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PART I  
MEDITATIONS AND DISCOURSES  
on  
• THE GLORY OF CHRIST

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CHAPTER I

THE EXPLANATION OF THE TEXT

Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me.—John 17:24

**T**HE HIGH PRIEST under the law, when he was to enter into the holy place on the solemn Day of Atonement, was to take both his hands full of sweet incense from the golden table of incense, to carry along with him in his entrance. He also had a censer filled with fire that was taken from the altar of burnt-offerings where atonement was made for sin with blood. Upon his actual entrance through the veil, he put the incense on the fire in the censer until the cloud of its smoke covered the ark and the mercy seat. (See Lev. 16:12,13.) And the end hereof was to present to God, in the behalf of the people, a sweet-smelling savor from the sacrifice of propitiation.

In answer to this mystical type, the great High Priest of the Church, our Lord Jesus Christ, being to enter into the "holy place not made with hands" (Heb. 9:24), did, by the glorious prayer recorded in this chapter, influenced from the blood of

His sacrifice, fill the heavens above, the glorious place of God's residence, with a cloud of incense, or the sweet perfume of His blessed intercession, typed by the incense offered by the high priest of old. By the same eternal fire wherewith He offered Himself a bloody sacrifice to make atonement for sin, He kindled in His most holy soul those desires for the application of all its benefits to His Church which are here expressed and wherein His intercession consists.

It is only one passage in the verse above named that at present I design an inquiry into. And this is the subject matter of what the Lord Christ here desires in the behalf of those given Him by the Father, namely, that they may behold His glory.

It is evident that in this prayer the Lord Christ has respect to His own glory and the manifestation of it which He had in the entrance asked of the Father (vv. 4, 5). But in this place He has not so much respect to it as His own as to the advantage, benefit, satisfaction, and blessedness of His disciples in the beholding of it. For these things were the end of all that mediatory glory which was given to Him. So Joseph charged his brethren, when he had revealed himself to them, that they should tell his father of all his "glory in Egypt" (Gen. 45:13). This he did, not for an ostentation of his own glory, but for the satisfaction which he knew his father would take in the knowledge of it. And such a manifestation of His glory to His disciples the Lord Christ here desires, as might fill them with blessed satisfaction forevermore.

This alone, which is here prayed for, will give them such satisfaction, and nothing else. The hearts of believers are like the needle touched by the loadstone,<sup>1</sup> which cannot rest until it comes to the point where it is directed. For being once touched by the love of Christ, receiving therein an impression of secret ineffable virtue, they will ever be in motion and restless until they come to Him and behold His glory. That soul which can be satisfied without it, that cannot be eternally

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<sup>1</sup> *Loadstone*, magnetic oxide of iron, and, thus a piece of this metal used as a magnet.

satisfied with it, is not partaker of the efficacy of His intercession.

I shall lay the foundation of the ensuing meditations in this one assertion: *One of the greatest privileges and advancements of believers, both in this world and unto eternity, consists in their beholding the glory of Christ.* This, therefore, He desires for them in this solemn intercession, as the complement of all His other requests in their behalf: "That they may behold my glory," that they may see, or contemplate My glory. The reasons I do not assign this glorious privilege only to the heavenly state, which is chiefly meant in this passage, but apply it to the state of believers in this world also, with their duties and privileges therein, shall be immediately declared.

All unbelievers do in their heart call Christ "Ichabod" (Where is the glory? I Sam. 4:21). They see neither "form nor comeliness in him" that He should be desired (Isa. 53:2). They look on Him as Michal, Saul's daughter, did on David "dancing before the ark," when she despised him in her heart (II Sam. 6:16). Indeed many of them do not "call Jesus anathema," but they cry, "Hail, Master!" and then crucify Him (Matt. 26:49).

Hence have we so many cursed opinions advanced in derogation to His glory—some of them really destructive of all that is truly so; yea, denying the "only Lord that bought us" and substituting a false Christ in His room. And there are others who express their slight thoughts of Him and His glory by bold, irreverent inquiries as to what use His person is in our religion; as though there were anything in our religion that has either reality, substance, or truth but by virtue of its relation to Him. And, by their answers, they bring their own inquiries yet nearer to the borders of blasphemy.

Never was there an age since the name of Christians was known upon the earth wherein there was such a direct opposition made to the person and glory of Christ as this in which we live. There were, indeed, in the first times of the Church, swarms of proud, doting, brainsick persons, who vented many foolish imaginations about Him, which issued at length in

Arianism, in whose ruins they were buried. The gates of hell in them prevailed not against the rock on which the Church is built (Matt. 16:18). But as it was said of Caesar, "He alone went soberly about the destruction of the commonwealth,"<sup>2</sup> so we now have great numbers who oppose the person and glory of Christ under a pretense of sobriety of reason, as they vainly plead. Yea, the disbelief of the mysteries of the Trinity and the incarnation of the Son of God—the sole foundation of Christian religion—is so diffused in the world that it has almost devoured the power and vitals of it. Not a few, who dare not yet express their minds, give broad intimations of their intentions and good will toward Him, in making the object of their scorn those who desire to know nothing but Him and Him crucified.

God, in His appointed time, will effectually vindicate His honor and glory from the vain attempts of men of corrupt minds against them.

In the meantime, it is the duty of all those who "love the Lord Jesus in sincerity" (Eph. 6:24) to give testimony in a peculiar manner to His divine person and glory, according to their several capacities, because of the opposition that is made against them.

I have thought myself on many accounts obliged to cast my mite into this treasury. I have chosen to do so, not in a way of controversy (which formerly I have engaged in), but so as, together with the vindication of the truth, to promote the strengthening of the faith of true believers, their edification in the knowledge of it; and to express the experience which they have, or may have, of the power and reality of these things.

I now design to demonstrate that the beholding of the glory of Christ is one of the greatest privileges and advancements that believers are capable of in this world, or in that which is to come. By this they are first gradually conformed to it and then fixed in the eternal enjoyment of it. For here in this life,

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<sup>2</sup> Even with the help of two distinguished authorities, I am unable to trace this to its origin.—W.M.S.

beholding His glory, they are changed or transformed into the likeness of it (II Cor. 3:18); and hereafter they shall be "forever like unto him" because they "shall see him as he is" (I John 3:1,2). On this our present comforts and future blessedness depend. This is the life and reward of our souls. "He that hath seen him hath seen the Father also" (John 14:9). For we discern the "light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Cor. 4:6).

There are two ways or degrees of beholding the glory of Christ which are constantly distinguished in the Scripture. The one is by *faith*, in this world, which is "the evidence of things not seen"; the other is by *sight*, or immediate vision, in eternity (II Cor. 5:7), "We walk by faith, and not by sight." We do so while we are in this world, "whilst we are present in the body, and absent from the Lord" (v. 8). But we shall live and walk by sight hereafter. It is the Lord Christ and His glory which are the immediate object both of this faith and sight. For we here behold Him darkly in a glass (that is, by faith); but we shall see Him face to face (by immediate vision); now we know Him in part; but then we shall know Him as we are known (I Cor. 13:12). The difference between these two ways of beholding the glory of Christ shall be afterward declared.

It is the second way—by vision in the light of glory—that is principally included in that prayer of our blessed Saviour that His disciples may be where He is, to behold His glory. But I shall not confine my inquiry to that; nor does our Lord Jesus exclude from His desire that sight of His glory which we have by faith in this world, but prays for the perfection of it in heaven. It is the first way that I shall insist upon for the following reasons:

1. *No man shall ever behold the glory of Christ by sight hereafter who does not in some measure behold it here by faith.* Grace is a necessary preparation for glory, and faith for sight. Where the subject (the soul) is not previously seasoned with grace and faith, it is not capable of glory or vision. Nay, persons not disposed to it cannot desire it, whatever they pretend;

they only deceive their own souls in supposing that they do so. Most men will say with confidence, living and dying, that they desire to be with Christ and to behold His glory; but they can give no reason why they should desire any such thing—only they think this somewhat better than to be in that evil condition which otherwise they must be cast into forever, when they can be here no more. If a man pretends to be enamored of, or to greatly desire, what he never saw nor was ever represented to him, he but dotes on his own imaginations. The pretended desires of many to behold the glory of Christ in heaven, who have no view of it by faith while they are here in this world, are nothing but self-deceiving imaginations.

The apostle tells us concerning himself and other believers, when the Lord Christ was present and conversed with them in the days of His flesh, that they “saw his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). And we may inquire, What was this glory of Christ which they so saw, and by what means did they obtain a prospect of it?

a) It was not the glory of His outward condition as glory and grandeur of kings and potentates. He made Himself of no reputation, but being in the form of a servant, He walked in the condition of a man of low degree. The secular grandeur of His pretended Vicar<sup>3</sup> makes no representation of that glory of His which His disciples saw. He kept no court, nor house of entertainment, nor (though He made all things) had of His own where to lay His head.

b) Nor was it with respect to the outward form of the flesh which He was made, wherein He took our nature on Him, as we see the glory of a comely or beautiful person; for He had neither form nor comeliness that He should be desired; “his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form

<sup>3</sup> *His pretended Vicar.* The word “vicar” is derived from the Latin word *vicarius*, meaning substitute, from which is derived the English word *vicarious*. It came to be applied to earthly representatives of God or Christ, thus Christ or the Holy Spirit as representing the Father. It was early used in speaking of the Pope, or even the apostle Peter, and then of a priest or pastor. Owen uses it here in reference to the Pope.



more than the sons of men" (Isa. 53:2,3; 52:14). All things appeared in Him as became "a man of sorrows."

c) Nor was it absolutely the eternal essential glory of His divine nature that is intended, for this no man can see in this world. What we shall attain in a view of this hereafter we know not.

d) But it was His glory as He was "full of grace and truth." They saw the glory of His person and His office in the administration of grace and truth. And how or by what means did they see this glory of Christ? It was by faith and not otherwise; for this privilege was granted to them only who "received him" and believed on His name (John 1:12). This was that glory which the Baptist saw when, upon His coming unto him, he said to all that were present, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" (vv. 29-33).

Wherefore let no man deceive himself; he that has no sight of the glory of Christ here shall never have any of it hereafter to his advantage. It is not to our edification to discourse on beholding the glory of Christ in heaven by vision until we go through a trial whether we see anything of it in this world by faith or not.

2. *The beholding of Christ in glory is in itself too high, illustrious, and marvelous for us in our present condition.* It has a splendor and glory too great for our present spiritual visible faculty, just as the direct, immediate sight of the sun darkens our sight and does not relieve or strengthen it at all. Wherefore we have no way to take into our minds any true spiritual apprehensions of the nature of immediate vision, or what it is to see the glory of Christ in heaven, but by that view which we have by faith in this life of the same glory. Whatever otherwise falls into our minds is but conjecture and imagination; such are the contemplations of most about heavenly things.

I have seen and read somewhat of the writings of learned men concerning the state of future glory; some of them are filled with excellent notions of truth, and elegancy of speech, whereby they cannot but much affect the minds of those who

duly consider what they say. But I do not know whence it comes to pass that many complain that in reading of such discourses they are like a man who beholds his natural face in a glass, and immediately forgets what manner of man he was (Jas. 1:23); as one of old complained after his perusal of Plato's thoughts about the immortality of the soul. The things spoken do not abide nor incorporate with our minds. They please and refresh for a little while, like a shower of rain in a dry season that does not get the root of things; the power of them does not enter into us.

Is it not all from this, that their notions of future things are not brought out of the experience which we have of the beginnings of them in this world? Without which they can make no permanent abode in our minds, nor continue any influence upon our affections. Yea, the soul is disturbed, not edified, in all contemplations of future glory when things are proposed to it whereof in this life it has neither foretaste, sense, experience, nor evidence. No man ought to look for anything in heaven but what one way or other he has some experience of in this life. If men were fully persuaded of this, they would be, it may be, more in the exercise of faith and love about heavenly things than for the most part they are. At present they know not what they enjoy and they look for they know not what.

So it is that men, utterly strangers to all experience of the beginning of glory in themselves as an effect of faith, have filled their divine worship with images, pictures, and music to represent to themselves somewhat of that glory which they fancy to be above. For into the true glory, they have no prospect, or can have; because they have no experience of its power in themselves, nor do they taste of its goodness by any of its first-fruits in their own minds. Only by a view of the glory of Christ by faith here may we attain such blessed conceptions of our beholding His glory above by immediate vision that our hearts shall be drawn to admire it and desire its full enjoyment.

3. *Our present edification is principally concerned in this be-*

*holding of the glory of Christ now, for in it the life and power of faith are most eminently acted.* And from this exercise of faith, does love unto Christ principally, if not solely, arise. If, therefore, we desire to have faith in its vigor or love in its power, giving rest, complacency, and satisfaction to our own souls, we are to seek for them in the diligent discharge of this duty; they will not be found anywhere else. Here would I live; here would I die; here would I dwell in my thoughts and affections, to the withering and consumption of all the painted beauties of this world, to the crucifying all things here below until they become to me a dead and deformed thing, in no way meet for affectionate embraces.

For these and similar reasons I shall first inquire into our beholding of the glory of Christ in this world by faith; and endeavor to lead the souls of believers into the more retired walks of faith, love, and holy meditation, "whereby the king is held in the galleries" (Song of Sol. 7:5).<sup>4</sup>

But because there is no benefit in, nor advantage by, the contemplation of this sacred truth unless there is an improvement in the practice of it—the constant beholding of the glory of Christ by faith—I shall name a few advantages which we may have thereby.

1. *We shall be made fit for heaven.* Every man is not so who desires it and hopes for it; for some are not only unworthy of it and excluded from it by reason of sin, but they are not fit for it and incapable of any advantage by it. All men, indeed, think themselves fit enough for glory (what should hinder them?) if they could attain it; but it is because they know not what it is. Men shall not be clothed with glory whether they will or no. It is to be received in that exercise of the faculties of their souls which such persons have no ability for. Music has no pleasure in it to them who cannot hear; nor the most beautiful colors, to those who cannot see. It would be no

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<sup>4</sup> In our Revised Version, the phrase Owen quotes from the Song of Solomon reads, "the king is held captive in the tresses," referring to the hair of the head of the bridegroom. Owen's translation is from the Septuagint, where the Greek word is *paradromais*.

benefit to a fish to take him from the bottom of the ocean, filled with cold and darkness, and place him under the beams of the sun; for he is no way meet to receive any refreshment from it. Heaven itself would not be more advantageous to persons not renewed by the Spirit of grace in this life.

Hence the apostle gives "thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. 1:12). Indeed, the beginning here and the fullness of glory hereafter are communicated to believers by an almighty act of the will and grace of God. But yet He has ordained ways and means whereby they may be made receptive subjects of the glory to be communicated to them. That this way and means is by beholding the glory of Christ by faith shall be fully declared in our progress. This should excite us to this duty; for all our present glory consists in our preparation for future glory.

2. *Virtue will proceed from a real view of Christ's glory in a transforming power to change us "into the same image"* (II Cor. 3:18). How this is done and how we become like Christ by beholding His glory will be fully declared in our progress.

3. *The constant contemplation of the glory of Christ will give rest, satisfaction, and complacency to the souls of those who are exercised therein.* Our minds are apt to be filled with a multitude of perplexed thoughts—fears, cares, dangers, distresses, passions, and lusts make various impressions on the minds of men, filling them with disorder, darkness, and confusion. But where the soul is fixed in its thoughts and contemplations on this glorious object, it will be brought into and kept in a holy, serene, spiritual frame. For "to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Rom. 8:6). It does this by taking our hearts from all undue regard of all things below, in comparison to the great worth, beauty, and glory of our Redeemer. (See Phil. 3:7-11.) A lack of this makes many of us strangers to a heavenly life and causes us to live below the spiritual refreshments and satisfactions that the gospel tenders to us.

4. *The sight of the glory of Christ is the spring and cause of our everlasting blessedness.* "We shall ever be with the Lord" (I

Thess. 4:17), or "be with Christ," which is best of all (Phil. 1:23). For there shall we "behold his glory" (John 17:24); and by "seeing him as he is, we shall be made like him" (I John 3:2), which is our everlasting blessedness.

The enjoyment of God by sight is commonly called the beatifical vision, and it is the sole fountain of all the actings of our souls in the state of blessedness. The old philosophers knew nothing of this; neither do we know distinctly what they are, or what is this sight of God. However, this we know, that God in His immense essence is invisible to our corporeal eyes, and will be so to eternity, and also incomprehensible to our minds. For nothing can perfectly comprehend that which is infinite but what is itself infinite. Wherefore the blessed and blessing sight which we shall have of God will be always "in the face of Jesus Christ." Therein will that manifestation of the glory of God, in His infinite perfections and all their blessed operations, so shine into our souls and immediately fill us with peace, rest, and glory.

These things we here admire but cannot comprehend. We know not well what we say when we speak of them; yet there is in true believers a foresight and foretaste of this glorious condition. There enters sometimes, by the Word and Spirit, into their hearts such a sense of the uncreated glory of God, shining forth in Christ, as affects and satiates their souls with ineffable joy. Hence arises that "peace of God which passeth all understanding," keeping "our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ" (Phil. 4:7). "Christ," in believers "the hope of glory," gives them to taste of the first-fruits of it; yea, sometimes to bathe their souls in the fountain of life and to drink of the rivers of pleasure that are at His right hand. Where any are utterly unacquainted with these things they are carnal, yea, blind, and see nothing afar off. These enjoyments, indeed, are rare, and for the most part of short continuance. *Rara hora, brevis mora.*<sup>5</sup> But it is from our own sloth and darkness that we do not enjoy more visits of this

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<sup>5</sup> *Rara hora, brevis mora*, few the hours, soon (is) death.

grace, and that the dawnings of glory do not shine more on our souls. Such things as these may excite us to diligence in the duty proposed to us.

And I shall inquire: 1) What is that glory of Christ which we do or may behold by faith? 2) How do we behold it? 3) In what way does our doing so differ from immediate vision in heaven? And in the whole we shall endeavor to answer the inquiry made to the Spouse by the daughters of Jerusalem: "What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?"