

Jim's Notes
October 17, 2007
The Letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians
Ephesians 3:14-21

Ephesians 3:14:

Caius Marius Victorinus (AD 300 – aft. 362):

By kneeling we demonstrate the full form of prayer and petition. So we bend our knees. We ought not merely to incline our minds to prayer but also our bodies. We do well to lower our bodies lest we create an impression of elevation or an appearance of pride.

All good working and doing occur through Christ. The spirit of Christ is that of a serving ministry. He is himself the ministry of God toward us. God does everything through him, Therefore he says, "I bend my knees to the Father." (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.3.14)

Ephesians 3:15:

Theodoret (AD 392 – 457):

God is fully and truly Father; for he was nor first a father and later became son but is always Father and Father by nature. The other fathers, whether bodily or spiritual, have received this name from above. . . . Paul is saying here that he is petitioning the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is truly Father. He has his fatherhood not by receiving from another but himself has conferred fathering upon others. (Epistle to the Ephesians 3.14-15)

St. Jerome (AD 347 – 420):

Before any discussion we must note that he did not say "from whom every fatherhood in heaven and earth is born" but from whom every fatherhood in heaven and earth is named. For it is one thing to merit the name of father, another to have a natural relation [as eternal Father to all creatures] . . . Think by this analogy: As God exists, God allows the term existence to be applied to creatures as well. So we say that creatures exist and subsist, nor so as to imply that they exist in and of themselves [as God exists] but as a derived existence enabled by God. . . . According to this same argument, God allows the term fatherhood to be given to creatures. So by analogy to his fathering we can understand creaturely fathering. . . . Similarly, as the only good One (see Mark 10:18) he makes others good. As the only immortal One God has bestowed immortality on others. As the only true One (see Romans 3:4) he imparts the name of truth, So also the Father alone, being Creator of all and the cause of the subsistence of all things, makes it possible for other creatures to be called fathers. (Epistle to the Ephesians 2.3.14)

We who are not of Abraham's race are called Abraham's children if we possess his faith. Similarly, I think that the angels and other invisible powers have something like

princes of their own in heaven whom they rejoice to call fathers. . . . Our term fatherhood may now be used in the light of the awareness that God is Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the only begotten Son is so not by adoption but by nature. It is by adoption that creatures also are allowed to participate in fathering and hence are given the name of fathers. And remember that whatever we say of the Father and Son we say also of the Holy Spirit. (Epistle to the Ephesians 2.3)

Ephesians 3:16:

Caius Marius Victorinus (AD 300 – aft. 362):

What are these “riches of the glory of God?” They are being strengthened with might through his Spirit, so that they may be strong against the sinful nature, the desires of the flesh and the dreadful powers of this world, This strengthening happens through the Spirit of God. But how are persons strengthened and made firm through the Spirit of God? By “Christ’s dwelling in the inner man,” he says. For when Christ begins to dwell in the inner citadel of the soul, persons are made strong by might through the Spirit. In this way everything of a hostile nature is evicted. (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.3.16-17)

Ephesians 3:17:

Ambrosiaster [pseudo-Ambrose] (about A.D. 370):

Paul prays that believers be made more steadfast, not doubting but believing increasingly that Christ dwells in them even when they do not see him with their physical eyes. He prays that the Spirit which has been given them might infuse into them a certainty that Christ lives and is the Son of God, so that he lives by faith in their hearts. Thus when we have faith in him we behold him in our hearts. The benefit of this is that we grow more sure of his blessing. He does not desert us. He is always present through that faith in him which he guards in us, The gift of the Spirit, which is also the gift of God the Father, is given to us that he may keep us safe, to his glory. (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.3.18-19)

Ephesians 3:18a:

Caius Marius Victorinus (AD 300 – aft. 362):

Since he has taught that three things tend toward maturity in Christ, faith, understanding and love, he here brings them all into a brief compass. He is now praying that God will bestow all these gifts upon the Ephesians. Note the sequence he has followed: He spoke first of faith, “that you may have Christ dwelling in the inner man in your hearts through faith.” Now he speaks of understanding by saying, “so that you may comprehend with all the saints the breadth, length and depth.” Again he adds with regard to love, “to know the love that surpasses knowledge.” (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.3.18-19)

Ephesians 3:18b:

Caius Marius Victorinus (AD 300 – aft. 362):

God is through all and in all, and is all things and the source of all, through whom all things come and over all. In this aspect the task of understanding is to note and know what is “the breadth, the length, the height and the depth” of divine grace. How all these exist together or may be understood to exist in God and according to these aspects requires another, higher comprehension . . . Hence he prays finally that the Ephesians may understand them all together. And so that they will not despair through their inability to comprehend them together, he adds: “so that you may be able to comprehend with all the saints.” Therefore the saints comprehend these things together and can expound them. (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.3.18-19)

Ambrosiaster [pseudo-Ambrose] (about A.D. 370):

What is meant when Paul speaks of “length and breadth and depth and height”? Think of a sphere. The length is the same as the breadth and the height the same as the depth. So too all is proportional within the immeasurable infinity of God. A sphere is enclosed in a definite manner. God, being unenclosed, not only fills all things but exceeds all things. God is not confined but has everything within himself, so that he is the only one to be reckoned infinite. We cannot sufficiently thank him for the fact that, being so great, he deigned through Christ to visit human beings when they were subject to death and sin. (Epistle to the Ephesians 3.18.2)

St. Jerome (AD 347 – 420):

Let us think first about physical “breadth and length, depth and height” in order that we may be able to pass through these physical dimensions to their spiritual dimensions. For the sake of argument, let the physical length be that of heaven and earth, that is, of the whole world, from east to west. Let the breadth be from south to north. Let the depth be from the abyss and the infernal regions. Let the height be to all that is elevated above the heavens. But they say that the earth is round and rotates as a sphere, Roundness has no breadth and length, height and depth, but is proportional in all dimensions. Hence we are necessarily forced to understand spiritual by “height” the angels and forces above and by “depth” those powers below and what is beneath them. By “length” and “breadth” we speak spiritually of that which occupies the middle place between those above and those below. The consequence is that one draws near as a neighbor either to those things above or to those below. Whatever begins to advance one's path toward better things so as to rise to the heavenly height, that is what Paul is calling length. Whatever brings one to the lower things as one lapses toward vice he is calling “breadth.”

St. Gregory of Nyssa (AD 335-394):

The divine mind of the apostle did not imagine this fourfold figure of the cross to no purpose. He knew that this figure, which is divided into four segments from the common center, represents the power and providence of the one displayed upon it. This dimensionality runs through all things. For this reason he calls each of four projections by its own name. By the height he means what is above, by the depth the underworld,

by the length and breadth the intermediate domain which is under the control of his all-governing power. Hence the worship of the cross is viewed in relation to the fourfold figure of the cross. The heavenly order is symbolically paying its devotion to the Lord in the upper part, the cosmic order in the middle infernal order in the lower

St. Gregory of Elvira (d. AD 392):

The height is the measure of the majesty of the Lord . . . The length is the passion of the Lord's cross, by which believers are resealed. The breadth is seen in Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit is coming down upon all believers. (On the Ark of Noah 32)

Ephesians 3:19a:

Caius Marius Victorinus (AD 300 – aft. 362):

The one who knows the love that “passes all understanding” will better express the full measure of love for Christ. Paul prays that they may first know [the love of Christ] rather than do something. Doing comes from this knowing. (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.3.18-19)

Ambrosiaster [pseudo-Ambrose] (about A.D. 370):

Can any words adequately describe this mystery, that God is born as a man? That God dies for the human race the master for his servants, the Creator for his creation, the righteous for the unrighteous? . . . In the greatness of his majesty he became lowly to do on our behalf what was worthy of his love, so that we, insofar as we can, should join his household. (Epistle to the Ephesians 3.19.1-3)

Ephesians 3:19b:

Ambrosiaster [pseudo-Ambrose] (about A.D. 370):

Faith is never directed solely to the Father or solely to the Son (but to Father and Son in their relationship). Hence he adds “that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” Thus by confessing Christ and giving thanks to him in the same glorious terms, the same honor is reserved for the Son as for the Father. All things that come from God the Father have been restored through his Son. By this the faithful confess the divine perfection in its wholeness. (Epistle to the Ephesians 3.19.4)

Ephesians 3:20:

Caius Marius Victorinus (AD 300 – aft. 362):

He says in effect: "I pray that you will do these things and understand these things. If, however, anyone is able to do more and more abundantly and go beyond these things, that is, beyond what I ask or understand, praise be to him. Yet whoever does more abundantly will receive this ability through the same power that works within us all, namely, through the power of God and Christ our Lord." (Ephesians 1.3.20-21)

Ambrosiaster [pseudo-Ambrose] (about A.D. 370):

He is praying to God the Father that we might know better what is expedient for us, and what had better not be asked for, and when something should be given, and how much of it and exactly what we really need. He prays that God himself might fittingly govern those who believe in him by his own providence and power. (Epistle to the Ephesians 3.21)

Ephesians 3:21:

St. Jerome (AD 347 – 420):

This glory does not extend over the present time only, as if terminating in the age to come. Rather it extends throughout all generations and all ages. It is eternally ineffable. It abides, develops and increases. (Epistle to the Ephesians 2.3.20-21)

Theodoret (AD 392 – 457):

God is to be worshiped both in the present life and in the next. Having thus revealed God's goodness to them, he proceeds to urge them on to the particular virtues. (Epistle to the Ephesians 3.20-21)

The Catholic Encyclopedia:

Glory

This word has many shades of meaning which lexicographers are somewhat puzzled to differentiate sharply. As our interest in it here centres around its ethical and religious significance, we shall treat it only with reference to the ideas attached to it in Holy Scripture and theology.

I. SCRIPTURE

In the English version of the Bible the word Glory, one of the commonest in the Scripture, is used to translate several Hebrew terms in the Old Testament, and the Greek doxa in the New Testament. Sometimes the Catholic versions employ brightness, where others use glory. When this occurs, the original signifies, as it frequently does elsewhere, a physical, visible phenomenon. This meaning is found for instance in Ex., xxiv, 16: "And the glory of the Lord dwelt upon Sinai"; in Luke, ii, 9, and in the account of the Transfiguration on Mount Thabor. In very many places the term is employed to signify the witness which the created universe bears to the nature of its Creator, as an effect reveals the character of its cause. Frequently in the New Testament it signifies a manifestation of the Divine Majesty, truth, goodness or some other attribute through His incarnate Son, as, for instance, in John, I, 14: "(and we saw his glory, the glory as it were of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth"; Luke, ii, 32, "A light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel"; and throughout the prayer of Christ for his disciples, John 17. Here too, as elsewhere, we find the idea that

the perception of this manifested truth works towards a union of man with God. In other passages glory is equivalent to praise rendered to God in acknowledgment of His majesty and perfections manifested objectively in the world, or through supernatural revelation: "Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory, and honour, and power: because thou hast created all things", Apoc., iv, 11: "Give glory to the Lord, and call upon his name", Ps. Civ, 1 (cf. Ps. Cv, I).

The term is used also to mean judgment on personal worth, in which sense the Greek *doxa* reflects the signification of the cognate verb *dokeo*: "How can you believe, who receive glory one from another: and the glory which is from God alone, you do not seek?" John, v, 44; and xii, 43: "For they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God". Lastly, glory is the name given to the blessedness of the future life in which the soul is united to God: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come", Rom., viii, 18. "Because the creature also itself shall be delivered from the servitude of corruption, into the liberty of the glory of the children of God", ib., 21. The texts cited above are representative of multitudes similar in tenor, scattered throughout the sacred writings.

II. THEOLOGICAL

The radical concept present under various modifications in all the above expressions is rendered by St. Augustine as *clara notitia cum laude*, "brilliant celebrity with praise". The philosopher and theologian have accepted this definition as the centre around which they correlate their doctrine regarding glory, divine and human.

1. Divine Glory

The Eternal God has by an act of His will created, that is, has brought into being from nothingness, all things that are. Infinite Intelligence, He could not act aimlessly; He had an objective for His action: He created with a purpose; He destined His creatures to some end. That end was, could be, no other than Himself; for nothing existed but Himself, nothing but Himself could be an end worthy of His action. "I am Alpha and Omega (Scripture), the beginning and the end, saith the Lord God" (Revelation 1:8); "The Lord hath made all things for himself" (Proverbs 16:4). Did He, then, create in order that from His creatures He might derive some benefit? That, for example, as some present-day theories pretend, through the evolution of things toward a higher perfection the sum of His Being might be enlarged or perfected? Or that man by co-operating with Him might aid Him in the elimination of evil which He by Himself is unable to cast out? No; such conceits are incompatible with the true concept of God. Infinite, He possesses the plenitude of Being and Perfection; He needs nothing, and can receive no complementary increment or superfluous accession of excellence from without. Omnipotent, He stands in need of no assistance to carry His will into execution.

But from His infinity He can and does give; and from His fullness have we all received. All things are, only because they have received of Him; and the measure of His giving constitutes the limitations of their being. Contemplating the boundless ocean of His reality, He perceives it as imitable *ad extra*, as an inexhaustible fund of exemplar ideas which may, if He so wills, be reproduced in an order of finite existence distinct from, yet

dependent on His own, deriving their dower of actuality from His infinite fullness which in imparting sustains no diminution. He spoke and they were made. Everything which His fiat has called into existence is a copy — finite indeed and very imperfect, yet true as far as it goes — of some aspect of His infinite perfection. Each reflects in fixed limitation something of His nature and attributes. The heavens show forth His power; earth's oceans are

. . . the glorious mirror where the Almighty's form Glasses itself in tempests. . .
The summer flower, though only to itself it live and die, is a silent witness before Him of His power, goodness, truth, and unity; and the harmonious order which binds all the innumerable parts of creation into one cosmic whole is another reflection of His oneness and His wisdom. Yet, as each part of creation is finite, so too is the totality; and therefore its capacity to reflect the Divine Prototype must result in an infinitely inadequate representation of the Great Exemplar. Nevertheless, the unimaginable variety of existing things conveys a vague hint of that Infinite which must ever defy any complete expression external to Itself. Now this objective revelation of the Creator in terms of the existences of things is the glory of God. This doctrine is authoritatively formulated by the Council of the Vatican: "If any one shall say that the world was not created for the glory of God, let him be anathema" (Sess. III, C. I, can. 5).

This objective manifestation of the Divine nature constitutes the Universe — the book, one might say, in which God has recorded His greatness and majesty. As the mirror of the telescope presents an image of the star that shines and wheels in the immeasurably remote depths of space, so does this world reflect in its own fashion the nature of its Cause between Whom and it lies the gulf that separates the finite from the Infinite. The telescope, however, knows not of the image which its surface bears; the eye and mind of the astronomer must intervene in order that the significance of the shadow and its relation to the substance may be grasped. To praise, in the exact sense of the term, demands not alone that worth be manifest, but also that there be a mind to acknowledge. The unconscious testimony of the universe to its Creator is rather potential than actual glory. Hence, this glory which it renders to Him is called in theological phrase *gloria materialis*, to distinguish it from the formal glory rendered to God by His intelligent creatures. They can read the writing in the book of creation, understand its story, accept its lessons, and reverently praise the Majesty which it reveals. This praise involves not merely intellectual perception, but also the practical acknowledgment by heart and will which issues in obedience and loving service. The endowment of intelligence with all that it implies — spirituality and free-will — renders man a higher and nobler image of the Creator than is any other being of this visible world. The gift of intellect also imposes on man the duty of returning to God that formal glory of which we have just spoken. The more perfectly he discharges this obligation, the more does he develop and perfect that initial resemblance to God which exists in his soul, and by the fulfilment of this duty serves the end for which he, like all else, has been created.

The natural revelation which God has vouchsafed of Himself through the world interpreted by reason has been supplemented by a higher supernatural manifestation which has culminated in the Incarnation of the Godhead in Jesus Christ: "and we saw his glory, the glory as it were of the Father, full of grace and truth". Similarly the natural resemblance to God and the relation of our being to His, as established by creation, are supplemented and carried into a higher order by His communication of sanctifying grace. To know God through the medium of this supernaturally revealed truth, to serve Him in love springing from this grace is to be "Filled with the fruit of justice, through Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God" (Phil., I, 11). In manifesting the glory of God by the development of their proper powers and capacities, inanimate creatures reach that perfection or fulness of existence which God has prescribed for them. Likewise man achieves his perfection or subjective end by giving glory to God in the comprehensive sense above indicated. He attains the consummation of his perfection not in this life, but in the life to come. That perfection shall consist in a direct, immediate, intuitive perception of God; "We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face. Now I know in part; but then I shall know even as I am known" (1 Corinthians 13:12). In this transcendent knowledge the soul shall become, in a higher measure than that which obtains by virtue of creation alone, a participant and therefore an image of the Divine nature; so "we shall be like to him: because we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). So that objectively and actively the life in heaven shall be an unending ineffable manifestation and acknowledgment of the Divine majesty and perfections. Thus we understand the Scriptural language in which the future life of the blessed is described as a state in which "we all beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

The Catholic doctrine on this subject is defined by the Council of Florence (see Denzinger, 588). (See CREATION; GOOD.)

The word 'glory' is all over the place

May 12, 2002, Feast of the Ascension of the Lord

By Bishop Robert Morneau

Some words in our vocabulary are straightforward and clear: words such as sauerkraut, football or snow. These words name things and we know their reference. But other words are fuzzy, complex, multi-leveled in their meaning.

One of the "tough" words that challenges our understanding is "glory." Just what is it? Can it be seen or touched? How is it produced? Can you define it in 25 words or less? In our readings today the word "glory" is all over the place. We do well to ponder this biblical reality.

Jesus: "I have given you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do." Our Lord connects glory to his vocation, to his mission of salvation. When that work is

achieved, the setting free of people from sin and death, the Father is glorified as is the Son.

Peter: "Rejoice, insofar as you share Christ's sufferings. When his glory is revealed you will rejoice exultantly." Glory is closely linked to suffering, to the love that Jesus manifested in his dying on the cross.

The assembly: "Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth." Here is one of our Easter songs containing the "tough" word. Glory here is associated with praise and honor, our turning to a God who is creator, redeemer, and sanctifier.

Given the word of God and our liturgical hymn, what do our theologians say regarding the mysterious word "glory?"

Card. Martini of Milan: "The glory of which Scripture speaks repeatedly is the splendor of God, the overflowing of his power, the richness, goodness, and tenderness of God who intervenes in history. This is glory: the divine splendor which intervenes in history and is made visible." For many of us, God's splendor was partially revealed in the life of Mother Teresa. Through her the light of Christ was made visible for many of the poor of India.

Romano Guardini: "That Jesus goes to his death in the purity of his oneness with the Father's will -- that is glory." Doing God's will brings about glory. That is, acting justly, loving tenderly, and walking humbly in faith (Micah 6:8), fulfills God's command and leads to oneness with God and unity among people. In that oneness, harmony, convergence, God is glorified since the divine will is accomplished. Living contrary to God's will brings disgrace.

L. Boros: "This fundamental proof of God's presence is referred to in the Bible as 'glory' (doxa). It is the appearance of the Absolute within creation (schechina), the force and power of the felt nearness of God (Kabod), which draws men to itself by its beauty (chesed and chen). Man, therefore, is overwhelmed by absolute beauty." Another aspect of glory, besides light and obedience, is beauty. The glory of God is attractive and transparent. When God's work is done and done well, a certain radiance fills the atmosphere and there is joy in the wind.

Finally, one last crack at the word: " 'The whole earth is full of Thy glory.' The soul of that phrase enchants us, but what does it mean? What is the glory of God? Surely not just radiant splendor, a light that never was seen on sea or land. The meaning of the word 'glory' is a clear, adoring knowledge. To glorify God means an attitude of soul in which knowledge and adoration are one." (Evelyn Underhill)

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