I will bear that burden of guilt and punishment that would sink you eternally to the bottom of hell. I will pay what I never owed, and be made temporarily a curse for you, so that you may attain eternal blessedness.' To the same effect He speaks to convicted sinners in the invitation He extends to come to Him.

This is how the Lord Christ is presented in the Gospel — plainly crucified before our eyes (Galatians 3:1) — through the representation of His glory in the sufferings He bore in the discharge of the office He had undertaken. Let us then behold Him as poor, despised, persecuted, reproached, reviled, hanged on a tree —

through all of it laboring under a sense of the wrath of God due to our sins. This is why these things are recorded in the Gospel, read, preached, and set before us. But what can we see in them? What glory is there in these things? Are these not the very things at which the whole world of Jews and Gentiles stumbled and took offense — the things in which He was appointed to be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense? Was it not counted foolish to look for help and deliverance through another's misery — to look for life through His death? The apostle explains at length how it was so esteemed (1 Corinthians 1). So it seemed in the wisdom of the world. But even on account of these very things He is honorable, glorious, and precious in the sight of those who believe (1 Peter 2:6-7) — for in them He was the wisdom of God and the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:24). And the apostle explains at length the grounds for the very different ways people think about the cross and sufferings of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:3-6).

CHAP. VII. THE GLORY OF CHRIST IN HIS EXALTATION, AFTER THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE WORK OF MEDIATION IN THIS WORLD.



We may next behold the glory of Christ with respect to His office — specifically, in what God did for Him in response to His carrying out that office in this world: namely, in His exaltation.

These are the two main headings under which all the prophecies and predictions about Jesus Christ in the Old Testament are gathered: His sufferings, and the glory that followed them (1 Peter 1:11). All the prophets testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that would follow. So when He opened the Scriptures to His disciples, He gave them this as the summary of its teaching: 'Was it not necessary for Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?' (Luke 24:26). The same is expressed repeatedly elsewhere (Romans 14:9; Philippians 2:5-8).

As much as we know of Christ — His sufferings and His glory — so much do we understand of Scripture, and no more.

These are the two great themes of Christ's mediation and His kingdom, and this is the order in which they are given to the church — first suffering, then glory. 'If we endure, we will also reign with Him' (2 Timothy 2:12). Those who plan for some other arrangement are only deceiving themselves. Some would reign here in this world, and we may say with the apostle, 'Would that you did reign, so that we might reign with you!' But the members of the mystical body must be conformed to the Head. In Him, suffering came before glory, and so it must be in them. The order in the kingdom of Satan and the world is the reverse: the good things of this life first, and then eternal misery — that is the pattern of that kingdom (Luke 16:25).

These are the two springs of the salvation of the church — the two anointed ones who stand before the Lord of all the earth — from which all the golden oil flows by which the church is consecrated to God and set apart for Him. This glory of Christ in His exaltation — which followed on His sufferings — is what we now inquire into. We will set out our understanding of it in the following observations.

First, this is particularly the glory which the Lord Christ prays His disciples may be with Him to behold. It is not just this glory considered in isolation, but the one in which all the other aspects of His glory are made visible. It is the evidence, the pledge, and the means by which they are all manifested. Over all the other dimensions of His glory discussed previously, a veil was drawn while He was in this world. As a result, most people saw nothing of it, and even the best saw it only obscurely. But in this glory the veil is removed, so that the full glory of His person — both in itself and in the work of mediation — shines forth most brilliantly. When we

behold this glory directly, we will see Him as He is. This is the glory the Father granted Him before the foundation of the world and with which He was actually invested at His ascension.

Second, by this glory of Christ I do not mean the essential glory of His divine nature — His being absolutely, in His own person, God over all, blessed forever. But the manifestation of this glory in particular — after it had been veiled in this world under the form of a servant — belongs to it. The divine glory of Christ in His person does not belong to His exaltation as something newly given; but its declaration and display does. It was not granted to Him by way of free gift, but the announcement of it to the church of angels and humanity after His humiliation was. He never left it behind while He was in this world; but the direct evidence and declaration of it He set aside, until He was 'declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead.'

When the sun is in total eclipse, it loses nothing of its native beauty, light, and glory. It is still what it was from the beginning — a great light to rule the day. To us it appears as a dark and useless object; but when, by its course, it moves free from the lunar obstruction and faces us directly, it displays once again its native light and glory. So it was with the divine nature of Christ, as we have previously described. He veiled its glory by the interposition of the flesh — by taking our nature as His own — and beyond that, by taking in that nature the form of a servant, of a person of humble and low condition. But this temporary eclipse being past and gone, that glory now shines forth in its infinite brilliance and beauty, belonging to His present exaltation. When those who had known Him here as a poor, sorrowful, persecuted man dying on a cross came to see Him in all the infinite, uncreated glories of the

divine nature shining in His person, it could not but fill their souls with transcendent joy and wonder. And this is one reason for His prayer for them while on earth — that they might be where He is to behold His glory — for He knew what inexpressible satisfaction it would be to them forever.

Third, I do not primarily mean the glorification of the human nature of Christ — the very soul and body in which He lived and died, suffered and rose again — though that is also included here. That too would be a subject worthy of our contemplation, especially as it is the pattern of the glory He will bring all those who believe in Him into. But since we are presently looking at something further, I will note only one or two things regarding it.

The very nature He took on in this world is what has been exalted into glory. Some, claiming great subtlety and precision, deny that He has flesh and blood in heaven — that is, in terms of their substance — however they imagine those might have been changed, purified, or glorified. The great foundation of the church and all gospel faith is that He was made flesh, that He took on flesh and blood just as the children did. The idea that He abandoned the flesh and blood formed in the womb of the blessed virgin — in which He lived and died, which He offered to God in sacrifice, and in which He rose from the dead — is a Socinian fiction. What the true nature of the glorification of Christ's humanity actually is, neither those who hold this view nor we can fully comprehend. 'It has not appeared as yet what we will be' — much less is it clear to us what He is, whom we will be like. But that He exists in the same human nature He had on earth, with the same rational soul and the same body, is a foundational article of Christian faith.

The human nature of Christ Jesus is filled with all the divine graces and perfections that a finite created nature is capable of receiving. It is not deified; it is not made into God; it does not merge in heaven into a single nature with the divine through some composition; no essential attribute of deity is communicated to it so as to reside in it; it is not made omniscient, omnipresent, or omnipotent. Yet it is exalted in a fullness of divine perfection that is inexpressibly beyond the glory of all angels and human beings. It is incomprehensibly closer to God than any of them, receiving from God glorious light, love, and power in a measure inexpressibly above them all. Yet it remains a creature.

As to the substance of this glory of Christ's human nature, believers will share in it — for 'when we see Him as He is, we will be like Him.' But in terms of its degree and measure, His glory surpasses anything we can participate in. 'There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory,' as the apostle says (1 Corinthians 15:41). And if stars differ from one another in some measure of the same kind of glory, how much greater is the difference between the glory of the sun and that of any star at all? Such is the difference — and it will remain to eternity — between the human nature of Christ and what glorified believers will attain. But even this is not what properly constitutes the glory of Christ in His exaltation after His humiliation and death. The main elements of that glory may be grouped under the following heads.

First, it consists in the exaltation of the human nature — as it subsists in the divine person — above all of God's creation in power, dignity, authority, and rule, together with everything God's wisdom has appointed to make that glory radiant. I addressed the

explanation and confirmation of this aspect of Christ's present glory at such length in my exposition of Hebrews 1:2-3 that I have nothing more to add here.

Second, it consists in the evidence given of God the Father's infinite love toward Him and His delight in Him, along with the eternal approval of how He discharged the office entrusted to Him. This is why He is said to sit at the right hand of God, or at the right hand of the Majesty on high. All of the following are contained in that expression: that the glory and dignity of Christ in His exaltation is singular — the highest that can be given to a creature, beyond comprehension; that He stands, with respect to His discharge of office, under God's eternal approval; and that as one so gloriously exalted, He is proclaimed to all creation.

Third, to this is added the full manifestation of His own divine wisdom, love, and grace in the work of mediation and the redemption of the church. This glory is entirely unique and belongs to Him alone. Neither angels nor human beings have the smallest share in it. Here we see it dimly, as in a mirror; above, it shines in its full brightness to the eternal joy of all who behold Him.

This is the glory that the Lord Jesus Christ especially prayed His disciples would behold. This is what we ought to strive to see by faith. By faith, I say — not by imagination. Vain and foolish people, having only general ideas about this glory of Christ and understanding nothing of its true nature, have tried to represent it in paintings and images adorned with all the beauty that artistic skill and the ornaments of gold and jewels can provide. This kind of representation of Christ's present glory — made and offered to the imagination and fleshly feelings of superstitious people — is the

sort of devotion and veneration found in the Roman church. But they are wrong; they do not know Scripture, nor the eternal glory of the Son of God.

This is the sole foundation of all our meditations on this subject. The glory that the Lord Jesus Christ actually possesses in heaven can be seen or understood in this world only through the light of faith resting on divine revelation. To behold this glory of Christ is not an act of imagination or fancy. It does not involve picturing to ourselves the shape of a glorious person in heaven. Rather, it is the steady exercise of faith fixed on the revelation and description of Christ's glory given in Scripture that is the basis, rule, and standard of all godly meditation on it.

We ought to examine ourselves honestly about how much we have actually sought a genuine sight of this glory of Christ. When did we last fix our eyes steadily on it? When did we see it in a way that left our souls satisfied and refreshed? It is set before us as one of the chief supports of faith, a help to our joy, an object of our hope, a ground for consolation, and our greatest encouragement to obedience and suffering. Are our minds regularly occupied with thoughts of it? Or do we consider ourselves largely unconcerned with it? Do we treat it as something distant and beyond us — something we will have plenty of time to consider when we reach heaven? That is how it is with many people. They care neither where Christ is nor what He is, so long as they can somehow be saved by Him. They hope, as they claim, to see Him and His glory in heaven, and assume that time will be soon enough. But their claim to desire it is empty, and their expectation of any such thing is vain. Those who make no effort to behold the glory of Christ in this world — as has been said many times — will never behold Him

in glory hereafter with any true satisfaction, nor do they genuinely desire to. They simply imagine it will be part of the relief they receive when they leave this world. But what could produce such a desire in them? Nothing can do it except some sight of His glory here by faith — which they despise or entirely neglect. Every claim to desire heaven and the presence of Christ in it, when that desire does not arise from and is not rooted in the sight we have of Christ's glory in this world by faith, is mere fantasy and imagination.

Meditating regularly on this glory of Christ will fill us with joy on His behalf — and that joy itself is a powerful motivation to keep up the practice. Most of us are self-centered and look no further than our own interests. As long as we can be pardoned and saved by Christ, we are not much concerned with how things are with Him — we simply assume all is well enough. We see no personal concern of our own in it. But this attitude is directly opposed to the spirit of divine faith and love, whose chief expression is preferring Christ above ourselves and our concerns in Him above all our own. Let this stir us up to contemplate His glory. Who is it that is thus exalted above all? Who is it that is surrounded with glory, majesty, and power? Who is it that sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high, with all His enemies made His footstool? Is it not He who was poor, despised, persecuted, and killed in this world — all for our sakes? Is it not the same Jesus who loved us, gave Himself for us, and washed us in His own blood? So the apostle declared to the Jews that the same Jesus whom they killed and hung on a tree, God had exalted at His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance to Israel and the forgiveness of sins (Acts 5:30-31).

If we have any sense of His love, any stake in what He has done and suffered for the church, we cannot help but rejoice in His present state and glory.

Let the world rage as long as it likes. Let it bring all its power and cunning against everything of Christ that exists in it — which, whatever some may claim otherwise, springs from a hatred of His person. Let men make themselves drunk with the blood of His saints. We have this as our support against all their efforts — what He says of Himself: 'Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades' (Revelation 1:17-18).

Blessed Jesus! We can add nothing to You, nothing to Your glory. But it is a deep joy to us that You are what You are — that You are so gloriously exalted at the right hand of God. And we long to behold that glory more fully and clearly, according to Your prayer and promise.

CHAP. VIII. REPRESENTATIONS OF THE GLORY OF CHRIST UNDER THE OLD TESTAMENT.



Scripture tells us that beginning with Moses and all the prophets, Christ explained to His disciples in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself (Luke 24:27). It is therefore clear that Moses, the prophets, and all the Scriptures bear witness to Him and His glory. This is the thread of life and light running through the entire Old Testament — without following it, we cannot understand the Old Testament rightly. Neglecting this is what leaves many as blind in reading the Old Testament as the Jews are, with the same veil over their minds. It is faith alone, perceiving the glory of Christ, that can remove the veil of darkness covering people's minds as they read the Old Testament, as the apostle declares (2 Corinthians 3:14-16). I will therefore briefly consider some of the ways in which the glory of Christ was represented to believers under the Old Testament.

First, the glory of Christ was represented in the institution of the beautiful worship of the law, with all its forms and ceremonies. In this respect these institutions had an advantage over all the elaborate ceremonies that humans can devise for the outward wor-

ship of God — they were designed and shaped by divine wisdom to represent the glory of Christ in His person and office. Nothing invented by human imagination can do this or even claim to. Human beings cannot create mysteries, nor give any naturally ordinary thing a mystical significance. But this is exactly what the ancient divine institutions did. What was the tabernacle and temple? What was the holy place with all its furnishings? What was the inner sanctuary, the ark, the cherubim, the mercy seat within it? What was the high priest in all his robes and ministrations? What were the sacrifices, and the annual sprinkling of blood in the Most Holy Place? What was the entire system of their religious worship? Were these anything other than representations of Christ in the glory of His person and office? They were a shadow, and the body casting that shadow was Christ. Anyone wishing to see in detail how the Lord Christ was foreshadowed and represented in them may consult my exposition of the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where it is treated so fully that I will not dwell on it again here. The summary is this: Moses was faithful in all God's house as a witness to the things that would be spoken afterward (Hebrews 3:5). Everything Moses did in building the tabernacle and establishing its services was simply to provide a preliminary witness — through representation — to the things of Christ that would be revealed afterward. That was also the substance of the ministry of the prophets (1 Peter 1:11-12). The partial glimpses of Christ's glory that believers obtained through these means were the very life of the ancient church.

Second, the glory of Christ was represented in the mystical account given to us of His communion with His church in love and grace. While this is hinted at in many places of Scripture, one en-

ture book is devoted to setting it forth. That book is the Song of Solomon — Solomon being a type of Christ and a penman of the Holy Spirit. It is a gracious record of Christ's outpouring of love and grace to His church, and their response of love and delight in Him. A person may judge that he has made real progress in experiencing the mystery of this blessed exchange and communion with Christ when the expressions of it in that holy dialogue bring light and life to his mind and genuinely convey to him a felt sense of their power. But because these things are little understood by many, the book itself is much neglected, if not despised. Indeed, some have reached the point of shamelessly mocking its language. But we are forewarned of such scoffers in the last days, who walk according to their own ungodly desires — they need not concern us further here.

Together, the representations of Christ's glory in the institutions of outward worship and the record of the inward communion believers had with Christ in grace, faith, and love give us the substance of the view they had of His glory. That holy book vividly expresses what this discovery of Christ's glory produced in the souls of those who believed: strains of delight and wonder, raptures of joy, deep and solemn satisfaction, fervent affection, and diligent pursuit of communion with Him. A few days — a few hours — spent in the frame of heart described there is a blessedness that surpasses all the wealth of this earth. And if we, whose revelations of the same glory far exceed theirs, are found to fall short of them in fervent affection toward Christ and sustained holy wonder at His excellencies, we will one day be judged as unworthy of the greater revelation we received.

Third, the glory of Christ was also represented and made known under the Old Testament through His personal appearances on various occasions to several prominent leaders of the church in their generations. He did this as a prelude to His incarnation. At that time He was God only, but appeared in the assumed form of a man to foreshadow what He would become. He did not create a human nature and unite it to Himself on these occasions; He only took on the form of a man by His divine power, composed of whatever substance He chose, to be dissolved again immediately. So He appeared to Abraham, to Jacob, to Moses, to Joshua, and others — as I have proven and established at length elsewhere. In all of this, because He was the divine person who lived in and dealt with the church throughout the entire Old Testament, He consistently attributed to Himself human emotions — to hint that a time was coming when He would act directly in human nature. Indeed, after the fall, nothing is spoken of God in the Old Testament — nothing of His institutions or His ways of dealing with the church — that does not look forward to the future incarnation of Christ. It would have been absurd to portray God continually with human emotions — grieving, relenting, being angry, being pleased, and the like — were it not that the divine person in view was going to take on the nature in which such emotions reside.

Fourth, Christ's glory was represented in prophetic visions. The apostle affirms that the vision Isaiah saw was a vision of His glory (John 12:41). And it was a remarkable representation of it. His divine person was exalted on a throne of glory, and His train filled the temple. The full train of His glorious grace filled the temple of His body — the true tabernacle that God and not man set up,

the temple that was destroyed and that He raised again in three days, in which the fullness of the Godhead dwells (Colossians 2:9). This glory was presented to Isaiah's view (Isaiah 6:1-3), filling him with dread and astonishment. He was relieved from it by an act of ministry from that glorious one, who took away his sin through a coal from the altar — a symbol of the purifying power of His sacrifice. This was nourishment for the souls of believers; it was on these and similar occasions that the whole church would lift their voice in that holy cry: 'Hurry, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices.'

Of the same nature was His glorious appearance on Mount Sinai at the giving of the law (Exodus 19). The psalmist's description of it (Psalm 68:17-18) is applied by the apostle to the ascension of Christ after His resurrection (Ephesians 4:8-11). When the law was given, the scene was full of outward terror because of the fiery law; the psalmist treated it as full of mercy in light of Christ's fulfillment of that same law. His giving of the law was like death to those under it, because of its holiness and the severity of its curse; His fulfilling of it was life, through the pardon and righteousness that flowed from it.

Fifth, the doctrine of His incarnation — by which He became the subject of all the glory we are exploring — was revealed in the Old Testament, though not as clearly as it is in the gospel after the actual accomplishment of the thing itself. In how many places this is done in the Old Testament I have set forth elsewhere, having explained and defended many of them — for no one can claim to know them all. One example will suffice here: the same prophet Isaiah, chapter 9, verses 6-7: 'For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders;

and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.' This one testimony is enough to confound all Jews, Socinians, and other enemies of Christ's glory. I recognize that despite this declaration of Christ's glory in His future incarnation and reign, much darkness remained in the minds of those to whom it was given at the time. They could accept the truth of the revelation, but they could form no idea of how or in what manner it would be fulfilled. Now, however, every word of it has been explained and declared, its deeper meaning plainly opened to us in the gospel, and its fulfillment answers every expression in it exactly — so to refuse to receive it is judicial blindness. Nothing but the satanic pride of the human heart — which will not accept the effects of infinite wisdom unless it can comprehend them — can shut people's eyes against the light of this truth.

Sixth, promises, prophecies, and predictions concerning His person, His coming, His office, His kingdom, and His glory in all of these — along with the wisdom, grace, and love of God to the church in Him — are the thread of life running through all the writings of the Old Testament and making up a great portion of them. These are the things He explained to His disciples out of Moses and all the prophets. He appealed to Scripture on these matters against all His opponents: 'Search the Scriptures, for they are the ones that testify about Me.' If we do not find them, if we cannot see them there, it is because a veil of blindness lies over our minds. We cannot read, study, or meditate on the Old Testament

writings to any real benefit unless we are seeking to find and behold the glory of Christ declared and represented in them. For lack of this, those writings remain a sealed book to many people to this day.

Seventh, the Old Testament constantly represents the glory of Christ through metaphorical language — in fact, it is full of it. Such images are extraordinarily suited to conveying to our minds a sense of things we cannot grasp directly. There is an infinite condescension of divine wisdom in this method of instruction, representing the power of spiritual realities through things we naturally perceive. The names applied to the Lord Christ drawn from creatures that represent to our senses the excellence that is spiritually in Him are almost beyond counting. He is called the rose for the sweet fragrance of His love, grace, and obedience; the lily for His gracious beauty and loveliness; the pearl of great price for His worth, since to those who believe He is precious; the vine for His fruitfulness; the lion for His power; the lamb for His meekness and fitness for sacrifice — along with countless other images of the same kind.

I have mentioned these things not with any intention of plumbing the depths of this treasury of divine truth about the glory of Christ, but only to shed a little light on the evangelist's words — that Christ opened to His disciples out of Moses and all the prophets the things concerning Himself — and to stir up our own souls to contemplate them as they are found there.

CHAP. IX. THE GLORY OF CHRIST IN HIS INTIMATE CONJUNCTION WITH THE CHURCH.



I have addressed at length what concerns the glory of Christ in the sending of the Holy Spirit to the church, along with all the divine truths that flow from it, in my discourse on the whole dispensation of the Holy Spirit. That subject therefore will not be treated here, among the many other things that present themselves to us as part of this glory or as intimately connected to it. I will dwell briefly on only three things that cannot be directly placed under the earlier headings.

The first of these is the intimate union between Christ and the church, by which it is right and just in God's sight — in keeping with the rules of His eternal righteousness — that what Christ did and suffered in the discharge of His office should be counted, reckoned, and imputed to us, as to all its fruits and benefits, as though we had done and suffered the same things ourselves. This union of His with us was an act of His own mind and will, and in it He is inexpressibly glorious.

The enemies of Christ's glory and of His cross grant one thing: that there must be such a union between the guilty person and the one who suffers for him that in some sense the guilty person can be said to have undergone the punishment himself. But they then claim that there was no such union between Christ and sinners — none at all — and that He was simply a man as other men are, and otherwise at the greatest possible distance from all of them. The falseness of this claim, and the deep ignorance of Scripture hiding behind a pretense of intellectual precision in those who make it, will be plainly evident in what follows.

The apostle tells us that 'He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross' (1 Peter 2:24), and that 'He died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God' (1 Peter 3:18). But this seems strange to reason — where is the justice, where is the fairness, in the just suffering for the unjust? Where is divine righteousness in this? For it was an act of God: 'But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him' (Isaiah 53:6). The fairness of this, and the grounds on which it rests, must be briefly examined here.

First of all, it is certain that all the elect — the whole church of God — fell in Adam under the curse due to the transgression of the law. That curse included both temporal and eternal death. No one could undergo that curse and be saved. Nor was it consistent with the righteousness, holiness, or truthfulness of God that sin should go unpunished. Therefore, given God's decree to save His church, there was a necessity for a transfer of punishment — from those who had deserved it but could not bear it, to one who had not deserved it but could bear it.

This transfer of punishment by divine arrangement is the foundation of the Christian religion — indeed, of all supernatural revelation in Scripture. It was first hinted at in the first promise and then explained and confirmed in all the institutions of the Old Testament. Although the sacrifices of the law revived the greatest and most fundamental principle of natural religion — that God is to be worshiped with our best — their principal purpose was to represent this transfer of punishment from the offender to another, who would serve as a sacrifice in his place.

The reasons for the justice of this arrangement, and the inexpressible glory of Christ in it, are what we now examine. I will organize what needs to be said under the following heads.

First, it is not contrary to the nature of divine justice — nor does it conflict with the principles of natural reason in human beings — that in certain cases some persons should suffer punishment for the sins and offenses of others.

For now I will offer no other confirmation of this than the following: God has often done this very thing, and He neither will nor can do injustice.

He declared He would do so: 'For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations' (Exodus 20:5). It is no strong objection to say that the children are also sinners who continue in their fathers' sins — for even the worst sinners must not be treated unjustly, yet they would be treated unjustly if punished for their fathers' sins, if it were absolutely wrong for anyone ever to be punished for another's sin.

The church also affirms: 'Our fathers sinned, and are no more; it is we who have borne their iniquities' (Lamentations 5:7). And so it was — for in the Babylonian captivity, God punished the sins of their ancestors, especially those committed in the days of Manasseh (2 Kings 23:26-27). Likewise, in the final destruction of that nation and its institutions, God punished in them the guilt of all the bloody persecutions from the beginning of the world (Luke 11:50-51).

Canaan was cursed for the sin of his father (Genesis 9:25). Saul's seven sons were put to death because of their father's bloody cruelty (2 Samuel 21:8-14). For David's sin, seventy thousand people were struck down by an angel — of which David said, 'I am the one who has sinned and done wrong. These are but sheep — what have they done?' (2 Samuel 24:15, 17). See also 1 Kings 21:29. The same was true of all the children and infants who perished in the flood, or in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Other examples of the same kind could be given.

It is therefore clear that it is not inconsistent with divine justice, or with reason among human beings, that in certain cases the sins of some may be punished on others.

Second, it should be noted that this administration of justice is not arbitrary — as if any person could be punished for the sins of any other person at random. There is always a specific cause and reason for it, and that reason is a particular union between those who sin and those who are punished for their sins. Two things belong to this union: first, a special relationship; and second, a special shared interest.

First, a special relationship is required for this transfer of punishment — such as that between parents and children, as in most of the examples given above, or between a king and his subjects, as in David's case. This relationship constitutes the sinning persons and the suffering persons as one body, in which if one member offends, another may justly suffer — the back may be held accountable for what the hands have taken.

Second, the shared interest matters as well. Those whose sins are punished in others have such a stake in those others that seeing them punished is itself a punishment to themselves. This is why sinners are threatened with the punishment and suffering that will come upon their descendants for their sakes — which is itself a severe punishment to them: 'Your sons shall be shepherds for forty years in the wilderness, and they will suffer for your unfaithfulness' (Numbers 14:33). The punishment due to their sins is in part transferred to their children, and in this the sting of their own punishment also consists.

Third, there is a greater, more intimate union, a closer relationship, and a deeper mutual interest between Christ and the church than has ever existed or ever could exist between any other persons or relationships in the world. By virtue of this union, it was just and right in God's sight that He should suffer for us, and that what He did and suffered should be imputed to us — as we will further demonstrate.

There are only three kinds of union that can exist between distinct persons. The first is natural, the second is moral (under which I include the spiritual or mystical), and the third is covenan-

tal — based on mutual agreement. Christ is united to His church in all three ways, and in each of them in a way that is singular and unique.

First, the natural union. 'He made from one man every nation of mankind' (Acts 17:26), which creates a kinship and bond between all people. This is why every person is every other person's neighbor or brother, to whom kindness is owed (Luke 10:36). This natural union existed between Christ and the church, as the apostle declares: 'Since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives' (Hebrews 2:14). This is why 'both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father' (Hebrews 2:11). His infinite condescension in entering into this communion of nature with us was described earlier; but it is not the same as the common bond between all other human beings who share the same nature. There are two respects in which His union with us was unique and remarkable.

First, His union with the church did not arise from any necessity of nature but from a voluntary act of His own will. The union that exists among all other human beings is necessary — every person is every other person's neighbor simply by being a person, whether he wills it or not. Natural birth, which gives every person his existence in the same human nature, comes before any act of will or choice on his part. With the Lord Christ it was otherwise, as the text affirms — for the reasons stated there, He took on flesh and blood by an act of His own will, freely entering into this union with us. He did it by His own choice, because the children shared

in flesh and blood — He would be what the children were. Therefore the union of Christ in human nature with the church is inexpressibly different from the common bond that exists among all other people in the same nature. It might not be fitting among ordinary human beings for one to act and suffer in the place of others simply because of the universal human bond they share whether they will it or not. But this objection cannot apply to the Lord Christ, who entered into this union in a remarkable and wondrous way through a free act of His own will.

Second, He entered into this union with this very design and for this sole purpose — so that in our nature, which He made His own, He might do and suffer what had to be done and suffered for the church. So the text adds: that through death He might destroy the one who had the power of death, and free those who through fear of death were subject to bondage. This was the only purpose of His natural union with the church, and this puts the relationship between Him and it at an immense distance from anything that is or can be between ordinary human beings.

It is a foolish argument to claim that because a mere shared human nature among people is not enough to justify the righteousness of one person being punished for another, therefore Christ's union in the same nature with the church is not a sufficient and just basis for His suffering for us and in our place. By an act of His own will and choice He took on our nature — and He did so for this very purpose: that in it He might suffer for us, as the Holy Spirit expressly declares. Among ordinary human beings there is and can be nothing like this, so no objection based on what is fair

or unfair among them can apply to what is just between Christ and the church. And in this He is glorious and precious to those who believe, as we shall see shortly.

Second, there is a mystical union between Christ and the church that corresponds to all the closest real or moral unions between other persons or things — such as the union between the head of a body and its members, or the vine and its branches (which are real unions), or between a husband and wife (which is both moral and real). Scripture abundantly declares that such a union exists between Christ and His church, and that it is the foundation for the justice of His suffering in the church's place. The apostle speaks to this: 'Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church' — that is, His wife, the bride, the Lamb's wife — 'and gave Himself up for her' (Ephesians 5:25-32), and so on. Being the head and husband of the church, which had to be sanctified and saved — and could be saved in no other way than by His blood and sufferings — He was both fit to suffer in this way, and it was also righteous that what He did and suffered should be imputed to those for whom He did and suffered it. Let the opponents of Christ's glory point to any one example of such a union, bond, and relationship among human beings as exists between Christ and the church — then their objections against His obedience and sufferings in our place, and the imputation of what He did and suffered to us, might have some appearance of force. But Christ's glory is unique in this regard, and it appears as such to those who grasp the mystery of it in any spiritual measure.

But it will be objected that this mystical union of Christ with His church comes after what He did and suffered for it — for it follows upon the conversion of people to Him. It is through faith that

we are grafted into Him. Until faith is actually worked in us, we have no mystical union with Him. He is not a head or husband to unregenerate, unsanctified unbelievers while they remain in that condition. And that was the state of the whole church when Christ suffered for us (Romans 5:8; Ephesians 2:5). Therefore there was no such mystical union between Him and the church that would make it fitting and just for Him to suffer in its place. The church, therefore, is the result of the work of redemption — something that arose from it and was formed by it — and so cannot be the object of redemption as something that was to be redeemed on the basis of a prior union with Him. I answer:

First, although this mystical union is not actually complete without an actual sharing in the Spirit of Christ, the elect church was appointed before all His sufferings to be His bride and wife, so that He might love her and suffer for her. So it is said: 'Jacob served for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep' (Hosea 12:13). Yet she was not his married wife until after he had served for her and thereby purchased her to be his wife; yet while he was serving for her, she is called his wife because of his love for her and because she was designed to become his wife through his service. So the church was appointed to be the bride of Christ in the counsel of God, whereupon He loved her and gave Himself for her.

In the work of redemption, therefore, the church was its object as the one appointed to become the bride of Christ, and its result inasmuch as through it she was made fit for the full consummation of that union — as the apostle expressly declares (Ephesians 5:25-27).

Second, prior to everything the Lord Christ did and suffered for the church, there was a supreme act of the will of God the Father: giving all the elect to Him and entrusting them to Him to be redeemed, sanctified, and saved — as Christ Himself declares (John 17:6, 9; John 10:14-16). On this basis, the mystical union between Christ and the church carries its virtue and efficacy even before it is actually brought to completion.

Third, there is a covenantal union between distinct persons. As this varies according to the different interests and aims of those who enter it, it is most fully realized when one person, by the common consent of all who are involved, takes on the role of sponsor or guarantor for others — undertaking to do and answer for everything required of them to achieve the ends of the covenant. This is what the Lord Christ did when He became the surety of the new covenant on behalf of the church (Hebrews 7:22), presenting Himself to God to do and suffer for them — in their place and on their behalf — whatever was required for them to be sanctified and saved. I have treated these things at length elsewhere, since they contain a great part of the mystery of God's wisdom in the salvation of the church. Here I only note that this completes the mystical union between Christ and the church, by virtue of which it was fitting, just, and right in God's sight that what He did and suffered should be imputed to us.

These are some of the foundations of the mystery by which the sins of the church — as to their guilt and punishment — are transferred from the sinners themselves to one who is in every way innocent, pure, and righteous in Himself. This is the life, soul, and center of all scriptural revelation. In this, He is exceedingly glorious and precious to those who believe. No heart can conceive and

no tongue can express the glory of Christ in this. Because His infinite condescension and love in this have been addressed earlier, I will here only point to its greatness through some of its effects.

First, this glory shines forth in the exaltation of God's righteousness in the forgiveness of sins. There is no more adequate description of the divine nature than justice in government and rule. It belongs to justice to punish sin according to its desert, and this was how God first acted as governor of the rational creation — in the eternal punishment of the angels who sinned, and in the expulsion of Adam from paradise, which was also a symbol of everlasting ruin. Now all the church — all the elect of God — are sinners: they were sinners in Adam, and they have been and are sinners in themselves. What then is justice required to do in this case? Shall it let them all go unpunished? Where then is the justice that spared neither the angels who sinned nor Adam at first? Would such a course of action be consistent with that justice, reconcilable to it? The establishment of God's righteousness on one hand, and the forgiveness of sin on the other, appear so contradictory to each other that many stumble and fall over it eternally (Romans 10:3-4).

But in this interposition of Christ — in this transfer of punishment from the church to Him by virtue of His union with it — there is a beautiful harmony between the righteousness of God and the forgiveness of sins, the display of which is His eternal glory. O blessed exchange! O sweet permutation! as Justin Martyr says.

By virtue of His union with the church — a union He entered into of His own accord — and His undertaking in that union to answer for the church before God, it was righteous for God to lay the

punishment of all our sins on Him, so that He might freely and graciously pardon them all, to the honor and exaltation of His justice as well as of His grace and mercy (Romans 3:24-26).

In this He is glorious in the sight of God, angels, and human beings. In Him there is, in the same divine acts at the same time, a glorious display of both justice and mercy — the one in punishing, the other in pardoning. The apparent conflict between God's righteousness and the salvation of sinners — which troubles and terrifies the consciences of convicted people, and on which most of them shatter themselves into eternal ruin — is here resolved and removed. In His cross, divine holiness and punitive justice were exercised and made plain; and through His triumph, grace and mercy are extended to the fullest measure. This is the glory that captures the hearts and satisfies the souls of those who believe. What more could they desire — what else is needed for the rest and peace of their souls — than to see in a single view God eternally pleased, as His righteousness is declared and His mercy exercised for their salvation? In a true understanding of this, let my soul live; in faith in it, let me die; and let present wonder at this glory prepare me for its eternal enjoyment in all its beauty and fullness.

He is also glorious in that the law of God in its commands — that is, in the obedience it required — was perfectly fulfilled and accomplished. This was absolutely necessary given the wisdom, holiness, and righteousness of the one who gave it. What could be more inconsistent with those divine perfections than to give a law that was never to be fulfilled by those to whom it was given and who were meant to receive its benefits? We could not fulfill it ourselves. But through the obedience of Christ, by virtue of His mysti-

cal union with the church, the law was so fulfilled in us by being fulfilled for us that the glory of God in giving it and attaching eternal rewards to it is greatly magnified (Romans 8:3-4).

This is the glory of Christ of which one view by faith will scatter all fears, answer all objections, and bring relief to poor, tempted, doubting souls in their darkest moments — and it will serve as an anchor for all believers, which they may cast within the veil to hold them firm and steady through every trial, storm, and temptation in life and in death.

CHAP. X. THE GLORY OF CHRIST IN THE COMMUNICATION OF HIMSELF UNTO BELIEVERS.



Another aspect of Christ's glory that we are to behold here by faith — and hope to behold by sight hereafter — consists in His mysterious communication of Himself and all the benefits of His mediation to the souls of those who believe, for their present happiness and future eternal blessedness.

By this He becomes theirs as they are His — which is the life, the glory, and the consolation of the church (Song of Solomon 6:3; 2:16; 3:10). He and all that He is are made over to them by virtue of their mystical union, and there must be some basis, formal reason, and cause for this relationship between Christ and the church — by which He is theirs and they are His, He is in them and they are in Him — in a way that does not exist between Him and other people in the world.

The apostle, speaking of this communication of Christ to the church and the union between them that follows from it, declares that it is 'a great mystery; for I am speaking,' he says, 'with reference to Christ and the church' (Ephesians 5:32).

I will very briefly examine the causes, ways, and means of this mysterious communication by which He is made to be ours, to be in us, to dwell with us, and by which all the benefits of His mediation belong to us. As noted, it is clear that He does not communicate Himself to all by natural necessity, as the sun sheds light equally on the whole world; nor is He present with everyone through a ubiquity of His human nature; nor, as some imagine, through a diffusion of His rational soul into all; nor does He become ours through a physical eating of Him in the sacrament. This mystery proceeds from and depends on other reasons and causes, as we will briefly set out.

Before I proceed to explain the way and manner in which Christ communicates Himself to the church, I need to say something first about divine communications in general and their glory. I will do this by briefly tracing the harmony and correspondence between the old creation and the new.

First, all being, power, goodness, and wisdom were originally, essentially, and infinitely in God; and in these, together with the other perfections of His nature, His essential glory consists.

Second, the old creation was a communication of being and goodness by almighty power, directed by infinite wisdom, to all things that were created to display that glory. This was the first communication of God to anything outside Himself, and it was exceedingly glorious (Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:21). It was an intricate structure in which one thing was ordered under and dependent on another — without which things could not subsist or continue in existence. All creatures below live on the earth and its produce; the earth, for its entire output, depends on the sun and other heavenly bodies, as God declares: 'I will respond,' says the Lord, 'I will re-

spond to the heavens, and they will respond to the earth, and the earth will respond to the grain, the new wine and the oil, and they will respond to Jezreel' (Hosea 2:21-22). God has ordered things in a linked chain of causes on which their existence depends. Yet,

Fourth, in this mutual dependence on and supply to one another, all things depend on and are sustained by God Himself, the eternal fountain of being, power, and goodness. He responds to the heavens; and in the continuation of this order through God's constant communication of being, goodness, and power to all things, God is no less glorified than He was in the first act of creating them (Acts 14:15-17; Acts 17:24-29).

Fifth, this glory of God is visible in substance and accessible to human reason — for from His works in creation and providence, people can learn of His eternal power and deity, in which He is essentially glorious.

Sixth, but by this divine communication God did not intend only to glorify Himself in the essential properties of His nature, but also in His existence as three persons — Father, Son, and Spirit. Although the whole creation in its original framing and its perfection was and is by an outpouring of power and goodness from the divine nature in the person of the Father — as He is the fountain of the Trinity, which is why He is specially called the Creator of all things — yet the immediate work of creation was carried out by the Son, the power and wisdom of the Father (John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:3). And just as upon the first production of the created mass, the Spirit of God took special charge of it — preserving and developing it until the distinct kinds of creatures were produced (Genesis 1:2) — so in the continuation of the whole creation there is a special operation of the same Spirit in all things.

Nothing can subsist for a moment, given the dependence all things have on one another, without a continual outpouring of power from Him (Psalm 104:29-30).

Through these divine communications in the producing and sustaining of the creature, God manifests His glory — and in the natural order, this is the only way He does so. Without them, although He would have been forever essentially glorious in Himself, His glory could not have been known to any but Himself. The whole manifestation of God's glory therefore depends on these divine communications. But this is far more remarkable — though not as visible in its outward effects — in the new creation, as we shall see.

First, all goodness, grace, life, light, mercy, and power — which are the springs and causes of the new creation — are all originally in God, in the divine nature, and that infinitely and essentially. In these, God is eternally and essentially glorious, and the entire design of the new creation was to manifest His glory in them through outward communications of them and from them.

Second, the first communication of and from these things is made to Christ as the head of the church. For God was pleased that in Him all the fullness of these things should dwell, so that the whole new creation might hold together in Him (Colossians 1:17-19). This was the first expression of divine wisdom for the manifestation of God's glory in these holy properties of His nature. For,

Third, this communication was made to Him as a storehouse and treasury of all the goodness, grace, life, light, power, and mercy needed for the constitution and preservation of the new creation. These things were to be laid up in Him, hidden in Him,

dwelling in Him — and from Him to be communicated to the whole mystical body appointed for Him, that is, the church. This is the first outpouring of divine power and wisdom for the manifestation of God's glory in the new creation. The appointment of Christ as its head, and the storing up in Him of all that was necessary for its production and preservation — in which the church is chosen and predestined in Him to grace and glory — is the spring and fountain of divine glory in all the communications that flow from it.

Fourth, this communication to Christ is first to His person, and then with respect to His office. It is in the person of Christ that all fullness originally dwells. When human nature was assumed into personal union with the Son of God, all fullness came to dwell in Him bodily (Colossians 2:9). And receiving the Spirit in all fullness and without measure, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge were hidden in Him (Colossians 2:3), and He was filled with the unsearchable riches of divine grace (Ephesians 3:8-11). The office of Christ is nothing other than the way appointed in the wisdom of God for communicating the treasures of grace that were given to His person. This is the purpose of Christ's entire office in all its parts — as priest, prophet, and king. These offices are, I say, simply the ways appointed by infinite wisdom for communicating the grace stored in His person to the church. We have looked into the transcendent glory of this in some small measure already.

Fifth, the decree of election prepared — if I may put it this way — the material of the new creation. In the old creation, God first prepared and created the raw material of the whole, which was af-

terward formed by the power of the Holy Spirit into all the distinct kinds of beings that the creation was to contain, each animated according to its kind.

And in preparation for the production and completion of the new creation, God from eternity — in the holy purpose of His will — prepared and set apart for Himself that portion of humanity of which it was to consist. These people were the particular material to be worked on by the Holy Spirit, so that the glorious structure of the church might be built from them. What the psalmist said perhaps of the natural body is true of the mystical body of Christ, which is the primary meaning intended: 'My frame was not hidden from You when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth; Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in Your book were all written the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them' (Psalm 139:15-16). The substance of the church from which it was to be formed was before God's eyes as determined in the decree of election — yet at that point it was unformed, not yet shaped into members of the mystical body. But they were all written in the book of life. And in fulfillment of God's purpose, they are shaped by the Holy Spirit throughout the whole course of time, in their various generations, into the form designed for them.

Sixth, this then is the glorious order of divine communications: from the infinite, eternal fountain of wisdom, grace, goodness, and love in the Father — all whose effects toward this end are stored up in the person and mediation of the Son — the Holy Spirit, to whom their actual application is entrusted, communicates life, light, power, grace, and mercy to all who are appointed as members of the new creation. By this, God glorifies both the essential proper-

ties of His nature — His infinite wisdom, power, goodness, and grace as the only eternal source of all these things — and also His inexpressibly glorious existence in three persons, through the ordered communication of these things to the church, which originate in His own nature. And in this, the glorious truth of the blessed Trinity — which some oppose, some neglect, and most regard as so far above them that it doesn't concern them — becomes precious to those who believe and becomes the foundation of their faith and hope. In contemplating the glorious order of these divine communications, we find ourselves in steady contemplation of the inexpressible glory of God's existence in the three distinct persons of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Seventh, following this divine order, the elect in all ages are formed and animated by the Holy Spirit — moving and acting on the material of the new creation — receiving spiritual life, light, grace, and power to the glory of God. They are not called by chance, according to the outward occasions and circumstances of their conversion; but in every age, at His own chosen time and season, the Holy Spirit communicates these things to them in the order described, to the glory of God.

Eighth, and in the same manner the entire new creation is sustained every day. Every moment, vital power and strength, mercy and grace are communicated in this divine order to all believers in the world. There is a continual outflow from the fountain, from the head, into all the members, by which they all hold together in Him — moved by the one who works in us both to will and to act according to His good pleasure. The apostle declares that the entire

structure of church order is fitted as an external instrument to promote these divine communications to all the members of the church (Ephesians 4:13-16).

This, in broad terms, is the order of divine communications — an order that is continued in its essential nature in heaven and will be so to eternity, for God is and always will be all in all. But at present it is invisible to physical eyes, and indeed to human reason. This is why most people despise it — they see no glory in it. But let us take to heart the apostle's prayer, that it may be otherwise with us (Ephesians 1:16-23). The revelation God has made of His glory in the old creation is far inferior to what He makes of Himself in the new.

Having laid out these general considerations about the glory of divine communications, I will proceed to explain in particular the basis and manner by which the Lord Christ communicates Himself — and with Himself all the benefits of His mediation — to those who believe, as proposed earlier.

On our part, we are said to receive Him — and to do so by faith (John 1:11-12). For us to receive Him, He must be offered, given, granted, or communicated to us. And this is accomplished through certain divine acts of the Father and certain acts of His own.

The foundation of the whole is laid in a sovereign act of the will, the pleasure, and the grace of the Father. This is the order and pattern of all divine operations in the way of grace — they all originate from Him, and having accomplished their ends, they return, rest, and center in Him again (Ephesians 1:4-6). Therefore, that Christ is made ours — that He is communicated to us — flows originally from the free act, grant, and gift of the Father (1 Corinthians

1:30; Romans 5:15-17). Several things contribute to this: first, His eternal purpose, purposed in Himself, to glorify His grace in all His elect through this communication of Christ and the benefits of His mediation to them — which the apostle sets out at length (Ephesians 1); second, His giving of all the elect to Christ as His own, so that Christ might do and suffer for them what was first necessary to the actual communication of Himself to them — 'Yours they were, and You gave them to Me' (John 17); third, the giving of the promise — the establishment of the rule and law of the gospel — by which a share in Christ, an interest in Him and all that He is, is made over and assured to believers (John 1:12; 1 John 1:1-4); fourth, an act of almighty power working and creating faith in the souls of the elect, enabling them to receive Christ as He is offered and communicated to them through the gospel (Ephesians 1:19-20; Ephesians 2:5-8).

These things — which I have only named — bear on the glory of Christ here, for this communication of Him to the church is an effect of the eternal counsel, wisdom, grace, and power of the Father.

But it is the acts of Christ Himself in this that we are chiefly concerned with, as those which display the glory of His wisdom, love, and condescension.

First, He gives and communicates to believers His Holy Spirit — the Holy Spirit as distinctly His, as granted to Him by the Father, as dwelling in Him in all fullness. This Spirit abides originally as to His person, and immeasurably as to His effects and workings in Christ Himself; and Christ gives this Spirit to all believers to dwell and abide in them as well (John 14:14, 20; 1 Corinthians 6:16-17; Romans 8:8). From this follows an inexpressible union between Him and them. For just as in His incarnation

He took our nature into personal union with His own, so here He takes our persons into mystical union with Himself. By this He becomes ours and we are His.

In this He is unspeakably glorious. The mystery of the same Spirit dwelling in Him as the head and in the church as His body — animating the whole — is a transcendent effect of divine wisdom. There is nothing like it anywhere else in all creation — no such union, no such mutual communication. The closest unions and relationships found in nature are only shadows of it (Ephesians 5:25-32). Here too the Lord Christ is precious to those who believe, but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to the disobedient. This glorious, inexpressible effect of His wisdom and grace — this rare, unique, singular way of communicating Himself to the church — is despised by many. Some of them may know what it is to be joined to an immoral person so as to become one flesh, but what it is to be joined to the Lord so as to become one spirit, they do not know. Yet this principle and source of the church's spiritual life — and of all its vital spiritual movement toward God and heavenly things, by which our life is hidden with Christ in God — is the glory, the exaltation, the honor, and the security of the church, to the praise of God's grace. Understanding it in its causes, effects, workings, and privileges is to be preferred above all the wisdom the world has to offer.

Second, He communicates Himself to us by forming in us a new nature — His own nature — so that the very same spiritual nature is in Him and in the church. The difference is only this: in Him it exists in the absolute perfection of all those glorious graces in which it consists; in the church it exists in various measures and degrees, according to His pleasure in communicating it. But it is

the same divine nature that is in Him and in us, for through the precious promises of the gospel we are made partakers of His divine nature. It is not enough that He took our nature to be His own, unless He also gives us His nature to be ours — that is, implanting in our souls all those gracious qualities, in their essential nature and substance, with which He Himself in His human nature is endowed. This is the new man, the new creation, the divine nature, the spirit born of the Spirit, the transformation into the image of Christ, the putting on of Christ, the workmanship of God to which in Him we are created — all of which Scripture so fully attests (John 3:6; Romans 6:3-8; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:20-24; 2 Peter 1:4).

The new heavenly nature thus formed in believers — as the first vital expression of the union between Christ and them through the indwelling of the same Spirit — is specifically His nature. It is so both because He Himself is the pattern and model for it in us — since we are predestined to be conformed to His image — and because it is produced and shaped in our souls by an outpouring of power, virtue, and energy from Him.

This is a most heavenly way of His communicating Himself to us — the way in which God has made Him to be our wisdom and sanctification. Because of it, He says of His church: 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh' — I see myself, my own nature in them, and for that reason they are beautiful and dear to me. By this He makes the way to present the church to Himself as a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and blameless. All the purity, beauty, holiness, and inward glory of the church depends on this communication of Christ to us through the forming of His own nature in us. By this the church is

truly, substantially, and inwardly set apart from the world and distinguished from all others who, in the outward forms of religion and the duties of profession, appear the same. By this it becomes the firstfruits of creation to God, bearing into the world the renewal of His image. In this the Lord Christ is and will be glorious to all eternity. I only mention these things, which deserve to be dwelt upon far more fully.

Third, He also communicates Himself through the actual grafting or implanting into Himself that He works in us by faith — which is His own operation. From this two things follow: one through the grace or power He gives, and the other through the law or constitution of the gospel — both of which have great bearing on this mystical communication of Christ to the church.

The first is that through this grafting, supplies of spiritual life, sustenance, movement, strength in grace, and perseverance are communicated to us and continually drawn from Him. This is what He Himself teaches so beautifully in the parable of the vine and its branches (John 15:1-5). By this there is a continual communication from His inexhaustible fullness of grace to the whole church and all its members, for all the purposes and duties of spiritual life. They live — yet not they, but Christ lives in them; and the life they live in the flesh, they live by faith in the Son of God. The second, by virtue of the law and constitution of the gospel, is that His righteousness and all the fruits of His mediation are thereby imputed to us — the glory of this mystery the apostle unfolds (Romans 3-5).

I could also add the mutual indwelling between Him and believers in love — for the way His love is communicated to them (being poured into their hearts by the Holy Spirit), and their love

returned to Him (being worked in them by the almighty power of the same Spirit), is deeply mysterious and glorious. I could also mention the continuation of His exercise of all His offices toward us, on which everything we receive from Him — all the benefits of His mediation — depends. But the few examples of Christ's glory in this mysterious communication of Himself to His church that have been given here may be enough to give us a view of it sufficient to fill our hearts with holy wonder and thanksgiving.

CHAP. XI. THE GLORY OF CHRIST IN THE RECAPITULATION OF ALL THINGS IN HIM.



Finally, the Lord Christ is uniquely and supremely glorious in the gathering together of all things in Himself — after they had been scattered and disordered by sin. The apostle presents this as the most remarkable expression of divine wisdom and God's sovereign pleasure.

He lavished His grace upon us in all wisdom and insight, making known to us the mystery of His will according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him — to bring about the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth (Ephesians 1:8-10).

To understand what the Holy Spirit means in these words — particularly as they bear on the glory of Christ represented in them — several brief observations need to be noted first. It will be necessary to describe briefly the origin of all things in heaven and earth, their original order, the disorder that followed, their restoration in Christ, and the glory of Christ in that restoration.

God alone has all being in Himself. This is why He gives Himself the name 'I AM' (Exodus 3:14). He was eternally all — while everything else that has ever been, is now, or will be was nothing. And when things exist, they exist only as they are from Him, through Him, and for Him (Romans 11:36). Furthermore, His being and His goodness are the same. The goodness of God is the disposition of the divine being to communicate itself in its effects. This then is the primary description of the divine nature: infinite being and goodness in a nature that is intelligent and self-sufficient. As the apostle declares: 'Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him' (Hebrews 11:6).

Second, in this state of infinite, eternal being and goodness — before any act of wisdom or power outside Himself brought other things into existence — God was and is eternally in Himself all that He will ever be, all that He can be, to eternity. Where there is infinite being and infinite goodness, there is infinite blessedness and happiness, to which nothing can be added. God is always the same — that is His name: 'You are He, and Your years will not come to an end' (Psalm 102:27). All existing things add nothing to God and bring no change to His state. His blessedness, happiness, and self-sufficiency — as well as all His other infinite perfections — were exactly the same before the creation of anything, when there was nothing but Himself, as they are now that He has made all things. The blessedness of God consists in the inexpressible mutual indwelling of the three holy persons in the one nature, with the internal, reciprocal actings of the Father and the Son in the eternal love and delight of the Spirit. Nothing can be added to this, and no change can be made in it by any external work or effect of power.

In this, God acts in the perfect knowledge and perfect love of His own perfections, with an infinite rest in them — which is the divine blessedness. This gives us the true understanding of the divine nature before its manifestation in any outward effects: infinite being and goodness, eternally blessed in the knowledge and enjoyment of itself through inconceivable, inexpressible, internal actings that correspond to the manner of its existence, which is in three distinct persons.

Third, this being and goodness of God, by His own will and pleasure working through infinite wisdom and power, produced the creation of all things. In this He communicated a finite, limited, dependent being and goodness to things outside Himself. Since all being and goodness are in Him alone, as was said, it was necessary that the first outward work and effect of the divine nature would be the communication of being and goodness to other things. So when He had given everything its being out of nothing by the word of His power — saying, Let them be, and they were — it is said that He saw everything He had made, and behold, it was very good (Genesis 1). Being and goodness must be the first outward effects of the divine nature, and being wrought by infinite power and wisdom, they reveal to us the glory of God in the creation of all things. Infinite being that is self-sufficient — which is necessary in the first cause and source of all things — infinite goodness to communicate the effects of that being to what did not yet exist, and infinite wisdom and power in that communication, are all gloriously displayed therein.

Fourth, in this original state, all things that were made depended directly on God Himself, with no other head or ruling power standing between them. They received the continuation and

preservation of their being through the direct workings of those divine attributes by which they were made, and their dependence on God was grounded in the law implanted in the principles and capacities of their various natures by God Himself.

Fifth, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. He provided Himself with two distinct families of rational creatures who would depend on Him through a law of moral obedience and thereby give Him glory — and He gave them two distinct dwellings suited to their nature and purpose: heaven above and earth below. The earth He appointed as the home of humanity, suited in every way to the constitution of human nature, the preservation of human life, and the purpose of humanity's creation in giving glory to God. Heaven He prepared as the home of the angels, suited in every way to the constitution of their nature, the preservation of their being, and the purpose of their creation in giving glory to God. Just as humanity was given power and dominion over all things below — using them all to the glory of God, so that even these irrational and lifeless things gave God glory through humanity — so the angels had a corresponding dominion over the celestial and ethereal bodies fitted to their dwelling, through the contemplation and use of which God would receive tribute of glory and praise from them as well. To suppose any other race of intelligent creatures beside angels in heaven and humanity on earth is not only without any support in divine testimony, but it disturbs and disorders the entire representation of God's glory given to us in Scripture, and the entire design of His wisdom and grace as set out therein. Intelligent creatures not included in God's

government and the mystery of His wisdom in Christ as Scripture reveals them are a fantasy of human imagination — barely deserving to be called sober thinking.

Sixth, this original order of things was beautiful and fitting — which is why everything was declared to be very good. Each of these two families had their own immediate, distinct dependence on God. He was the direct head over them. No other common head was placed between God and them. They were not heads over one another. All communications to them came directly from God Himself. Their unity among themselves consisted in this alone: that all their obedience met and centered in God. So God made the heavens and the earth, and two distinct families in them for Himself.

Seventh, this beautiful order — this union between God's two families — was disturbed, broken, and destroyed by the entrance of sin. Through sin, part of the family above and the entire family below fell away from their dependence on God; ceasing to center in Him as their head, they fell into conflict and enmity among themselves. With the center of their unity removed and lost, nothing remained among them but enmity and confusion. To show that its goodness was gone, God cursed the earth and all that was in it — for it had been placed under humanity, who had now fallen away from Him. He did not curse the heavens, however, which were under the angels — since only some of them had abandoned their dwelling, and the dwelling of the rest was not to be cursed for their sakes. But all of humanity had completely turned away from God.

Eighth, the angels who sinned God rejected utterly and forever, as an example of His severity. The entire human race He would not utterly abandon; instead, He determined to recover and save a

remnant according to the election of grace — how He did this in a way consistent with all His divine perfections I have explained elsewhere.

Ninth, He would not restore them to their former state — with two distinct families each in immediate dependence on Himself — though He left them in different and distinct dwellings (Ephesians 3:15). Instead, He would gather them both into one, under a new head, in whom one part would be kept from sinning and the other delivered from the sins already committed.

Tenth, this is what the apostle declares in these words: to bring together all things in Christ — things in the heavens and things on the earth. He expresses it again in Colossians 1:20: to reconcile all things to Himself through Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven. All things had fallen into disorder and confusion through sin; they had broken away from God and fallen into conflict among themselves. God would not restore them to their first order of immediate dependence on His divine perfections. He would no longer maintain them as two distinct families; but in His infinite wisdom and goodness He would gather them together under one common head, on whom they would have their immediate dependence, and be reconciled again with one another.

Eleventh, this new head — in whom God has gathered all things in heaven and earth into one body, one family, on whom all their dependence rests, in whom they all now hold together — is Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:21-23). This glory was reserved for Him; no other could be fit for it or worthy of it (Colossians 1:17-20).

Twelfth, to fulfill all the purposes of this new head of God's reunited family, all power in heaven and earth — all fullness of grace and glory — is committed to Him. There is no communication from God, no act of rule toward this family, no supply of virtue, power, grace, or goodness to angels or human beings, except what comes immediately from this new head into whom they have been gathered. In Him they all hold together; on Him they depend; to Him they are subject; in their relationship to Him their peace, unity, and harmony with one another consist. This is the summing up of all things that the apostle intends.

Thirteenth, it is true that He acts differently toward the two parts of the reunited family — angels and human beings — according to their different states and conditions. We needed repair through redemption and grace, which the angels did not; angels were capable of immediate confirmation in glory, which we are not until we reach heaven. Therefore He took on our nature so that it might be repaired — which He did not do with the nature of angels; and He gives us union with Himself through His Spirit, which raises us to a dignity and honor suited to fellowship with the angels in the same family.

This is a brief account of the mysterious work of divine wisdom in the summing up of all things in Jesus Christ — and in this He is transcendently glorious, His glory here being far beyond our ability to comprehend. Yet a few observations may be made to guide us in viewing and contemplating it.

First, He alone was a fit and capable subject for this glory. He alone could bear the weight of it. No mere creature in heaven or earth was fit to be made the head of the entire new creation of God. In none of them could all things hold together. None of them

was fit to stand in the place of God in this way — to have all things depend on him and be placed in subjection to him, so that there would be no communication between God and creation except by and through him alone. Therefore, when the Holy Spirit assigns this glory to Him, He describes Him in terms that reveal His unique fitness for it — as He is 'the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power' (Hebrews 1:3); and as He is 'the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together' (Colossians 1:15-19). Such a one alone — and no other — was fit to bear and sustain this glory. And the glory of His person is such that it is the blessedness of all creatures to find their center in this glory of His office.

Second, this is the glory God designed for His only incarnate Son — and it gives us a small glimpse into the mystery of God's eternal, wondrous purpose to glorify Himself in the incarnation of Christ. God purposed that His eternal, only begotten Son would become incarnate, take on our nature, and be made man. What was His design in this incomprehensible work of wisdom, love, and power? In the first place, it was certainly for the redemption of the church through the sacrifice of Himself and the other acts of His mediation. But there is something more general and encompassing, in which all the concerns of God's glory find their center. That was His purpose to gather all things into one in Him — so that the whole creation, especially those who would be eternally blessed, would have a new head given to it for its sustenance, preservation,

order, honor, and safety. All springs are in Him, and all streams flow to Him, and through Him to God. Who can express the divine beauty, order, and harmony of all things in their summing up in Christ? The union and communion between angels and human beings, the ordered life of the whole family in heaven and earth, the communication of life, grace, power, mercy, and comfort to the church, the governance and direction of all things to the glory of God — all depend on this. This is the glory God designed for His incarnate Son, and it was the greatest and highest that could be communicated to Him. As the apostle notes, all things are placed in subjection to Him — with the one exception of the one who does the subjecting, that is, God the Father (1 Corinthians 15).

There is no contemplation of Christ's glory that ought more to fill the hearts of believers with delight and joy than this — the gathering of all things together in Him. One sight by faith of Him in the place of God, as the supreme head of all creation — moving, directing, guiding, and disposing of it — will bring spiritual refreshment to a believing soul.

And it will do so all the more because it also gives a glorious display of His divine nature. That any mere creature should be a head of life, motion, and power — as well as of sovereign rule and governance over the whole new creation, with all things brought to order through him — is not only an impious idea but a foolish one.

If we lived more in the contemplation of this glory of Christ and of the wisdom of God in this gathering of all things in Him, there is no duty we would fail to be reminded of, and no privilege of which we would not gain a fresh sense — as could easily be demonstrated.

Third, in particular, the Lord Christ is glorious in this: the entire breach made in God's glory in creation by the entrance of sin is hereby repaired and made whole. The beauty and order of the whole creation consisted in its dependence on God through the obedience of its rational part — angels and human beings. Through this, the being, goodness, wisdom, and power of God were made manifest. But the beauty of this order was defaced, and the display of the divine perfections to the glory of God was eclipsed by the entrance of sin. All of it is restored, repaired, and made whole in this gathering of all things under one new head, Christ Jesus. Indeed, the entire intricate structure of divine creation is rendered more beautiful than it was before. And so the whole of creation groans for each part's share in this restoration of all things. Whatever order, beauty, and glory exists in heaven above or on earth below — all of it arises from the new relationship of creation to the Son of God. Whatever is not gathered into one in Him — in its place and in its measure — exists under darkness, disorder, and the curse. The Jews have a saying that in the days of the Messiah all things will be healed — except the serpent (that is, the devil) and the wicked who are as his offspring.

Fourth, He is glorious in this: He is appointed as the only means through which all the treasures of God's infinite wisdom are expressed and displayed to His creatures. The wisdom of God is absolutely, always, and in all things infinite. God does not and cannot act with more wisdom in one thing than in another — no more in creating man than in creating a lifeless creature. In the first creation, infinite wisdom was the inseparable companion of infinite power: 'How many are Your works, O Lord! In wisdom You have made them all.' But when the effects of this divine wisdom were

defaced in their chief beauty and glory, still greater treasures of wisdom were called for in their repair. In this gathering of all things in Christ, God poured them out to the fullest extent of everything He will ever do in dealing with His creatures — as the apostle expresses it: 'so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places' (Ephesians 3:10). Through the gathering of all things into this one head, the manifold, varied, and unsearchable wisdom of God was made known even to the angels. Before this, they had not known God's design and work after the entrance of sin. They could not comprehend the wisdom capable of repairing that loss. They did not know that divine wisdom had another course to take — at least they did not know what that course would be. But through this, the manifold wisdom of God — His infinite wisdom in all its resources, capable of reaching the ends of His glory by many and varied means — was made known to them. In this gathering of all things in Christ, divine wisdom has displayed itself in all its fullness to angels and human beings alike. In Him are hidden, and through Him are displayed, all the treasures of wisdom (Colossians 2:3). In this He is glorious, and will be so to eternity.

Fifth, He is glorious in this: firmness and security are thereby given to the whole new creation. The first creation in its order was an exquisite and glorious structure. But because everything depended directly on God through the principles of its own nature and the law of its obedience, all was brought to ruin by the sin of angels and human beings. Now, however, everything belonging to this new creation — every believer in the world as well as the angels in heaven, all gathered together in this one head — is secured

from the kind of ruin that overtook all things before. In this new head the whole, and all its parts, and every individual member — even every particular believer — has an indestructible foundation.

But enough. I will dwell on no more examples of this kind, though Scripture offers them in abundance. Who can declare this glory of Christ? Who can speak of these things as they deserve? I am far from attempting to set out the whole of it — I am deeply aware of how small a portion I am able to grasp of even the least part of it. In these meditations I find no satisfaction except what ends in humble wonder.

CHAP. XII. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN
OUR BEHOLDING THE GLORY OF
CHRIST BY FAITH IN THIS WORLD,
AND BY SIGHT IN HEAVEN. THE
FIRST OF THEM EXPLAINED.



We walk here by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). That is, in the life of God — in walking before Him and in the whole of our obedience — we are guided and sustained by faith and not by sight. These are the two spiritual capacities of our souls, the one making us partakers of grace, holiness, and obedience in this life, and the other of eternal blessedness and glory.

Both of these — faith in this life and sight in the life to come — have the same immediate object. They are the soul's abilities to reach out to and embrace its object. That object, for both, is the glory of Christ, as has been described — including what that glory is and what it consists of. My present purpose therefore is to examine the difference between our beholding the glory of Christ in this world by faith and the vision we will have of that same glory hereafter.

The latter is what our Lord Jesus Christ especially has in view in His prayer for His disciples: 'Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me' (John 17:24). I will not dwell on it separately, since my main purpose lies elsewhere — focused principally on the work of God in this life and the privileges we enjoy through it. Yet I will take a brief look at this as well — not in isolation, but in terms of the differences between faith and sight: the view we have of Christ's glory in this world by faith, and the view those above enjoy by direct vision, the object of both being exactly the same.

Even here I will take note only of those things that bear on our practice — on the present exercise of faith. I have elsewhere addressed at length the state of the church above, the state of present glory — including the administration of Christ's office in heaven, His presence among the glorified souls, and the worship of God under His guidance. I have also described the advantage believers gain by being with Him and the sight they have of His glory. These things therefore need only be touched on here.

These differences may be grouped under two heads: first, those that arise from the different natures and workings of the means by which we apprehend Christ's glory — namely faith and vision; and second, those that arise from the different effects produced by them. Examples of each kind will be given.

First, the view we have of Christ's glory by faith in this world is obscure, dim, indistinct, and indirect. The apostle declares it: 'For now we see in a mirror dimly' (1 Corinthians 13:12) — through or by a mirror, in a riddle, a parable, a dark saying. There is a double

figurative limitation placed on our view of Christ's glory, drawn from the two ways we perceive things: the sight of the eyes and the hearing of words.

The first is that we have this view not directly but indirectly and by way of representation — as in a mirror. I take the glass here to be not a telescope or optical aid to sight, but a looking glass that reflects an image of what we see. It is a sight like that of a person reflected in a mirror — we see not the person or substance directly, but only an image or representation of them, which is imperfect.

The shadow or image of Christ's glory is drawn in the gospel, and there we behold it as we behold a person's likeness reflected in a mirror. Although this image is obscure and imperfect compared to His real, substantial glory — which is the object of direct vision in heaven — it is the only image and representation of Himself He has left and given us in this world. That wretched, corrupt invention of fashioning images of Him from wood and stone, however adorned, or representations of Him through the art of painting, are so far from presenting anything of His real glory to people's minds that nothing could be more effective at diverting their thoughts from it altogether. But through this figure of seeing in a mirror, the apostle indicates the comparative imperfection of our present view of Christ's glory.

The image may also be drawn from an optical glass or telescope, by which the eye is aided in seeing things at a great distance. With such instruments, people can discover stars or heavenly lights that the naked eye, because of their distance, is entirely unable to detect. And even those we do see are represented more fully, though still far from being seen perfectly. The gospel is such

an instrument — without it we can make no discovery of Christ at all, yet even with it, we are far from beholding Him in the full dimensions of His glory.

He adds another indication of this imperfection in an image drawn from the way things are communicated to the minds of people through words. Words can be plain, direct, and literal — or they can be dark, figurative, and parabolic. This latter kind makes understanding difficult and imperfect, and because of the imperfection of our view of Christ's glory by faith in this world, the apostle says it is 'in a riddle.' The psalmist calls these 'dark sayings' (Psalm 78:2).

It must be noted here, however, that the description and representation of the Lord Christ and His glory in the gospel is not in itself absolutely dark or obscure. In fact, it is clear, plain, and direct — Christ is set forth in the gospel evidently, as crucified, exalted, and glorified. But the apostle is not speaking here about the manner or means of revelation itself, but about the means or instrument by which we take in that revelation. That instrument is our faith — and faith, as it exists in us, being weak and imperfect, grasps the representation of Christ's glory made to us as one grasps the meaning of a riddle, a parable, or a dark saying: that is, imperfectly and with difficulty.

On this account we can say at present, 'What a small portion of Him do we know!' — as Job speaks of God (Job 26:14). How imperfect are our conceptions of Him! How weak are our minds in handling these things! There is no part of His glory that we can fully comprehend. And what we do comprehend — for there is a true comprehension in faith (Ephesians 3:18) — we cannot remain in steady contemplation of. Forever blessed be that sovereign grace

through which He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness has shined into our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of His own glory in the face of Jesus Christ, and in that face, the glory of Christ Himself — so revealing Him to us that we may love Him, wonder at Him, and obey Him. But to behold His glory constantly, steadily, and clearly in this life we are not able, for we walk by faith and not by sight.

Our sight of Him here is, therefore, as it were, in glimpses — subject to being obscured by many obstructions. 'Behold, He is standing behind our wall, He is looking through the windows, He is peering through the lattice' (Song of Solomon 2:9). There is a great barrier between Him and us, like a wall; and the means by which He discloses Himself to us — through a window and lattice — include much instability and imperfection in our sight and understanding of Him. There is a wall between Him and us, behind which He nevertheless stands. Our present mortal condition is that wall, which must be torn down before we can see Him as He is. In the meantime, He looks through the windows of the gospel ordinances. When He is pleased to stand in those windows, He gives us a glimpse of Himself — but it is imperfect, as is our sight of a person through a window. His appearances at these windows bring deep refreshment to the souls of those who believe. Yet our sight of them is imperfect, fleeting, and does not remain. We are most often quickly left lamenting what we have lost. At such times our best response is to cry out: 'As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?' When will You again let me see You, even if only through windows? How much distress we sometimes sit in after these glimpses of Christ

and His glory! But He goes further still, and shows Himself through the lattice. This display of Christ's glory — called His showing Himself — comes through the promises of the gospel as they are opened in the ministry of the Word. In those promises the desirable beauties and glories of Christ are set before us. How precious, how gracious is He as represented in them! How the souls of believers are overwhelmed with delight at these views! Yet this disclosure of Him is also only through a lattice — we see Him in fragments, unsteadily and unevenly.

Such, I say, is the sight of Christ's glory that we have in this world by faith. It is dim, it is only partial, it is weak, fleeting, imperfect, and fragmentary. Little can we discover of it at any one time; and little time can we remain in contemplation of what we do discover — a rare hour, a brief stay. Sometimes it is to us as the sun behind a cloud — we cannot perceive it at all. 'When He hides His face, who then can see Him?' As Job says, so we may say: 'Behold, I go forward but He is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive Him; when He acts on the left, I cannot behold Him; He turns on the right, I cannot see Him' (Job 23:8-9). Whichever way we turn and whatever duties we pursue, we cannot gain a clear view of His glory. Yet on the other hand, His glory is sometimes to us as the sun shining in full brightness — and we cannot bear the rays of it. In infinite condescension He says to His church, 'Turn your eyes away from me, for they have confused me' (Song of Solomon 6:5) — as if He could not bear that overwhelming, affectionate love which looks through the eyes of the church as it exercises faith in Him. How much more do we find our own souls overwhelmed with His love when He is pleased to reveal His glory clearly to us!

Let us now consider briefly the vision we will have of that same glory in heaven, so that we may compare the two.

The vision — the sight of Christ's glory that we will have in heaven — is immediate, direct, and intuitive, and therefore steady, even, and constant. This is true on two accounts: first, regarding the object that will be set before us; and second, regarding the seeing faculty with which we will be endowed. The imperfection of both of these in this world is what produces the imperfection of our view of Christ's glory by faith, as has been described.

First, the object of heavenly vision will be real and substantial. Christ Himself in His own person, with all His glory, will be continually present with us, before us, set before us. We will no longer have an image or representation of Him, such as the portrayal of His glory in the gospel. 'We shall see face to face,' says the apostle (1 Corinthians 13:12), which he contrasts with our present dim sight as in a mirror — which is the furthest that faith can reach. 'We will see Him just as He is' (1 John 3:2), no longer in an imperfect description of Him. As a person sees his neighbor when they stand face to face in conversation, so shall we see the Lord Christ in His glory — not as Moses, who had only a passing glimpse of portions of God's glory as it passed before him.

Our bodily eyes will have a role in this, as we shall see. As Job says, 'Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God; whom I myself shall behold' (Job 19:25-27). Our physical sight will not be restored to us — and restored in a glory beyond what we can now conceive — for any lesser purpose than this great one: the eternal beholding of Christ and His glory. Who would not rejoice at the thought that with the same eyes by which they now see the signs and tokens of Him in the Lord's Supper, they will one

day behold Him directly in His own person? But principally, as we shall see shortly, this vision is intellectual. Therefore its object is not merely the human nature of Christ, but His divine person as that nature exists within it. I do not fully understand what that perfection will be which we shall have — for what is perfect must come and do away with what is partial — in our comprehension of the hypostatic union. But this I know: that in the immediate beholding of the person of Christ, we will see a glory in it a thousand times greater than anything we can now conceive. The excellencies of infinite wisdom, love, and power in Him will be continually before us. And all the glories of Christ's person — which we have previously examined so weakly and dimly — will be in our sight forevermore.

The ground and cause of our blessedness is therefore that we will be with the Lord forever (1 Thessalonians 4:17). This is what He Himself prays for — that we may be with Him where He is to behold His glory. Here we have some dim glimpses of it; we cannot behold it perfectly until we are with Him where He is. Then our sight of Him will be direct, intuitive, and constant.

There will be — there will exist subjectively in us — a glory in the beholding of Christ's glory that is at present incomprehensible. 'It has not appeared as yet what we will be' (1 John 3:2). Who can declare what a glory it will be within us to behold this glory of Christ? And how exceedingly great, then, is that glory of Christ itself?

This direct sight of Christ is what all the saints of God in this life breathe and long for. This is why they are willing to be dissolved — desiring to depart so as to be with Christ, which is far better for them (Philippians 1:23). They choose to be absent from

the body and present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8), so as to enjoy the inexpressibly longed-for sight of Christ in His glory. Those who do not long for it — whose souls and minds are not regularly visited with earnest desires for it, to whom thoughts of it bring no relief in trouble and no great joy — are spiritually blind and cannot see far. The person who is truly spiritual entertains and refreshes himself with thoughts of this continually.

Second, this vision will be made possible by the seeing power or faculty for beholding Christ's glory that we will then receive. Without this we cannot see Him as He is. When He was transfigured on the mountain and His human nature reflected something of His divine glory, the disciples who were with Him were overwhelmed rather than refreshed by it (Matthew 17:4). They saw His glory, but what they said in response they did not really know (Luke 9:30-33). The reason is that no person in this life possesses a seeing power — whether spiritual or physical — capable of looking directly and immediately on the real glory of Christ.

If the Lord Jesus were to appear to any of us now in His majesty and glory, it would not be for our growth or comfort. We are not fit or able, by any measure of light or grace we have received or can receive in this life, to bear the direct appearance and display of that glory. His beloved apostle John had rested on His chest many times in this life, in the close intimacies of love. But when Christ later appeared to him in His glory, John fell at His feet as though dead (Revelation 1:17). And when He appeared to Paul, the most that Paul could report was that he saw a light from heaven brighter than the sun, at which he and all who were with him fell to the ground (Acts 26:13-14).

This was one reason why, during the days of His earthly ministry, His glory was veiled under the frailties of the flesh and all kinds of suffering, as we noted earlier. The church in this life is in no way ready — by whatever grace it can receive — to commune with Him in the direct manifestation of His glory.

Therefore those who imagine His personal reign on earth before the day of judgment — unless they suppose all the saints will also be perfectly glorified (which is simply to bring heaven down to earth for a time, to no purpose) — make no provision at all for the growth or comfort of the church. No present grace, developed to the highest degree it is capable of in this world, can make us fit for direct fellowship with Christ in His unveiled glory.

How much more inexcusable, then, is the folly of those who try to represent the Lord Christ in His present glory through pictures and painted images! When they have done their very best with polished glass and gilding, a physical eye can not only look at it, but guided by reason can see it as contemptible and foolish. But the true glory of Christ — neither inward sight nor outward sight can bear its rays in this life.

The way of His presence that we are fit for is only that of His presence with us through His Spirit. We know Him now no longer according to the flesh (2 Corinthians 5:16). We have advanced beyond that way of knowing Him through the physical, external ordinances of the Old Testament. Nor do we know Him according to the bodily presence His disciples enjoyed in the days of His earthly life. We have attained something beyond that as well. The nature of His earthly ministry was such that the promised gift of the Spirit could not come until that ministry was finished. So He told His disciples that it was better for them that He should go away and

send the Spirit to them (John 16:7). After that they had a clearer view of the glory of Christ than they could have had by seeing Him in the flesh. This is our spiritual position and condition. We are past knowing Him according to the flesh; we cannot yet receive the sight of Him in glory; but the life we now live is by faith in the Son of God.

I will not here examine the nature of this heavenly vision, or the power and capacity we will have there to behold the glory of Christ. A few things may be mentioned as they relate to our minds and our bodies after the resurrection.

First, as to the mind: it will be perfectly freed from all the darkness, instability, and other incapacities that accompany it here, by which it is weakened, hindered, and obstructed in the exercise of faith. These incapacities are of two kinds. The first kind consists of the remnants of the corruption that came upon our natures through sin. By sin our minds became entirely vain, dark, and corrupt — utterly unable to discern spiritual things rightly, as Scripture testifies. Grace has in this life cured and removed this to such a degree that those who were darkness have become light in the Lord, enabled to live toward God under the guidance of a new spiritual light communicated to them. But it is only partly cured and removed in this life; it is not perfectly abolished. This is why we still carry remaining weaknesses and incapacities in discerning spiritual and eternal things — things we groan under and long to be delivered from. No trace, no scar or mark that this corruption ever had a place in our minds will remain in glory (Ephesians 5:27). Nothing will weaken, disturb, or hinder our souls in the exercise of all their powers — free from vanity, distraction, weakness, or inability — as they rest on their proper objects. We cannot now

comprehend the excellence of this complete freedom and capacity. Nor can we yet conceive the glory and beauty of those pure spiritual workings of our minds that will have no drag on them, no encumbrance in them, no mixture of dross. One pure act of spiritual sight beholding the glory of Christ, one pure act of love cleaving to God, will bring more blessedness and satisfaction into our minds than we are capable of receiving in this entire world.

Second, there is also an incapacity in our minds — as to their workings on spiritual and eternal things — that arises purely from the condition and role they have in this life. Here they are clothed with flesh, and that flesh debased and corrupted. In this state, though the mind performs its thinking by using the body as its organ and instrument, it is variously strained, burdened, and impeded in the exercise of its native powers — especially toward heavenly things — by the prison of flesh in which it is confined. There is an angelic excellence in the pure workings of the soul when freed from all material instruments, or when those instruments are all glorified and made fitting aids to its fullest spiritual activity. How and by what stages our minds will be freed from these obstructions in their beholding of Christ's glory will be addressed later.

Furthermore, a new light — the light of glory — will be implanted in our minds. There is a natural light — the human capacity to understand human things, to know, perceive, and judge of natural realities. It is that spirit of a person which is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the innermost parts (Proverbs 20:27).

But by this natural light alone, no one can rightly discern spiritual things, as the apostle declares (1 Corinthians 2:11-15). Therefore God gives a higher, supernatural light — the light of

faith and grace — to those He effectually calls to the knowledge of Himself through Jesus Christ. He shines into their hearts to give them the knowledge of His glory in the face of His dear Son. This new light does not abolish, blot out, or render the natural light useless — as the sun rising does not extinguish the light of the stars — but it directs and corrects the natural light in its principle, object, and end. Yet it is in itself a light of an entirely different kind. A person who has only the natural light can understand nothing of the spiritual light, having no taste or experience of its power and workings. He may talk about it and inquire into it, but he does not know it.

We have received this light of faith and grace, by which we discern spiritual things and behold the glory of Christ in the imperfect manner described above. But in heaven there will be an added light of glory that will make the mind itself shine like the sky at full brightness (Daniel 12:3). Three things may be said of it: first, as the light of grace does not destroy or abolish the light of nature but corrects and improves it, so the light of glory will not abolish the light of faith and grace, but by merging with it, will bring it to absolute perfection; second, as by the light of nature we cannot fully comprehend the true nature and power of the light of grace — because it is of a different kind and is perceived only in its own light — so by the light of grace we cannot fully comprehend this light of glory, being of its own unique nature and seen perfectly only by its own light; and 'it has not yet appeared what we will be'; third, the best understanding we can have of this light of glory is that at its first operation it perfectly transforms the soul into the image and likeness of Christ.

This is the progress of our nature toward its rest and blessedness. The principles remaining in human nature regarding good and evil, along with its practical convictions, are not destroyed by grace but improved — as its blindness, darkness, and hostility toward God are in part removed. Being renewed by grace, whatever it receives here of spiritual life and light will never be destroyed, but will be perfected in glory. Grace renews nature; glory perfects grace; and so the whole soul is brought to its rest in God. We have a picture of this in the blind man our Savior healed (Mark 8:22-24). He was completely blind — undoubtedly from birth. At the first touch his eyes were opened, but he saw very dimly — he saw people walking like trees. At the second touch he saw everything clearly. Our minds in themselves are completely blind. The first visitation of grace gives them sight of spiritual, heavenly, and eternal things — but it is dim and unsteady. The sight of glory makes all things clear and plain.

Second, the body as glorified — with its senses — will also have its use and place in this. After we are clothed again with our flesh, we will see our Redeemer with our eyes.

We do not yet know what power and spirituality there will be in the acts of our glorified bodies. Such they will be as to have a part in eternal blessedness. The holy Stephen, the first martyr, glimpsed something of that glory by anticipation before he died. When he was brought to trial before the council, all who sat there looked intently at him and saw his face as the face of an angel (Acts 6:15). He had his own transfiguration — in his own measure — corresponding to that of our blessed Savior on the mountain. And by this first beam of glory, his bodily eyes received such piercing vividness and sharpness that through all the inconceivable dis-

tances between earth and the dwelling of the blessed, he looked intently into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7:55-56). Who then can declare what the power and operation of the glorified sense of sight will be, or what sweetness and refreshment may be received into our souls through it?

It was a privilege — who would not have longed to share in it? — to have seen Him with bodily eyes in the days of His earthly life, as the apostles and other disciples did. Yet at that time He was not Himself glorified in the full display of His glory, nor were those who saw Him changed or transformed in their nature. How great this privilege was, He Himself declares to those who saw Him: 'Truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see' (Matthew 13:17) — of which we shall speak shortly. And if this was so excellent a privilege that we cannot help but rejoice for those who enjoyed it, how excellent and glorious will it be when with these eyes of ours — gloriously purified and strengthened beyond even those of Stephen — we behold Christ Himself directly in the fullness of His glory! He alone perfectly understands the greatness and excellence of this who prayed to the Father that those who believe in Him might be where He is, to behold His glory.

These are some of the grounds of the first difference between our beholding the glory of Christ by faith here and by direct vision hereafter. The one is weak, imperfect, obscure, and indirect; the other is direct, immediate, steady, and constant. We may pause a little in the contemplation of this.

This sight of Christ's glory — of which we have now spoken — is what we are breathing and longing for; what the Lord Christ prays we may arrive at; what the apostle declares to be our highest good — the best state our nature is capable of — what brings eternal rest and satisfaction to our souls.

Here our souls are burdened with countless infirmities, and our faith is hindered in its workings by ignorance and darkness. This causes even our best estate and highest attainments to be accompanied with groaning for deliverance. 'And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body' (Romans 8:23). Yes, 'while we are in this tent, we groan, longing to be clothed' — longing to be absent from the body and present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:2-8). The more we grow in faith and spiritual light, the more keenly we feel our present burdens, and the more earnestly we groan for deliverance into the perfect freedom of the sons of God. This is the posture of those minds who have received the firstfruits of the Spirit in the highest degree. The closer any person is to heaven, the more earnestly he desires to be there — because Christ is there. The more frequent and steady our views of Him by faith, the more we long and groan for the removal of all obstacles and barriers to seeing Him fully. Now groaning is a strong desire mixed with sorrow for the present lack of what is desired. The desire carries sorrow, and that sorrow carries joy and refreshment within it — like a spring shower falling on a man in a garden: it wets him, but at the same time refreshes him with the fragrance it draws from the flowers and herbs. And this groaning — which, when constant and habitual, is one of the finest fruits of faith in this life —

looks both to what we would be delivered from and what we would attain. The first is expressed in Romans 7:24, the other in the places just mentioned. And this state — with an occasional sigh from the weariness of trouble, sorrow, pain, and sickness in this life — is the best we can attain here.

We cannot think of Christ here without quickly being ashamed and troubled by our own thoughts — so confused, so unsteady, so imperfect are they. Usually they end in a groan or a sigh: Oh, when shall we come to Him? When shall we be always with Him? When shall we see Him as He is? And if at any time He begins to give more than ordinary evidence of His glory and love to our souls, we are unable to bear it in a way that gives it any lasting residence in our minds. But ordinarily this trouble and groaning is among our highest attainments in this world — a trouble from which I pray God I may never be delivered until deliverance comes at once through the end of this mortal life. May the good Lord increase this holy trouble more and more in all who believe.

The heart of a believer affected by the glory of Christ is like a compass needle touched with a magnet. It can no longer be still; it can no longer be satisfied at a distance from Him. It is put into constant motion toward Him. That motion is indeed weak and trembling. Longings, breathings, sighs, groanings — in prayer, in meditation, in the quiet places of our minds — are the life of it. Yet it is continually pressing toward Him. But it does not arrive; it does not reach its center and rest in this world.

But above, all is clear and serene, all plain and open in our beholding of the glory of Christ. We will be with Him always and will see Him as He is. This is heaven; this is blessedness; this is eternal rest.

The person of Christ, in all His glory, will be continually before us; and the eyes of our understanding will be so gloriously illuminated that we will be able to behold and take in that glory steadily.

But here at present our minds recoil, our meditations fail, our hearts are overcome, our thoughts grow confused, and our eyes turn aside from the brightness of this glory — we cannot sustain our contemplation of it. But there, an immediate, constant sight of it will bring everlasting refreshment and joy into our whole souls.

This beholding of the glory that the Father gave to Christ is indeed subordinate to the ultimate vision of the essence of God. What that ultimate vision is we cannot well conceive; we only know that the pure in heart shall see God. But the vision of Christ has such an immediate connection with it and subordination to it that without beholding Christ we can never see the face of God as the objective blessedness of our souls. For He is and will be to eternity the only means of communication between God and the church.

We can take some guidance in our longing after this perfect sight of Christ's glory from the example of the saints under the Old Testament. The sight they had of Christ's glory — for they too saw His glory, though through the obscurity of its veiled and shadowy revelation — was weak and imperfect even in the most illuminated believers, far inferior to what we now have by faith through the gospel. Yet even so, it was enough to stir them to search diligently into what had been revealed (1 Peter 1:10-11). Their discoveries were still dim and confused — like a person's view of things at a great distance, or of 'a land far off,' as the prophet says (Isaiah 33:17). The continuation of this veil over the revelation of Christ's glory — while a veil of ignorance and blindness also lay over their

hearts and minds — proved the ruin of that church in its apostasy, as the apostle declares (2 Corinthians 3:7-14). This double veil God promised to remove (Isaiah 25:7). And they will turn to the Lord when they are at last able to see clearly the glory of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:16).

But this caused the true believers among them to desire, long for, and pray for the removal of these veils and the passing of those shadows that made it as night to them compared to what they knew would appear when the Sun of Righteousness arose with healing in His wings. They thought the day slow in breaking and the shadows slow in fleeing (Song of Solomon 2:17; 4:6). There was, as the apostle speaks, an eager expectation — heads stretched forward — waiting for the appearing of the Son of God in the flesh and the fulfillment of all divine promises in Him (Romans 8:19). This is why He was called the Lord whom they sought and delighted in (Malachi 3:1).

Great was the spiritual wisdom of believers in those days. They rejoiced and took pride in the worship ordinances they enjoyed. They regarded them as their greatest privilege and attended to them diligently — recognizing them as expressions of divine wisdom and love, and because they cast a shadow of good things to come. But at the same time they longed for the time of reformation to arrive, when all those things would be set aside and they could behold and enjoy the realities those things signified. Those who did not long in this way — but rested in and put their trust in the institutions themselves — were not accepted by God. Those who were truly illuminated did not rest there, but lived in constant de-

sire for the full revelation of the mystery of God's wisdom in Christ, as even the angels themselves did (1 Peter 1:3; Ephesians 3:9-10).

In this frame of heart and the corresponding workings of their souls, there was more of the power of true faith and love than is found among most people today. They saw the promises from a distance, were persuaded of them, and embraced them (Hebrews 11:13). They stretched out the arms of their most intent affections to embrace the things that had been promised. We see this frame of heart in old Simeon, who as soon as he had taken the child Jesus in his arms cried out, 'Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, according to Your word' (Luke 2:28-29) — this is what my soul has longed for.

Our present darkness and weakness in beholding the glory of Christ is not of the same kind as theirs. It is not caused by a veil of types and shadows cast over that glory by the representative institutions of the Old Testament; it does not arise from a lack of clear doctrinal revelation of the person and office of Christ. As was noted earlier, it comes from two other causes. First, from the nature of faith itself compared to vision — faith is not able to look directly into this excellent glory or fully take it in. Second, from the manner in which it is set before us — not the substance of the thing itself, but only an image of it, as in a mirror. And yet the sight of Christ's glory that we will have in heaven is much further above what we now enjoy through the gospel, than what we now enjoy exceeds what they had under their types and shadows. There is a far greater distance between the vision of heaven and the sight we now have by faith, than there is between the sight we now have and what they had under the Old Testament. Heaven surpasses the

gospel state more than the law state surpasses the law. Therefore, if they prayed so earnestly, longed so deeply, and desired so fervently for the removal of their shadows and veils — so that they might see what we now see, to behold the glory of Christ as we may behold it in the light of the gospel — how much more should we, if we share their faith and their love — which neither will nor can be satisfied without perfect enjoyment — long and pray for the removal of all weakness, all darkness, and all barriers, until we come to that direct beholding of His glory which He prayed so earnestly that we would be brought to.

To briefly summarize what has been said: there are three things to consider about the glory of Christ — three stages in its manifestation: the shadow, the perfect image, and the substance itself. Those under the law had only the shadow of it and of the things belonging to it — they did not have the perfect image (Hebrews 10:1). Under the gospel we have the perfect image they did not have — a clear, complete revelation and declaration of it, presenting it to us as in a mirror. But the enjoyment of these things in their substance is reserved for heaven; we must be where He is so that we may behold His glory. There is a greater difference and distance between the real substance of any thing and the most perfect image of it, than there is between the most perfect image and the dimmest shadow of the same thing. If then they longed to be freed from their state of types and shadows so as to enjoy the representation of Christ's glory in the image given us in the gospel, how much more ought we to breathe and long for our deliverance from beholding it even in the image, until we enjoy the substance

itself. For whatever of Christ can be made manifest on this side of heaven is given to us for this very purpose — that we may desire all the more fervently to be present with Him.

It was their wisdom and grace to rejoice in the light they had and in those representative ordinances of worship that shadowed out Christ's glory to them — while always longing after the more excellent light and full disclosure of it that the gospel would bring. So it will be our wisdom and grace to thankfully use and profit from the revelations we now enjoy of it, and from those institutions of worship that assist our faith in viewing it — yet doing so while continually breathing after that perfect, glorifying sight of it that is reserved for heaven above.

May we examine ourselves a little by these things? Do we regard this pressing toward the perfect sight of Christ's glory as our duty, and do we keep at it? If it is otherwise with any of us, that is clear evidence that our profession of faith is hollow. If Christ is in us, He is the hope of glory in us — and where that hope is, it will express itself in active desires for the things hoped for. Many love the world too well and have their minds too full of its concerns to entertain desires for passing through it quickly to a state where they may behold the glory of Christ. They are at home here and unwilling to be absent from the body, even though to do so would be to be present with the Lord. They hope, perhaps, that such a time will come eventually, and that then it will be the best they can look for when they can be here no more. But those who desire the direct sight of Christ's glory above so slightly and faintly have little sight of His glory by faith in this world — if any at all. I cannot understand how any person can walk with God as he ought, or has that love for Jesus Christ that true faith produces, or finds refreshment

and joy in spiritual things and in things above, who does not on every fitting occasion so meditate on the glory of Christ in heaven as to long for admission into the direct sight of it.

Our Lord Jesus Christ alone perfectly understood what the eternal blessedness of those who believe in Him consists of. And this is the heart of what He prays for with regard to that end — that we may be where He is to behold His glory. Is it not our duty to live in continual desire for what He prayed so earnestly that we might attain? Even if we ourselves as yet perceive little of the glory, the excellence, and the blessedness of it, we ought to place such confidence in the wisdom and love of Christ that we believe it is our highest good — infinitely better than anything we can enjoy here below.

To those who are accustomed to these contemplations, they are the salt of their lives — the seasoning that makes everything else savory to them, as we shall demonstrate later. The lack of spiritual diligence in this is what has produced a careless, wordy, external religion which, consoling itself with some outward duties, has lost from within it the power of faith and love in their chief workings. By this many deceive their own souls. Property, land, possessions, relationships, occupations, and earthly interests — these are the things whose image is stamped on their minds and whose marks are written on their foreheads as labels by which they may be known. As believers beholding the glory of Christ in the blessed mirror of the gospel are changed into the same image and likeness by the Spirit of the Lord, so these people beholding the beauty of the world and its things in the darkened mirror of self-love are changed in their minds into that same image. The result is perplexing fears, empty hopes, futile clutching at perishing things, fruit-

less desires, earthly and self-centered plans, and corrupt self-pleasing imaginations — all feeding on and being fed by love of the world and love of self — dwelling and gaining power in them. But we have not so learned Christ Jesus.

CHAP. XIII. THE SECOND
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OUR BEHOLD-
ING THE GLORY OF CHRIST BY FAITH
IN THIS WORLD, AND BY SIGHT IN
HEAVEN.



Faith is the light in which we behold the glory of Christ in this world. And in its own nature, for this great purpose, it is weak and imperfect — like weak eyes that cannot look at the sun in its full brightness. Hence our sight of His glory differs greatly from what we will enjoy in glory, as has been described. But that is not all — faith is frequently hindered and interrupted in its workings, or it loses sight of its object by one means or another. As a person who sees something at a great distance sees it imperfectly, and the slightest obstruction or movement removes it entirely from view, so it is with our faith in this matter. Sometimes we can have little, sometimes no sight at all of the glory of Christ by it. This gives us, as we shall see, another difference between faith and sight.

Although this may seem somewhat removed from our main argument, I choose to dwell on it — to show why many people have so little experience of the things we have been discussing, and find

so little reality or power in this exercise of grace or performance of this duty. For in the end it will appear that the whole deficiency is in themselves; the truth itself, as we have set it out, is great and powerful.

First, while we are in this life, the Lord Christ is pleased in His sovereign wisdom sometimes to withdraw and, as it were, to hide Himself from us. When He does, our minds fall into clouds and darkness; faith loses its footing; we cannot behold His glory — indeed, we may seek Him and cannot find Him. So Job complains, as we noted earlier: 'Behold, I go forward but He is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive Him; when He acts on the left, I cannot behold Him; He turns on the right, I cannot see Him' (Job 23:8-9). Whichever way I turn, whatever my efforts, whatever way or work of His own I search for Him in — I cannot find Him, I cannot see Him, I cannot behold His glory. So the church complains: 'Truly, You are a God who hides Himself, O God of Israel, Savior!' (Isaiah 45:15). And the psalmist: 'How long, O Lord? Will You hide Yourself forever?' (Psalm 89:46). This hiding of God's face is the hiding of the shining of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ, and therefore of the glory of Christ Himself — for it is the glory of Christ to be the representative of the glory of God. The bride in Song of Solomon is often at a loss in this, lamenting that her beloved had withdrawn, that she could neither find Him nor see Him (Song of Solomon 3:1-2; 5:6).

People may retain their ideas about Christ, His person, and His glory. These cannot be erased from their minds except by heresy or stubborn dullness. They may have the same doctrinal knowledge of Him as others; but the sight of His glory does not consist in that. They may continue in the outward performance of duties toward

Him as before — but all the while, as to His special gracious communications to their souls and a cheerful, refreshing view of His glory, He may withdraw and hide Himself from them.

Under the same outward ministry of the Word He may manifest Himself to some and not to others — 'How is it that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?' (John 14:22) — so that those to whom He does manifest Himself see Him as beautiful, glorious, and lovely (for to those who believe He is precious), while others see nothing of it and marvel at those who admire Him (Song of Solomon 5:9). In the same way, under the same ministry of the Word He sometimes hides His face, withdraws the light of His countenance, and clouds the beams of His glory from some, while others are warmed and nourished by them.

There are two things we need to address here.

First, why does the Lord Christ at any time hide Himself and His glory from the faith of believers so that they cannot behold Him?

Second, how can we perceive and recognize that He has withdrawn from us — so that however content we may feel with ourselves, we are in fact not beholding His glory?

As to the first: although what He does is an act of sovereign and unfathomable wisdom, there are many holy purposes in it and therefore good reasons for it. I will mention only one. He does it to stir us up in a powerful way to diligent searching and seeking after Him. Terrible sloth and negligence tend to gain the upper hand in our meditations on heavenly things. Though our hearts may remain awake — as the bride says (Song of Solomon 5:2) — in their high regard for Christ, His love and His grace, yet we sleep in the

due exercise of faith and love toward Him. Who can justify himself in this? Who can say, 'My heart is pure; I am clean from this sin'? Indeed, it is so far the other way with many of us that He is forever to be admired in His patience — that on account of our coldness and terrible negligence in this, He has not only withdrawn at times, but has not utterly departed from us. He knows that those with whom He has been graciously present — who have had views of His glory, though they have not valued that mercy and privilege as they should — cannot bear the sense of His absence and His hiding from them. By this He will therefore awaken them to diligent searching after Him. When they discover His absence and feel His glory at a distance their faith cannot reach, they become like mourning doves in the valleys, each grieving over his own sin, and they stir themselves to seek Him early and earnestly (Hosea 5:15). So wherever the bride mentions Christ's withdrawing from her, she immediately describes her restless diligence in searching for Him until she finds Him (Song of Solomon 3:1-5; 5:2-8). And in these searches there is such an exercise of faith and love — though it may express itself mostly in sighs and groaning — as is acceptable and pleasing to Him.

We are like the man in the prophet's parable to Ahab — a man who was given someone to guard and who confesses that while he was busy here and there, the prisoner escaped. Christ commits Himself to us, and we ought to carefully keep His presence. 'I held him,' says the church, 'and would not let him go' (Song of Solomon 3:4). But while we are busy here and there, while our minds are crowded with other things, He withdraws and we cannot find Him. Even this rebuke, however, is a grace-filled means of drawing us back and bringing about His return.

Our second question is this: how can we know when Christ has withdrawn from us in such a way that we do not — and cannot — behold His glory?

I speak here only to those who regard the living exercise of faith and love in and toward Jesus Christ as their chief concern — in all their private time, and indeed in their whole walk before God. The question for these people is: how can they recognize when Christ has withdrawn from them to any degree, so that they cannot behold His glory as they should?

The first way to discover this is through the consequences of such withdrawals. What those consequences are, we can only know by contrast — by the effects of His presence with us and the manifestation of Himself to us, which must cease to some degree when He withdraws.

The first of these effects is the life, energy, and effective working of all grace in us. This is an inseparable consequence and fruit of beholding His glory. While we enjoy it, we live — yet not we, but Christ lives in us, stirring and bringing to life all His graces within us.

The apostle teaches us this: while we behold His glory as in a mirror, we are transformed into the same image from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18). That is, while by faith we contemplate the glory of Christ as revealed in the gospel, all grace will thrive and flourish in us toward a perfect conformity to Him. While we maintain this vision and contemplation, our souls will be kept in holy frames and in a continual exercise of love and delight — along with all other spiritual affections toward Him. It is impossible, while Christ is in the eye of our faith as presented in the gospel, for

us not to labor to be like Him and to love Him deeply. And there is no other way for us to attain either — which are the great concerns of our souls: to be like Christ and to love Him — except by a constant sight of Him and His glory by faith, which powerfully and effectively works these things in us. All our doctrinal knowledge of Him is useless; every view we have of His glory is mere imagination, fancy, or superstition, if not accompanied by this transforming power. What is produced by that power is growth and vitality in all grace — for in this alone does our conformity to Christ consist. Growth in grace, holiness, and obedience is a growing into likeness with Christ — and nothing else is.

I cannot refrain from a brief but necessary digression here. When this transforming power — which comes from a spiritual vision of Christ as presented in the gospel — is lost on people who are spiritually unformed and unfamiliar with the mystery of believing, fancy and superstition step in with various substitutes. This power, though it is the very life of true religion, is at present ridiculed by many. So people invented crucifixes and painted images to represent Christ in His sufferings and glory. Through these things, their outward senses stirred up their fleshly emotions, and they supposed themselves to be moved by Him and made like Him. Some went so far — whether by occult means or otherwise — as to produce the appearance of wounds on their hands, feet, and sides, claiming thereby to be conformed to His image, wholly transformed into it. But what is produced by an image is only an image; an imaginary Christ will produce nothing in the minds of people but imaginary grace.

In this way true religion was lost and died. When people could not obtain any experience in their minds of the spiritual mysteries of the gospel, nor sense any genuine spiritual change or benefit from them, they substituted various outward duties and observances in their place — as I hope to show at greater length elsewhere, God willing. These substitutes produced some kind of effects on their minds and emotions, but of an entirely different nature from the real effects of true gospel grace. This is openly evident in the substitution of images for the representation of Christ and His glory as given in the gospel.

However, there is a general premise that all sides concede: that there must be a vision of Christ and His glory in order for us to love Him, and through that love to be made conformable to Him. Here lies the difference: those in the Church of Rome say this must happen by beholding crucifixes and other images and pictures of Him — and with our physical eyes. We say it happens by beholding His glory by faith as revealed in the gospel, and in no other way. To be honest, there are some among us who, while they rightly reject images, also despise this spiritual view of the glory of Christ that we are exploring. Such people will at the first opportunity drift to the other side — for almost anything feels better than nothing.

We have a reliable prophetic word that guards us from these abominations through an explicit prohibition of images for all purposes — and our stability in holding to the truth and experiencing the power of this spiritual sight of Christ transforming us into His likeness is absolutely essential. For if an idolater should argue, as they all do, that in beholding an image of Christ or a crucifix — especially with diligence and consistency — he finds his affections toward Christ greatly stirred, increased, and inflamed (as they will

be, Isaiah 57:5), and that he thereby endeavors to be like Christ — what will we have to set against this claim? It is certainly true that such images are apt to make impressions on people's minds — partly from the readiness of the senses and imagination to give them access to thought, and partly from people's natural inclination toward superstition, their aversion to things spiritual and invisible, and their draw toward things present and visible. Hence even among those who are convinced that images should not be given religious veneration, some find themselves upon seeing them naturally inclined to a kind of thoughtful reverence — as they might feel entering a pagan temple full of idols; and others are constantly drifting toward their use and veneration in paintings and altars and the outward postures of worship found in that religious tradition. That such images do sensibly affect the minds of carnal and superstitious people cannot be denied — and those people suppose this to be genuine love toward Christ Himself. Yet it is universally acknowledged that beholding Christ is the most powerful means of awakening all our graces, spiritualizing all our affections, and transforming our minds into His likeness. And if we do not have a better and more excellent way of beholding Him than those who behold Him — as they suppose — in images and crucifixes, they would appear to have the advantage over us. Their minds would genuinely be affected with something; ours with nothing at all. By this pretense they attract the fleshly affections of people ignorant of the gospel's power, drawing them as followers. For having perhaps lived a long time without the least experience of any real impression on their minds or transforming power from the representation of Christ in the gospel, upon their very first de-

vout application to these images they find their thoughts engaged, their minds stirred, and some immediate change worked upon them.

But there was a difference between the person of David and an image stuffed with goat's hair, though the one was laid in the bed in place of the other. And so there is between Christ and an image, though the one is put in the place of the other. These images serve no other purpose than to divert people's minds from faith and love toward Christ, giving them some kind of substitute satisfaction that causes their fleshly affections to cling to their idols. It belongs to the wisdom of faith — or we need spiritual discernment — to distinguish between the working of natural emotions toward spiritual objects on wrong motives, by wrong means, and with indirect ends (which is what all Roman Catholic devotion consists of), and the genuine spiritual exercise of grace in those affections properly fixed on spiritual objects.

But as was said, it is a real experience of the power that lies in the spiritual beholding of Christ's glory by faith — as presented in the gospel — to strengthen, increase, and stir all grace to its proper exercise, and so gradually to change and transform the soul into His likeness, that must guard us against all those false claims. And so I return from this digression.

By this we can understand whether the Lord Christ has withdrawn in such a way that we do not, and cannot, behold His glory by faith as we should — which is the question we were examining. If we grow weak in our graces, unspiritual in our inner frame, cold in our affections, or negligent in their exercise through holy meditation, it is clear that He is at a great distance from us and that we are not beholding His glory as we ought. When the weather grows

cold, herbs and plants wither, and frost begins to harden the ground — everyone acknowledges that the sun has withdrawn and is not making its usual approach. And if it is so with our hearts — that they grow cold, frozen, withered, and lifeless in and toward spiritual duties — then it is certain that the Lord Christ has in some sense withdrawn and that we are not beholding His glory. We may retain correct ideas about His person, office, and grace; but faith is not in constant exercise in genuinely seeing Him and His glory. For nothing in Christian experience is more certain than this: while we really do by faith behold the glory of Christ as presented in the gospel — the glory of His person and office as described above — and abide in holy thoughts and meditations on it, especially in our private times and quiet moments alone, all grace will live and grow in us to some degree — particularly love toward His person, and through that, love toward everything that belongs to Him. Let us put it to the test and we will unfailingly find the promised result.

Do any of us find spiritual decline gaining ground in us — deadness, coldness, lukewarmness, a kind of spiritual dullness and numbness settling in? Do we find ourselves reluctant to exercise grace when it is needed, lacking the vigorous workings of it in communion with God? And do we want our souls to be healed of these dangerous conditions? Let us be sure of this: there is no better way — indeed, there is no other way at all — except this one: obtaining a fresh sight of the glory of Christ by faith and steadily abiding in it. Sustained contemplation of Christ and His glory, releasing its transforming power to revive all grace, is the only remedy in this case, as will be further shown later.

Some will say that this recovery must come through fresh supplies and renewed communications of the Holy Spirit. Unless He falls as dew and rain on our dry and barren hearts, unless He causes our graces to spring, thrive, and bear fruit, unless He revives and increases faith, love, and holiness in our souls, our backsliding will not be healed and our spiritual condition will not be restored. To this end He is prayed for and promised in Scripture (Song of Solomon 4:16; Isaiah 44:3-4; Ezekiel 11:19; Ezekiel 36:26; Hosea 14:5-6). And so it is — the immediate power behind the revival of our souls is from and through the Holy Spirit. But the question is: in what way, or by what means, may we receive those supplies and communications of the Spirit for this purpose? The apostle declares this in the passage we have been considering: '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' (2 Corinthians 3:18). It is in the exercise of faith in Christ in the way described above that the Holy Spirit puts forth His renewing, transforming power in and upon our souls. This therefore is the one thing that will bring Christians back from their present decline and deadness.

Some complain greatly of their condition — no one is as dead, as dull, as numb as they. They do not know whether any spark of heavenly life remains in them. Some make weak, halfhearted attempts at recovery — like the efforts of a man in a dream who seems to exert great force but accomplishes nothing. Some pile up duties upon themselves. Yet the general run of professing Christians seems to be in a wasting, fruitless state. The reason is that they will not sincerely and consistently make use of the only remedy and means of relief — like a person who would rather

waste away in his sickness with passing and useless comforts than apply himself to a known and proven cure, perhaps because doing so is inconvenient to some of his current habits. The remedy is to live in the active exercise of faith in Christ Jesus. He Himself assures us of this: 'Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing' (John 15:4-5).

There is a twofold coming to Christ through believing. The first is that we may have life — that is, that a spring and principle of spiritual life may be communicated to us from Him, for He is our life (Colossians 3:3), and because He lives, we also live (John 14:19). In fact, it is not so much we who live as Christ who lives in us (Galatians 2:19-20). And unbelief is a refusal to come to Him so as to have life (John 5:40). The second is a coming to Christ by believers in the actual exercise of faith, so that they may have this life more abundantly (John 10:10) — that is, such supplies of grace as keep their souls in a healthy, vigorous exercise of all the powers of spiritual life. And just as He rebukes some for not coming to Him to have life, so He may rightly rebuke us all for not coming to Him in active faith so as to have this life more abundantly.

Second, when the Lord Christ is near us and we do behold His glory, He will frequently communicate spiritual refreshment — peace, consolation, and joy — to our souls. We will not only have our graces stirred with respect to Him as their object, but become aware of His movements toward us in His communications of Himself and His love to us. When the Sun of Righteousness rises upon any soul, or draws near to it, that soul will find healing under

His wings; His beams of grace will convey through His Spirit a holy, spiritual refreshment to it. For He is present with us through His Spirit, and these are His fruits and effects as the Comforter, suited to the office in which He is promised to us.

Many people live in a very careless and unwise profession of faith. As long as they can keep up their outward duties, they are largely indifferent to the greatest gospel privileges — those things that are the very substance of divine promises and all genuine pursuit of vital communion with Christ. Such things are spiritual peace, refreshing consolations, inexpressible joys, and the blessed settled rest of assurance. Without some taste and experience of these, profession is empty, lifeless, and useless; and religion itself is a lifeless body without an animating soul. The peace some enjoy is nothing but numbness. They do not regard these things as real — things that are the substance of Christ's present reward to His people, and the surrender of which would rob the church of its chief supports and encouragements in all its sufferings. It is a powerful evidence of unbelief when we can satisfy ourselves without experiencing in our own hearts the great gospel gifts of this kind — joy, peace, consolation, assurance. How can we be said to believe the promises of future things — heaven, immortality, glory, the faith of which is the foundation of all true religion — when we do not believe the promises of present reward in these spiritual privileges? And how shall we be thought to believe them when we do not seek to experience these things in our own souls — and are even content without them? In this people deceive themselves. They would very much like to have evangelical joy, peace, and assurance to cover over their poor inner condition and careless walk. Some have tried to combine these things — to their own ruin. But

it will not work. Without the diligent exercise of the grace of obedience, we will never enjoy the grace of consolation. But we must speak more of these things later.

It is particularly in the sight of Christ's glory — in His drawing near to us and abiding with us — that we are made partakers of gospel peace, consolation, joy, and assurance. These are part of the royal train of His graces, part of the reward that accompanies Him — 'His reward is with Him.' Wherever He is graciously present with anyone, these things are never lacking in proper measure and degree — unless it be through their own fault or for the purpose of their testing. In these things He gives to His beloved church (Song of Solomon 7:12). 'Whoever loves Me,' He says, 'will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him' (John 14:21). 'We will come to him and make Our abode with him' (John 14:23), in a way that includes dining with him (Revelation 3:20) — which on His part can only mean the communication of these spiritual refreshments. The only question is: by what way and means do we receive them? I say it is in and through our beholding the glory of Christ by faith (1 Peter 1:8-9). Let that glory be rightly grasped as laid out earlier — the glory of His person, His office, His condescension, His exaltation, His love, and His grace; let faith be fixed in a vision and contemplation of it, let it mingle with it as reflected in the mirror of the gospel, meditate on it, embrace it — and power will proceed from Christ, communicating spiritual, supernatural refreshment and joy to our souls. In ordinary circumstances it is impossible for believers to have a genuine sight of this glory at any time without it to some degree affecting their hearts with a sense of His love — which is the source of all consolation in them. In the exercise of faith on the disclosures of Christ's glory

given to us in the gospel, no one will ever be entirely without such intimations of His love — indeed, such outpourings of it in his heart — as will be a living spring of those spiritual refreshments (John 4:14; Romans 5:5). Therefore, when we lose our sense of these things in our souls, it is clear that the Lord Christ has withdrawn and that we are not beholding His glory.

I cannot avoid another brief digression here. There are those by whom all these things are mocked as disordered fancies and imaginations. Indeed, things have been said and written about them that amount to a practical rejection of the gospel, the powers of the world to come, and the whole work of the Holy Spirit as the Comforter of the church. By this all genuine intercourse between the person of Christ and the souls of believers is utterly dismantled, reducing all religion to an outward performance and spectacle — more suited to a stage than the temple of God that exists in the human mind. According to these contemptuous scoffers, there is no such thing as the love of God being poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit; no such thing as the Spirit of God bearing witness with our spirits that we are children of God, from which these spiritual joys and refreshments follow as necessary effects; no such thing as the lifting up of God's face upon us that puts gladness into our hearts; no such thing as rejoicing in believing with joy that is inexpressible and full of glory; no such thing as Christ's showing and manifesting Himself to us, dining with us, and giving us of His love; and the divine promises of a feast of rich food and well-aged wine in gospel mercies are empty, meaningless words. According to them, all the overwhelming joys and exultations of spirit that countless faithful martyrs in ancient times and in later ages experienced through a sight of God's glory in Christ and a sense of His

love — joys they testified to in their dying moments in the midst of torment — were mere fancies and imaginations. But it is the height of shamelessness in these profane scoffers that they advertise their own ignorance of the real powers of true religion.

There are others who will not deny the truth of these things outright. They dare not contradict the clear scriptural testimonies that confirm them. They suppose that some people do experience them — at least they once did — but as for themselves, they have no experience of them and do not regard it as their duty to seek after them. They are content with hopes of heaven and future glory. As for the present, they desire no more than to be found performing some duties in response to their convictions, which gives them the poor sort of peace they enjoy. In this way many excuse themselves in their spiritual laziness and unbelief, keeping themselves free to find refreshment and satisfaction in other things while the refreshments of the gospel are despised. These two things are incompatible. While people look for their chief refreshment and satisfaction in earthly things, it is impossible for them to pursue spiritual things as they should. And it must be admitted that when we rightly prize spiritual and gospel consolations and joys, that will reduce our affections toward and satisfaction in present earthly enjoyments (Philippians 3:8-9).

But there is no more certain truth than this: where Christ is present with believers — where He has not withdrawn from them for a season — where they live in the sight of His glory by faith as presented in the gospel, He will give them at His own appointed times such intimations of His love, such supplies of His Spirit,

such holy joys and rejoicing, such rest of soul in assurance, as will refresh their souls, fill them with joy, satisfy them with spiritual delight, and stir them to all acts of holy communion with Himself.

Let no such dishonor be cast on the gospel as the suggestion that while faith in it and obedience to it are ordinarily accompanied by outward troubles, afflictions, persecution, and reproach — as we are forewarned they will be — it does not by its inward consolations and divine refreshments more than outweigh all those evils we may suffer for its sake. To suppose otherwise is directly contrary to Christ's own promise, which assures us that even now in this life — distinct from eternal life in the world to come — we will receive a hundredfold return for everything we may lose or suffer for His sake (Matthew 19:30), and also contrary to the experience of those who in every age have joyfully accepted the plundering of their possessions, knowing in themselves — through their experience of the firstfruits — that they have in heaven a better and more lasting possession (Hebrews 10:34). If we fall short of participating in these things, if we are strangers to them, the blame rests on ourselves alone, as will be immediately declared.

Since the Lord Christ's purpose in withdrawing from us and hiding His glory from our sight is to exercise our graces and stir us to diligence in seeking Him, here is our direction for this situation. Do we find ourselves lifeless in the spiritual duties of religion? Are we strangers to the heavenly visits of consolation and joy — those visitations of God by which He preserves our souls? Do we rarely experience a sense of His love being poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit? There is only one way of recovery. To this strong tower we must turn as prisoners of hope; we must look to Christ

that we may be saved. A steady sight and contemplation of His glory by faith alone is what will bring all these things in living experience into our hearts and souls.

Again, second, the loss of our sight of Christ's glory and the hindrance to the exercise of faith in this largely comes from ourselves. All our spiritual disadvantages arise from within us. It is the remaining lusts and corruptions in us — either indulged through laziness and negligence, or stirred and inflamed by Satan's temptations — that block us in this duty. While these are in any state of disorder or agitation, it is vain to expect any clear sight of this glory.

The sight of Christ's glory that we are describing consists of two things: its essential nature, and its necessary accompaniment or effect. The first is a spiritual perception or understanding of it as revealed in Scripture — for the revelation of the glory of His person, office, and grace is their principal subject and the principal object of our faith. The second consists of extended, multiplied thoughts about Him, with the active exercise of faith in love, trust, delight, and longing for the full enjoyment of Him (1 Peter 1:8). If we content ourselves with mere ideas and reflections about Christ's glory as doctrinally set out for us, we will find no transforming power communicated to us by it. But when under the guidance of that spiritual light our affections cleave to Him with wholehearted commitment, our minds are filled with thoughts of Him and delight in Him, and faith is sustained in its constant exercise of trust and dependence on Him — then power will go out from Him to purify our hearts, increase our holiness, strengthen our graces, and fill us at times with joy that is inexpressible and full of glory. This is the right condition of spiritual health: when

our knowledge of the glory of God in Christ corresponds to the means of grace we enjoy, and when our affections toward Christ are proportioned to that knowledge — in its various degrees, for some have more and some have less. Where knowledge leaves affection behind, it ends in formality or atheism; where affection outruns knowledge, it sinks into the swamp of superstition, doting on images, pictures, and the like. But where things do not go to these extremes, it is better that our affections exceed our knowledge — arising from the limits of our understanding — than that our knowledge exceed our affections, arising from the corruption of our wills. In both respects, the exercise of faith is frequently interrupted and hindered by the remaining corruption in us — especially if it is not consistently held under the discipline of mortification but in some way allowed to run freely. For,

First, the vapors of that disorder will cloud and darken the understanding, so that it cannot clearly perceive any spiritual object — least of all the greatest of them. Nothing is more universally recognized, even in natural and moral matters, than that disordered passions and affections blind, darken, and deceive the mind in its operations. It is all the more so in spiritual things, where that disorder is a direct rebellion against its proper guiding light — that is, against the light and rule of grace.

There are three kinds of people who hear the gospel preached, in each of whom different obstacles to this sight arise.

First, in obstinate unbelievers there is a darkness that is an effect of Satan's power over their minds, blinding them, which makes it impossible for them to see anything of the glory of Christ. The apostle declares it: 'And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has

blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God' (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). These are not those we are speaking to.

Second, in all people there is a corrupt, natural darkness — a deprivation of the mind by nature — that prevents them from discerning the glory of Christ as they should. Hence the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness does not comprehend it (John 1:5). The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them because they are spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:14). This is why, although Christ is preached among us continually, very few perceive any glory or beauty in Him worth desiring — as the prophet laments (Isaiah 53:1-2). But I am not speaking of this natural darkness in general here. Even these people have their minds filled with prejudices against the gospel and darkened as to Christ's glory in proportion to how much corrupt lusts and desires reign in them (John 12:43). This accounts for the differences among ordinary hearers of the Word. Although no person can do anything on his own to receive Christ and behold His glory without the special aid of God's grace (Matthew 11:24; John 6:44-45), yet some may put up more resistance to believing and lay more obstacles in their own way than others — and they do so through their lusts and corruptions.

Third, there are those in whom both of these evils are healed by faith — through which the eyes of our understanding are enlightened to perceive and discern spiritual things (Ephesians 1:16-18). But this healing is accomplished in this life only in part (1 Corinthians 13:12). And in this healing — through the supply of a principle of saving light to our minds — there are many degrees,

for some have a clearer light than others and thereby a more distinct discernment of the mystery of God's wisdom and of the glory of Christ within it. But whatever our attainments, what obstructs this light — what prevents it from shining as it should, and hinders faith in its sight of Christ's glory — is the remains of corrupted nature in us when they gain any significant force. They darken the mind and weaken it in its spiritual workings. That is, where any corrupt and disordered affections — such as love of the world, anxiety about it, tendencies toward sensuality, or similar spiritual disorders — gain the upper hand, faith is weakened in its spiritual workings — especially in perceiving and beholding the glory of Christ. The mind is rendered unsteady in its seeking after Him, being continually pulled away and distracted by vain thoughts and imaginations.

People under the power of such disorders may have the same doctrinal knowledge of the person of Christ, His office, and His grace as other people — and the same conviction of its truth fixed on their minds — but when they try to look into these realities themselves, everything is dark and confused to them because of the instability and unsteadiness of their own minds.

This is the substance of what I am saying. By faith we have a sight of Christ's glory. This sight is weak and unsteady — by the nature of faith itself, and by the way it is presented to us as in a mirror — compared to what we will attain by sight. But beyond this, where corrupt lusts or disordered affections are indulged, where they are not consistently mortified, where any sin holds a troubling dominance in the mind, faith will be so weakened that it can neither see nor meditate on the glory of Christ as it should. This is why most people are so weak and inconsistent in perform-

ing this duty — and in many cases, almost entirely unacquainted with it. The light of faith in their minds being impaired, clouded, and darkened by the strength of unmortified lusts, it cannot make such discoveries of this glory as it otherwise would. And this is what makes the preaching of Christ so unprofitable to so many.

Second, the sight of Christ's glory that we have by faith will fill the mind with thoughts and meditations about Him, and the affections will thereby cleave to Him with delight. This, as noted, is inseparable from a genuine spiritual sight of His glory in its due exercise. Everyone who has it must and will have many thoughts about Him and deep affections toward Him (Philippians 3:8, 10). It is not possible, I say, to behold the glory of His person, office, and grace — with a true sense of our stake and interest in them — without our minds being greatly moved by it and filled with contemplation of it. Where this is not true of someone, it is to be feared they have never heard His voice or seen His form — whatever they profess. A genuine spiritual sight of Christ will assuredly produce love toward Him, and if anyone does not love Him, he has never truly seen Him and does not know Him at all. And no love is real that does not produce many thoughts of the one who is loved. Therefore, those who share in this grace will think deeply about what Christ is in Himself, what He has done for us, His love and condescension, and the manifestation of all the glorious perfections of the divine nature in Him — expressed in a way of infinite wisdom and goodness for the salvation of the church. Thoughts and meditations on these things will overflow in us if we are not deficient in the due exercise of faith, and deep, fervent affections toward Him will follow — or at least will be actively present to our own refreshing experience. Where these things are absent in real-

ity — though in some they may be only at a low level — people are only deceiving their own souls in any hope of benefit from Christ or the gospel.

This then is the present situation. Where there are prevailing sinful disorders or disordered affections in the mind — such as those mentioned: self-love, love of the world, anxieties and fears about it, and an excessive valuing of relationships and earthly enjoyments — they will so crowd and distract the mind with a flood of thoughts about their own objects as to leave no room for quiet meditation on Christ and His glory. And where thoughts are thus engaged, the affections — which partly prompt those thoughts and are partly led by them — will be fixed in the same direction (Colossians 3:1-2).

This is what most greatly increases the imperfection in our sight of Christ's glory by faith in this life. In proportion to the degree that corrupt, earthly, selfish, or sensual affections fill the minds and hearts of people with a flood of thoughts about whatever they are fixed on or drawn toward, faith is correspondingly blocked and weakened in this work and duty.

Since the seeds of these lusts remain in all of us — more mortified in some than in others, yet having the same effects in all minds according to the remaining strength they carry — it follows, as an effective cause, that our sight of Christ's glory by faith is in many people so weak, imperfect, and unsteady.

Third, faith in this work is also interrupted by the temptations of Satan. His primary aim wherever the gospel is preached is to blind people's eyes so that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, will not shine into them or illuminate

their minds (2 Corinthians 4:4). And in this he succeeds to an astonishing degree. However brilliantly the light of the gospel shines in the preaching of the Word, by various means and devices he blinds the minds of most so that they see nothing of the glory of Christ in it. By this he maintains his rule over the children of disobedience. With regard to the elect, God overrules him — He shines into their hearts to give them the knowledge of His glory in the face of Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 4:6). Yet Satan will not so easily give up. He endeavors by every possible means to trouble, disturb, and darken the minds even of believers, so that they cannot retain clear and distinct views of this glory. He does this in two ways.

First, with some he brings all his weapons to bear, employs all his methods of subtle cunning, and hurls his fiery darts so as to agitate, unsettle, and cast them down — so that they can hold no comforting sight of Christ or His glory. From this arise fears, doubts, disputes, uncertainties, and various forms of discouragement. They cannot grasp the love of Christ, nor sense any claim they have on it, nor feel any refreshing assurance that they are accepted by Him. If anything of this does shine and break into their minds, it quickly vanishes and disappears. In its place come fears of being rejected and cast off by Him — that He will not receive them here or hereafter — and they are filled with anxiety and dependency, under which it is impossible to have any clear sight of His glory.

I know that ignorance, atheism, and stubborn contentment in sensual sin combine to mock all these things. But it is nothing new that people outwardly professing the Christian faith, when they

find personal gain in that outward religion, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and like irrational animals corrupt themselves in what they know by instinct.

Second, with others Satan works differently. By various means he seduces them into a careless complacency in which they promise themselves peace without any diligent examination of these things. The result is that they live in a general presumption that they will be saved by Christ — though they do not know how. This is why the apostle presses the duty of self-examination so earnestly on all Christians: 'Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you — unless indeed you fail the test?' (2 Corinthians 13:5). The standard for self-judgment he sets is whether Christ is in us or not; and He cannot be in us unless He is received by that faith through which we behold His glory. For by faith we receive Him, and by faith He dwells in our hearts (John 1:12; Ephesians 3:17).

This is Satan's most successful method in the world. Multitudes, led astray by him, live in deep complacency with complete neglect of these things. Complacency is acknowledged as a destructive evil to the souls of people — but it is thought to consist only in impenitence for great and open sins. But to be neglectful of seeking an experience of the power and grace of the gospel in one's own soul, while professing religion, is no less destructive and ruinous than impenitence in any ongoing pattern of sin.

These and similar obstructions to faith in its workings — added to faith's own imperfections — are another reason why our sight of Christ's glory in this world is so weak and unsteady, so that for the

most part it only briefly affects our minds and does not transform them into His likeness as fully as it otherwise would.

It is time now to consider the sight of Christ's glory that we will have in heaven, compared with what we have here below. That heavenly sight is steady, stable, and always the same — without interruption or distraction. This is evident both in the causes and means of it, and in our perfect deliverance from everything that might obstruct or hinder it.

First, we may consider the state of our minds in glory. The faculties of our souls will be made perfect there (Hebrews 12 — the spirits of righteous people made perfect): first, freed from all the weight of the flesh and its influence and restraint on their powers; and second, perfectly purified from all tendencies toward instability and changeability, from all inclinations toward the sensual and fleshly, and from all schemes of self-preservation or self-advancement — being wholly transformed into the image of God in spirituality and holiness. And including the state of our bodies after the resurrection: even they, in all their powers and senses, will be made entirely responsive to the most spiritual workings of our minds in their highest elevation by the light of glory. By this we will be enabled and fitted to abide eternally in the contemplation of Christ's glory with joy and satisfaction. The understanding will always be fulfilled in the vision of God, and the affections will cleave to Him inseparably — and this is blessedness.

The very essential faculties of our souls — in the mode of operation that their union with our bodies confines them to — are not capable of comprehending and abiding constantly in the contemplation of this glory. So though our present sight of it is dim and imperfect, and the way it is presented to us is obscure, yet from

sheer weakness of mind we are at times forced to turn away from even what little we do perceive — as we turn our bodily eyes from the rays of the sun when it shines at full brightness. But in the perfect state, our minds will be able to behold and delight in this glory constantly, with eternal satisfaction.

'As for me,' says David, 'I shall behold Your face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake' (Psalm 17:15). It is Christ alone who is the likeness and image of God. When we awake in the other world with our minds purified and restored, the beholding of Him will be endlessly satisfying. There will be no satiety, no weariness, no reluctance — but the mind, made perfect in all its faculties, powers, and workings with respect to its highest end — which is the enjoyment of God — will be satisfied in beholding Him forevermore. And where there is perfect satisfaction without satiety, there is blessedness forever. So the Holy Spirit affirms of the four living creatures in the Revelation: they do not rest day and night, saying 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty' (Revelation 4:8). They are continually engaged in wonder and praise of God in Christ, without weariness or interruption. In this we will be made like the angels.

Second, as our minds in their essential powers and faculties will be enabled to take in and rest in this glory of Christ, so the means or instrument for beholding it is far more excellent than faith — and in its kind absolutely perfect, as has been partly noted before. This means is vision — sight itself. Here we walk by faith; there by sight. And this sight is not an external aid like a lens helping weak eyes to see things at a distance — it is an internal power, an act of the inner capacity of our minds with which they are endowed in the glorified state. By it we will be able to see Him face to

face, to see Him as He is, in a direct grasping of His glory — for this power of sight will be given to us for this very purpose: to enable us to do so. To this sight the whole glory of Christ is clear, open, and evident — which will give us eternal rest in Him. Therefore our sight of the glory of Christ will be unchanging and always the same.

Second, the Lord Christ will never, on any occasion, for even a single moment, withdraw Himself from us or eclipse the manifestation of Himself to our sight. He does this sometimes in this life, and it is needful for us that He does. But in heaven, 'we will always be with the Lord' (1 Thessalonians 4:17) — without end, without interruption. This is the center of good and evil as to the different future states of people. They will both last forever. Eternity is what makes one state absolutely good and the other absolutely evil. To be in hell under the wrath of God is in itself the greatest punishing evil; but to be there forever, without any relief from misery or end of time, is what makes it the ultimate evil for those in that condition. So too eternity is the life of future blessedness. We will always be with the Lord — without limit of time, without interruption of enjoyment.

There are no seasons of change in the heavenly state. The New Jerusalem has no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple (Revelation 21:22-24). There is no need of appointed means of worship or ordinances of divine service, for we will need neither growth in grace nor encouragement to its exercise. The constant, direct, unbroken enjoyment of God and the Lamb supplies all. And it has no need of the sun or moon to shine in it, for the glory of God gives it light and the Lamb is its lamp. The light of the sun is excellent — yet it has its seasons; after shin-

ing in its greatest brightness it gives way to night and darkness. So the moon gives welcome light in the night — but it too has its seasons. Such is the light we have of the glory of God and the Lamb in this world — sometimes like the light of the sun, which under the gospel is sevenfold compared to the law (Isaiah 30:26); sometimes like the light of the moon, giving relief in the night of temptations and trials. But it is not constant; we move through cycles of light and darkness, of seeing Christ and losing sight of Him. But in heaven, the unceasing presence of Christ with His saints makes it always one glorious noon of light and glory.

Third, this heavenly vision is not in the least susceptible to weakening from internal defects, nor to any assault from temptation, as the sight of faith is in this life. No doubts or fears, no disturbing darts or intrusions will have any place there. No habit, quality, inclination, or disposition will remain in our souls except what leads us eternally to the contemplation of Christ's glory with delight and satisfaction. Nor will there be any defect in the gracious powers of our souls as to their unceasing exercise. And as for all other opposing enemies, we will live in perpetual triumph over them (1 Corinthians 15:55-57). The mouth of iniquity will be stopped forever, and the voice of the accuser will be heard no more.

The vision of Christ's glory that we will have in heaven is therefore serene — always the same, always new, and unailing — in which nothing can disturb the mind in its most perfect workings in a life of blessedness. And when all the faculties of the soul can, without any internal weakness or external hindrance, exercise their most perfect operations on the most perfect object — there lies all the blessedness of which our nature is capable.

Therefore, whenever in this life we attain any comforting and refreshing sight of the glory of Christ through the exercise of faith in its revelation — with a sense of our interest in Him — we cannot help but long for and desire to come to this more perfect, abiding, and unchanging sight of Him.

CHAP. XIV. OTHER DIFFERENCES
BETWEEN OUR BEHOLDING THE
GLORY OF CHRIST BY FAITH IN THIS
WORLD, AND BY SIGHT IN HEAVEN.



There are two more differences between our present beholding of Christ's glory by faith and the heavenly vision of Him that awaits us. These will only be named here, and then we will bring this discussion to a close.

First, in our present sight of Christ's glory by faith, we gather things one by one — in parts and portions from Scripture — and by comparing them together in our minds they become the object of our present sight, which is our spiritual grasp of the things themselves. We have no presentation of Christ's glory through a vision or radiant appearance of His person, as Isaiah had long ago (Isaiah 6:1-4) or as John had in the Revelation (Revelation 1:13-16). We do not need it; it would bring us no benefit. For the assurance of our faith, we have the prophetic word — which is more useful to us than even a voice from heaven (2 Peter 1:17-19). Of those who did receive such visions — though they were greatly useful to the church — yet in their own experience, one of them cried out, 'Woe

is me, for I am ruined!' and the other fell at His feet as though dead. We are not able in this life to bear such glorious representations of Him for our own growth.

And just as we have no such external presentations of His glory in visions, so we have no new revelations of Him through immediate inspiration. We can see nothing of it, know nothing of it, except what Scripture sets before us — and as Scripture sets it before us. Nor does Scripture in any one place give a complete presentation of the glory of Christ with all that belongs to it — nor could it — nor could any such representation be made in a form suited to our capacity on this side of heaven. If all the light of the heavenly bodies had been gathered into one, it would have destroyed rather than helped our sight; but distributed by divine wisdom into sun, moon, and stars — each giving out its proper measure — it is fitted to declare the glory of God and illuminate the world. In the same way, if the entire revelation of Christ's glory and everything belonging to it had been compressed into one continuous statement, it would have overwhelmed rather than enlightened our minds. So God has distributed its light across the whole expanse of the Old and New Testament, from which it communicates itself in various portions and degrees for the proper use of the church. In one place we have a description of His person and its glory — sometimes in plain, direct language and sometimes in richly varied images conveying a heavenly sense of things to the minds of believers; in other places, of His love and condescension in His office, and His glory in it. His humiliation, exaltation, and power are similarly presented across various passages. And as one star differs from another in glory, so God represented the glory of Christ one way in types and shadows under the Old Testament, and in another way in the plain declara-

tion of the New. Brilliant testimonies on all these themes are planted throughout Scripture, which we may gather as choice flowers in the paradise of God — the object of our faith and sight.

As the bride in the Song of Solomon considered each part of Christ's person and grace separately — His head, His hair, His face, His hands, His bearing — and concluded that He is altogether lovely (Song of Solomon 5:10-16), so we should search the Scripture as the prophets did, diligently inquiring into the grace and glory of Christ revealed there (1 Peter 1:11-12). This seeing of Christ in parts and portions is one reason why we see Him here only in part.

Those who would make images of Christ by carving, painting, or gilding feed on ashes; they trust in something empty and their deceived hearts have led them astray. But Christ is set forth plainly — crucified before us — in the Scripture (Galatians 3:1). The wisdom of faith gathers these scattered descriptions and representations and brings them together into a single view for its contemplation of Him. But in heaven the whole glory of Christ will be set before us at once. One act of the light of glory will take it all in. We can now long for it, breathe after it, and receive foretastes of it — but there, the whole soul will cleave eternally to the whole Christ.

In the vision we will have above, the whole glory of Christ will be set before us at once and always, and we will be enabled in a single act of the light of glory to take it all in. Here we are at a loss; our minds and understandings fail us in contemplating it. We cannot yet conceive what the beauty and glory of this complete sight of Christ will be. To have at once all the glory of what He is — what He was in His outward state and condition, what He did and suffered, what He has been exalted to, His love and condescension,

His mystical union with the church and His communication of Himself to it, the gathering of all things together in Him — and the glory of God the Father in His wisdom, righteousness, grace, love, goodness, and power shining forth eternally in Him in all that He is, has done, and does — all presented to us in a single view, all comprehended at once: this is what we cannot presently conceive. We can long for it, breathe after it, and have some foretastes of that state and season when our whole souls — in all their powers and faculties — will constantly, inseparably, and eternally cleave in love to the whole Christ in the sight of the glory of His person and grace, until they are refreshed and filled to overflowing in the rivers of pleasure that flow above forever. Thus we must speak of the things we admire, adore, love, long for, and have some foretastes of in inexpressible sweetness — yet cannot fully comprehend.

These are a few of the things from which the difference arises between the sight we have here of Christ's glory and that which is reserved for heaven — namely, differences that come from the contrast between the means of the two views: faith and sight.

There are also differences in the effects of the two visions. A few examples of these will be noted, and then this discussion will be closed.

The first difference in effects is this: the vision in heaven is perfectly and completely transforming. It changes us wholly into the image of Christ. 'When He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is' (1 John 3:2). But there are many things that lead toward this transformation, and many stages in it, that we ought to attend to in our present journey.

First, upon its departure from the body, the soul is immediately freed from all the weakness, inability, darkness, and fears that had been pressed into it from the flesh. The image of the fallen first Adam is abolished. It is freed even from the sinless frailties of its original constitution. This freedom comes with death as a step toward the blessed state; the first entry of mortality into immortality is a step toward glory. This freedom does not come from nature itself but from sanctification through the death of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:54-55). The souls of the departed are freed from all those marks of sin and frailty that had been their burden.

It is not so with wicked people — for them death is a curse, and in the disembodied state their souls are troubled with restless passions imprinted by corrupt fleshly desires. But the spirits of the righteous, being freed in this way, have all their faculties and all their graces — faith, love, and delight — immediately released to exercise themselves on God in Christ. They are carried with a full and unhindered current toward God. And in the resurrection, the body is purified, sanctified, and glorified to serve as a fitting instrument for the soul's highest spiritual operations. There are thus three things preparatory to the full glory: the departure from the body, the resurrection of the body, and the infusion of the light of glory into the mind.

For wicked people it is not so — death is to them a curse, and the curse is the means of bringing all evil, not relief from any. Whatever warmth and refreshment they have received through the influences of the flesh, they will be stripped of. In the disembodied state, their souls are endlessly troubled by the restless passions that their corrupt, fleshly desires have impressed on their minds. Those who look for relief in death look in vain. If there is anything

remaining of present good and usefulness to them, they will be deprived of it. And the temporary release from bodily pain will not begin to compare with the flood of evils that death will unleash upon them.

Second, the spirits of the righteous — freed by death from the drag of flesh not yet refined — have all the faculties of their souls and all the graces within them — faith, love, and delight — immediately set free, enabled to exercise themselves constantly on God in Christ. They were created for this very end; our nature was endowed with these faculties so that we might cleave to God and come to the enjoyment of Him. Now fully freed from all the weakness, perversity, and disability to this end — with all their effects brought in by the fall — they move with a full current toward God, cleaving to Him in the most intense embrace. All their operations toward God will be natural — carried out with ease, joy, delight, and satisfaction. We do not yet know the excellence of the workings of our souls in divine things when unburdened of the present weight of the flesh. This is a second step toward the full completion of glory.

In the resurrection of the body — upon its full redemption — it will be so purified, sanctified, and glorified as to place no obstacle before the soul in its operations, but to be a blessed instrument for its highest and most spiritual workings. The body will never again be a trouble and burden to the soul, but a helper in its operations and a sharer in its blessedness. Our eyes were made to see our Redeemer, and our other senses to receive impressions from Him according to their capacity. As the bodies of the wicked will be re-

stored to them to increase and complete their misery in suffering, so the bodies of the righteous will be restored to them to heighten and complete their blessedness.

Third, these things are preparatory to glory. The full communication of it comes through the infusion of a new heavenly light into the mind, enabling us to see the Lord Christ as He is. The soul will not be brought into the immediate presence of Christ without a new power to behold Him and the direct representation of His glory. Faith in the manner it now operates in this life — while we are absent from Christ — ceases. This light of glory takes its place, fitted for that state and all its purposes, as faith is fitted for the present state.

Fourth, in the first operation of this light of glory, believers will behold the glory of Christ — and the glory of God in Him — in such a way that they will be immediately and completely changed into His likeness. They will be as He is when they see Him as He is. There is no partial growth in glory as to its substance, though there may be as to its measure and degree. Additions may be made outwardly to what is first received — as by the resurrection of the body — but the inward light of glory and its transforming power is not capable of degrees, though new revelations may be made to it continually throughout eternity. For the infinite fountain of life, light, and goodness can never be fathomed, much less exhausted. What God said at the entrance of sin in contempt — 'Behold, the man has become like one of us' — taunting him with what he had foolishly attempted — upon the completion of His work of grace He says in love and infinite goodness: Man has become like one of us, in the perfect restoration of His image in him. This is the first effect of the light of glory.

Faith also, in beholding the glory of Christ in this life, carries a transforming power, as the apostle expressly states (2 Corinthians 3:18). It is the principle from which, and the instrument by which, all spiritual change is worked in us in this life — but its work is imperfect: first because it is gradual, and second because it is partial.

First, as to its manner of operation, it is gradual and does not transform us into the image of Christ all at once. In fact, the degrees of its progress are for the most part imperceptible to us. It takes much spiritual wisdom and careful observation to gain any experience of them in our own souls. The inner man is renewed day by day while we fix our attention on these invisible things (2 Corinthians 4:16-18) — but how? Even as the outer man decays with age — by imperceptible degrees and gradual changes. Such is the transformation that faith works in its present sight of the glory of Christ. And our experience of its transforming power here gives us evidence that it is real — that we are genuinely beholding Him. No one can have the slightest ground for assurance that he has seen Christ and His glory by faith without some effect of it in changing him into Christ's likeness. For just as when the woman in the gospel touched His garment, power went out from Him to heal her — so upon this sight of faith, an influence of transforming power flows from Christ to the soul.

Second, as to its result, it is only partial. It does not bring the work to perfection. The change it produces is real and glorious — or as the apostle says, it is from glory to glory, a progress of glorious grace — but absolute perfection is reserved for the heavenly vision. Just as in divine worship, perfection was not achieved by the law — the law did many things preparatory to the full revelation of God's will, but it made nothing perfect — so absolute perfection in

holiness and the restoration of God's image is not achieved through the gospel or through faith, however many stages toward it the gospel carries us, as the apostle fully declares (Philippians 3:10-14).

Second, the heavenly vision is beatific — as it is commonly called — and not wrongly so. It gives perfect rest and blessedness to those in whom it dwells. This may be briefly explained in the following observations.

First, there are continual operations of God in Christ in the souls of the glorified, and continual communications from Him to them. All creatures must eternally live — even in heaven — in dependence on Him who is the eternal fountain of being, life, goodness, and blessedness to all. Just as we cannot exist for a single moment — in body or soul, inwardly or outwardly — without the constant working of divine power in and toward us, so in the glorified state our whole existence will depend eternally on divine power and goodness communicating themselves to us for all the ends of our blessed life in heaven.

Second, we cannot comprehend the way and manner of these communications. We cannot fully understand even the nature and manner of His spiritual communications to us in this present life. We know these things by their signs, their outward means, and primarily by the effects they produce in the real change of our natures. But in themselves we see very little of them. The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it is coming from or where it is going — so is everyone who is born of the Spirit (John 3:8). All God's real operations in heaven and on earth are incomprehensible, being acts of infinite power that we cannot trace to their depth.

Third, all communications from the divine being and infinite fullness in heaven to glorified saints are in and through Christ Jesus, who will forever be the means of communication between God and the church — even in glory. All things being gathered into one head in Him — things in heaven and things on earth — that head being in immediate dependence on God, this order will never be dissolved (Ephesians 1:10-11; 1 Corinthians 3:23). Our continuation in a state of blessedness and glory depends entirely on these communications from God through Christ. We will be no more self-sufficient in glory than we are in nature or grace.

Fourth, the way on our part by which we will receive these communications from God through Christ — which are the eternal springs of life, peace, joy, and blessedness — is this very vision of which we speak. Scripture expressly assigns it to this end; and since it consists of the perfect operation of our minds and souls — in a perfect state, upon the most perfect object — it is the only means of our blessedness. This is the true reason why there is no satiety or weariness in heaven in the eternal contemplation of the same glory. Not only is the object of our sight absolutely infinite — which can never be fully explored and is perpetually new to a finite understanding — but our blessedness itself, consisting in continual fresh communications from the infinite fullness of the divine nature flowing to us through vision, is always new and will always be so to eternity. In this all the saints of God will drink from the rivers of pleasure at His right hand, be satisfied with His likeness, and refresh themselves in the eternal springs of life, light, and joy forevermore.

This effect the sight we have by faith of Christ's glory in this world does not produce. It is sanctifying, not glorifying. The best of saints in this life are far from a perfect or glorified state — not only because of the outward evils they are exposed to in their persons, but also because of the weakness and imperfection of their inward state of grace. Yet we may note some things to the honor of faith in those who have received it.

First, in its due exercise toward Christ, faith will give to the souls of believers some prior participation of future glory, producing in them dispositions toward it and a readiness to enjoy it.

Second, there is no glory, no peace, no joy, no satisfaction in this world that compares with what we receive through that weak and imperfect sight of Christ's glory which we have by faith. Indeed, all the joys of the world are nothing in comparison with what we receive through it.

Third, it is sufficient to give us such a perception — such a fore-taste of future blessedness in the enjoyment of Christ — as will continually stir us up to breathe and long after it. But it is not beatific.

Other differences of a similar kind between our present sight of Christ's glory by faith and the heavenly vision reserved for us could be expanded on at length, but I will go no further. There is nothing left for us to do in these meditations but to close them, now and always, with the deepest humility — out of a sense of our unworthiness and our inability to take these things in — with wonder at that excellent glory which we cannot fully comprehend, and with earnest longing for the time when we will see Him as He is, be with Him always, and know Him even as we are known.

The End.

THANKS FOR READING



If you spotted a typo or have feedback, the email is **sam@goodsoilapps.com** — or use the in-app feedback form in *Christian Reader*.