

THE GLORY ABOUT TO BE REVEALED

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THE SUGGESTION by the Editor of *The Way* to 'allow a last word to Paul on the peace of the eschaton' appeared initially to present several difficulties for a contributor to a gathering of studies on christian eschatology around the themes of 'Light, solace, and peace'. While Paul is manifestly familiar with the common rabbinic distinction between 'this epoch', or 'this world', and 'the epoch to come', his statements made within this frame of reference invariably deal exclusively with 'this present epoch' (1 Cor 1,20; 2,6.8; 3,18; 2 Cor 4,4; Gal 1,4). A single exception occurs in the dubiously authentic letter to the Ephesians, where God is said to have displayed the vast resources of his power, 'which he unleashed in Christ by raising him from death, and seating him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, supreme over . . . all power and dominion . . . not only in this epoch but in the epoch to come' (Eph 1,20-21). One reason for Paul's comparative silence regarding the future beyond history is attributable to the singular circumstances of Paul's initiation into the christian life, his confrontation by a Christ, raised by God from death as Lord of history (1 Cor 15,8; 2 Cor 4,6; Gal 1,1), in fact as 'the last Adam' become 'life-giving Spirit' (1 Cor 15,45). As a consequence, what for later theology were designated 'the last things' were for Paul in a very real sense first things. For by contrast with the earliest disciples he never knew the mortal Jesus (2 Cor 5,16). He thought of himself and other believers as 'those upon whom the end of the ages has come' (1 Cor 10,11).

This is not to say that Paul has ignored the future judgment (1 Cor 4,5; Rom 2,16), or the glorious resurrection of all believers (1 Cor 15,22-24), or 'the wrath that is surely coming' (1 Thess 1,10) from which, as 'God's Son, Jesus is at present delivering us'. Yet, as long as Paul, in common with the early christian Church, clung to the mistaken view that the 'parousia' (the risen Christ's manifest presence among us in power) was to occur in his lifetime — as he

did at least through his earlier, extant letters (1,2 Thess, Phil, 1 Cor) — he would reckon this series of events, by which the redemption of the human race was to be completed, as belonging to the future of history. Only thereafter would the future beyond history, 'the epoch to come', be inaugurated.

Paul's view of peace, solace, light

In view of the above remarks it becomes comprehensible why Paul consistently speaks of 'peace' as a divine gift of the present dispensation. The God who called him to be 'slave of Jesus Christ' (Rom 1,1) is pre-eminently a 'God of peace' (1 Thess 5,23; Phil 4,9; 1 Cor 14,33; Rom 15,33; 16,20), for 'God has called us unto peace' through the gospel (1 Cor 7,15b). Henceforth, 'the peace of God, transcending all human thought, will guard your hearts and minds in union with Christ Jesus' (Phil 4,7). 'May the God of peace himself make you perfect in holiness! May you — in your entirety, spirit, soul, and body — be preserved in an irreproachable manner at the parousia of our Lord Jesus Christ. The One who calls you is reliable: he will also see it done!' (1 Thess 5,23-24). The risen Christ for Paul is 'the Lord of peace' (2 Thess 3,16), for through him 'by being justified by faith we have peace with God' (Rom 5,1). He has given us his Spirit, among whose first gifts stands peace (Gal 5,22), since 'peace is the intent of the Spirit' (Rom 8,6). For Paul, 'the Kingdom of God is . . . justice and peace and joy from the Holy Spirit' (Rom 14,17). Actually — and this may cause some surprise — peace is the beginning of a process (by way of 'tribulation', 'endurance', 'character' proved under testing) that reaches 'hope in the glory of God'. And all this under the dynamic guidance of 'God's love poured forth in our hearts through the gift to us of the Holy Spirit' (Rom 5,1-5). This conviction inspires a prayer Paul inserts towards the end of this letter, 'May the God of hope fill you with joy and peace through your believing, so that you will overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit' (Rom 15,13).

'Solace' is mentioned once in a striking paragraph commemorating God as 'the Father of compassion and God of every possible solace' (2 Cor 1,3-7). 'Light' is also of rare occurrence — apart from Ephesians (Eph 1,18; 3,9; 5,8.9.13.15). This symbol, a borrowing from apocalyptic imagery, characterizes the Christians as 'sons of light' (1 Thess 5,5), summoned to be 'clothed with the weapons of light' (Rom 13,12), since 'What fellowship can there be of light with darkness?' (2 Cor 6,14). In two passages indeed, 'light' metaphori-

cally represents 'the last things'. 'God has fitted you for the apportioned lot of the saints in light, since he has rescued you from the power of darkness and transferred you into the Kingdom of his well-loved Son' (Col 1,12-13). At his parousia, 'The Lord will light up the hidden things of darkness' (1 Cor 4,5). In one of his reminiscences of his first encounter with the risen Jesus, Paul recalls the description in Genesis of God's creation of light (2 Cor 4,6).

Where then is one to look in Paul for the reality which contemporary theology designates as the *eschaton*, a substantive which significantly does not appear in the Pauline letters? I venture to suggest that it is discoverable primarily in the biblical symbol 'glory', by which the Apostle pictorially represents the relationships of a personal nature between God, Christ, and the believer. This ultimate reality is also denominated as 'eternal life', or its equivalents (2 Cor 4,17.18; 5,1; Gal 6,8; Rom 2,7; 5,21; 6,22.23). To be noted however is the fact that these latter terms appear only in those letters composed after a traumatic experience by Paul 'in Asia' (2 Cor 1,8), which brought home to him the realization that thereafter he would live 'under condemnation of death' (v 9), thus terminating his earlier hope of survival until the parousia.

The eschatological reality as process

Another aspect of the difficulty in pinning down the eschatological element in Pauline thought is perceptible in the continuing debate among professional students of Paul over the most accurate way of designating it. To distinguish between a 'realized' and 'futurist' eschatology, or between 'the already' and 'the not yet' of christian existence (the gifts of grace now constitutive of the life of faith and those awaited with hope in the future) appears to imply too static a view of the matter, and one which Paul clearly did not himself adopt. It seems more consonant with the evidence of his letters to describe it as movement, as process — with one proviso, however. In the use of this metaphor one must avoid any implication that the development is automatic and impersonal. For Paul consistently asserted that the attaining of the goal of christian existence stood ever under the divine will and was accomplished through the power of the risen Lord:

Brothers, I do not consider myself to have attained the goal. One thing only [I bear in mind]: straining forward to the future, oblivious of what lies behind, I run hard towards the goal for the

prize of the call heavenwards by God in Christ Jesus (Phil 3,13-14). For our city-state abides in heaven, whence we eagerly await as Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform this lowly body of ours, so as to share the form of the body of his glory in accordance with that power which makes him capable of even subjecting all things to himself (Phil 3,20-21).

This experience by Paul of the eschatological element in his own christian life as process, it may be observed in passing, is echoed in the mystical experiences of Ignatius Loyola, as Michael Buckley has remarked: 'What Ignatius saw, he saw as movement. The reality about him was essentially in process. His own life was understood as the history of a pilgrim . . .'.¹

Development, the salient feature of pauline christology

Paul's moving description of his apostolic career in a letter to Corinth indicates that he regarded his life as a never-ending quest for deeper communion with his Lord, 'to know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, in growing conformity with his death, if somehow I can reach resurrection from death' (Phil 3,10-11; see 2 Cor 4,10-11).

This ongoing movement towards christian fulfilment felt within himself has left its mark on Paul's conception of his Master, where he makes use of the israelite offering of the first-fruits of the harvest, a symbol of the people's consecration to God (Lev 23,10-11). The image explains the social repercussions upon all believers of Christ's resurrection.

For just as all die in Adam, so also in Christ all will be brought to life: each however in his proper rank — Christ as first-fruits, then those who are Christ's at his parousia, then the end, when he hands over his sovereignty to God his Father (1 Cor 15,22-24).

It is important to note that the introduction of the antithesis Adam-Christ implies a perception of a moral aspect in the movement towards salvation. For Paul, Adam, cause of death, personifies disobedience to God's will (Rom 5,12-21), whereas Christ as obedient Son 'hands over his sovereignty to God his Father'.

Paul now adds further touches to this sovereignty of the risen Christ. Paul never tires of proclaiming that 'Jesus is Lord' since his raising from death by his Father (Phil 2,11; 1 Cor 9,1; 12,3; 2 Cor 4,5; Rom 10,9; Col 2,6). Still he here attests that Christ's

sovereignty is incomplete until he is victorious over all his enemies, for such is the will of God declared in 'the Scriptures' (Ps 8,6).

For he must reign as king until he has put all enemies beneath his feet. Death will be destroyed as the last enemy, for '[God] has subjected all things beneath his feet'. Now when Scripture says, 'All has been subjected', it is obvious it means with the exception of Him who subjected all things to him. So when all things have been subjected to him, then also the Son himself will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to him, in order that God be all in everything (1 Cor 15,25-29).

This tiresome repetition of the keyword from the psalm underlines the importance in Paul's view of the *ethical* values present in the entire process. All is being carried out according to the divine will, and the termination of the movement of salvation exhibits the risen Christ as 'the Son' entirely subject to the Father's will. Filial obedience (Phil 2,8) has thus marked the entire career of Christ, 'who gave himself [over to death] on account of our sins that he might snatch us from the present wicked epoch, according to the will of God, who is also our Father' (Gal 1,4). This same obedience to his Father with regard to his 'being raised from death' is implicit in Paul's invariable use of the passive, which connotes Christ's filial acquiescence in the Father's action.

'Glory' a symbol of filial relationship with God

I am indebted to Professor C. F. D. Moule for the insight into 'the personal and essentially relational character of . . . "glory" in Paul's thought'.² In the Old Testament 'the glory of God' symbolized God's relations with his people as Saviour, manifested by acts of power on their behalf. Now it will be recalled that it is precisely in terms of 'glory' that Paul depicts the superiority of the 'new covenant' (2 Cor 3,6) — a phrase he seems to have coined. 'For if what was transitory was accompanied with glory, how much more that which is permanent [abides] in glory!' (2 Cor 3,11). In the new dispensation God has disclosed a new facet of his 'glory', his relationship with Jesus and all believers, as 'the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' (2 Cor 1,3) and as 'our Father' (1 Cor 1,3). The proclamation announcing this new set of relationships is 'the gospel of the glory of Christ' (2 Cor 4,4). Among mature Christians Paul can:

speak of divine wisdom as a mystery that has been hidden, which God destined before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this epoch ever knew of — had they known they would not have crucified the Lord of glory (1 Cor 2,6-8).

'The Lord of glory' indicates that in accepting his death by crucifixion Jesus's relation with God was revealed by his obedience to his Father. The mystery 'destined . . . for our glory' points to the new relation to God of all Christians, his sons and daughters in the Son. The statement, 'Christ was raised by the glory of the Father' (Rom 6,4) draws attention to his filial relation to God in this mystery. In its isolation from Christ the fallen human race has guiltily ignored its relation to God as his children. 'All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God' (Rom 3,23). It is only through the redemptive work of Christ, who 'welcomed you into the glory of God' (Rom 15,7), 'Christ in you, the hope of glory' (Col 1,27), that 'We can boast upon the hope of the glory of God' (Rom 5,2). Finally, notice is to be taken of a text which portrays the continuing transformation of all believers — that process-eschatology discussed earlier — in terms of this relational symbol. 'All of us, while with unveiled face we contemplate, as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord are being transformed from glory to glory into the same image by the Lord [who is] Spirit' (2 Cor 3,18). I make bold to interpret this *crux interpretum* as follows: Christ is depicted as the mirror reflecting 'the glory of the Lord', by his relation to the Father as the model of filial obedience, for the Christian, who contemplates 'with unveiled face' (by faith) this dynamic image of what he or she is destined to become through the personal relationship as adoptive son or daughter to God. And since the risen Lord is one with the Spirit in directing the believer to an ever deepening relation with Christ and the Father ('from glory to glory'), the transforming power of such contemplation is attributed to 'the Lord who is Spirit'.

Once the relational aspect of Paul's use of the symbol 'glory' is perceived, it becomes possible to appreciate how deeply personal is his view of what we have called the eschatological process of man's redemption. Through the pernicious disobedience of Adam (Rom 5,19) the members of the human family became 'God-haters' (Rom 1,30), and so 'fall short of the glory of God' (Rom 3,23). In modern psychological terms, men and women have suffered a loss of self-identity, whereas on the contrary they are intended to be 'God's sons and daughters through faith in Christ Jesus' (Gal 3,23). Indeed,

for those who love God, those called [by faith] according to his design . . . he has decreed that they be remoulded in the image of his Son, in order that he [the Son] be the eldest of a large family of brothers and sisters' (Rom 8,28-29).

To overcome the sinful disobedience of mankind and to disclose its true identity,

God sent forth his Son . . . to redeem those under law, that we might receive our adoptive sonship. Now the proof that you are sons is that God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying 'Abba, dear Father' (Gal 4,4-6).

Christ redeemed us by accepting from the Father's loving hands his death by crucifixion and his 'being raised' as the obedient Son, thereby disclosing how perfectly he recognized his filial relation to God. And the gift of the risen Christ, as 'the Spirit of his Son', is at work in disclosing to all human hearts with faith their true identity by raising their consciousness of their divine adoption.

Finally, Paul's deep sensitivity to the personal nature of Christ's redemptive work and our appropriation of it through faith does not allow any room for the expression of the 'vicarious' aspect of Jesus's death. Nowhere to my knowledge does Paul say Christ died instead of us. 'Through the obedience of the one man the many will be constituted just' (Rom 5,19b), that is, set into right relationship with God. By his own paradigmatic obedience Christ created the possibility of our involvement in that obedience; hence Paul speaks of 'the obedience of your faith' (Rom 1,5; 15,18).

It remains to review two pauline texts, which enable us to bring into sharper focus the ethical dimension in the Apostle's conception of the christian's progress towards the *eschaton*.

A significant change in Paul's eschatological viewpoint

The text (2 Cor 4,16 - 5,10) we wish to examine now is beyond doubt one of the most difficult in his letters. Not only is there disagreement among interpreters as to whether or not Paul has here adopted the hellenistic view of reality with its dualism between the material and the spiritual, soul and body, the phenomenal world and the invisible, but his sudden shifting from one image to another without warning creates a continual challenge to the translator. In turning the passage into English I have chosen to make idiomatic

elegance wait upon a fairly literal rendering in the hope of not betraying Paul's thought. I agree with Professor Moule, to whose article already cited I am happy to acknowledge my indebtedness, that there is no question here of any adoption by Paul of hellenistic dualism. He will be seen to evince a concern that, in the face of the gradual dissolution of his bodily faculties, he remain faithful in obedience to the will of God. I am convinced that in his confrontation with greek thought and culture Paul retained the hebraic, or better, biblical approach to reality. He never entertained the gnostic view that the soul must be helped to escape from evil identified with the material element of the human personality. 'Spiritual' does not denote for Paul the antithesis of 'matter' (a term he nowhere employs), but rather what is under the direction of the Spirit of God. Professor Moule has astutely observed that, given Paul's unshakable belief in the complete reality of the Incarnation, it is unthinkable that he ever considered 'the flesh' intrinsically sinful. The body of the Christian, the material aspect of the human personality, as it stands under condemnation of death (Rom 7,24) in this life, can be described as 'humiliated' or 'humiliating' (Phil 3,21). Yet for all that, the body is 'the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit' (1 Cor 6,19) and is destined to share the new life of the risen Christ 'through the indwelling Spirit' (Rom 8,11). Paul never speaks of resurrection of 'the flesh', since it represents the creaturely impotence of all human beings and can provide a 'pretext' (Gal 5,19) for self-sufficiency, which leads to disobedience and death (Rom 7,14). Still, life 'in the flesh' through 'faith in the Son of God' means that 'Christ lives in me' (Gal 2,20) and 'that Jesus's life may be made manifest in our death-doomed flesh' (2 Cor 4,10b).

To appreciate the significant change in Paul's view of the eschatological process it is important to recall the traumatic experience he underwent between the writing of his two extant letters to Corinth. 'I do not wish you to be ignorant, brothers, of the tribulation I endured in Asia. I was crushed by an excessively heavy burden, beyond my power to bear, so that I even despaired of living. In fact, in my heart I have accepted the death-sentence' (2 Cor 1,8 - 9a). Whatever the nature of this threat to his very life, one has the impression that while Paul feels he has been granted a reprieve in the 'death-sentence', the remission (of some illness?) is temporary, and he is forced to rethink what we have called his 'process-eschatology'.

When in his first letter to his corinthian Christians he had to deal

with the question of the glorious resurrection of believers, it was in a context of controversy. Certain 'enthusiasts' in the community were denying that this event was part of the hope for the future, because they erroneously felt they had already experienced it — with damaging results to the orthodox view of sexual morality, marriage, virginity, and community fellowship. Paul's teaching on the mystery of our resurrection is still conditioned by his assumption that the Lord's coming in glory would occur during his lifetime. Accordingly, in replying to the objection 'How will the dead rise?' (1 Cor 15,35) — while insisting strenuously upon the preservation of personal identity, which for him involved bodily continuity (vv 36-49) — he is chiefly pre-occupied, *not* with the dead, but with the transformation in those still alive (vv 50-52). 'For this perishable nature must be clothed with what is imperishable, this death-doomed creature must be clothed with immortality . . . then will the scriptural word come true, "Death has been swallowed up into victory!"' The clothing-metaphor, possibly a borrowing by Paul from apocalyptic (1 Thess 5,8; Rom 13,12), or more probably from an already traditional baptismal liturgy (Gal 3,27-28), was, in the ancient world, profoundly meaningful: one's garments became part of the personality of the wearer. The Apostle thinks of what, in a person still in this life, is perishable and mortal as being absorbed by the imperishable and immortal, as is evident from his free rendering of the isaian hebrew text (Isai 25,8), which pictures God as victoriously 'swallowing up' death. What distinguishes this description of the living Christian's transformation from Paul's maturer view is the notable lack of any reference to the gradual dissolution of man's physical and mental powers from sickness and ageing. Paul here appears as innocent of any premonition of what the process of dying entails, as when he wrote from gaol to his Philippians, when the thought of death was for him no more than a remote possibility.

As I passionately hope, I shall do nothing to be ashamed of. Now as always I shall speak out boldly, so that Christ will be glorified in my person whether in life or through death. For me living means Christ, while to die is an asset. . . . I am possessed by the desire to die and to be with Christ . . . (Phil 1,20-23).

His own brush with death in the Roman province of Asia, probably at Ephesus, was to bring him to a radical revision of his view, and

force him to evaluate its implications for christian morality in the light of God's manifest will for himself.

Paul's use of the first person plural only thinly disguises this narrative of his own personal 'tribulation'. He has universalized it for the instruction of his correspondents.

Accordingly, we do not lose heart. But if the external trappings of our humanity [literally, 'the human being from outside'] are wasting away, yet the real self ['the human being from within'] is being made new day after day. For the trivial and momentary burden of our tribulation is working out a glory which is eternal and far outweighs it. And all the while we keep our gaze fixed, not on the things that are to be seen, but on those that cannot be seen. For the things that can be seen are temporary: the things that cannot be seen are eternal. For we know that if our earthly house or tent be destroyed, we have an edifice from God, a house not made by human hands, eternal, in heaven (2 Cor 4,16 - 5,1).

Paul regards what is happening to himself from the viewpoint of christian hope: while recognizing the decline in his natural powers as a human being, yet by faith he knows that 'the human being from within' is thereby undergoing a corresponding growth in 'newness' explicable only in terms of his vital union with the risen Christ (Phil 1,21; Gal 2,20). In this first attempt to cope with his suffering he asserts that 'our tribulation is working out a glory which is eternal and far outweighs it'. Presently he will relate this 'working out' to God and his gift of the Spirit, thereby illustrating the relational and personal sense of 'glory'. The distinction between 'the things that are to be seen' and those 'that cannot be seen' is not inspired by Greek metaphysics but by the christian eschatological hope awaiting that 'edifice from God, a house not made by human hands'.

Paul's further description of the tragic element in this inevitable human decline now becomes dramatic. 'And yet indeed in this one we keep groaning, because we long to put on our heavenly dwelling place like an outer garment, in the hope that when we have put it on we may not be caught naked' (vv 2-3). The 'groaning' expresses the very human fear of the unknown which possesses Paul in his present bodily 'house' ('in this one'), or perhaps even 'a spasm of doubt' (Moule) — his hopes for the 'house not made with human hands' may prove illusory. Because of the somewhat involved metaphor of house/clothing this revulsion is expressed by the symbol of nakedness, so repugnant to Paul's jewish mentality. It should not

however be taken as any indication that he now adopts the hellenistic notion of the separation of soul and body.

For in truth while we are in this tent we are groaning, because we are weighed down by this preoccupation: we wish not to be stripped, but to be clothed as with an additional garment, so that our mortality may be swallowed up by life. However, the One who has worked things out for us in just this way is God — the One who has given us the Spirit as his pledge (vv 4-6).

Paul appears to refer to his former mode of imagining the transformation of a person still alive at the parousia (1 Cor 15,53-54), which his painful experience of bodily dissolution has forced him to abandon. The presence of the Spirit, God's reassuring 'pledge' within him, tells him that this eschatological process is not a blind, impersonal development, but due to God, 'who has worked things out for us in precisely this way' through exchange, not addition.

Paul concludes by recalling a further motive for trust: his longing to be 'with Christ' (Phil 1,23), whom he thinks of not as 'absent' so much as 'distant' (hence our translation of this term).

As a consequence, keeping up our courage at all times and ever conscious that while present in this body we are distant from the Lord (it is by faith we live, not by the appearances of things) — we keep up our courage and would rather abandon this body and go home to the Lord. Now here is why we aspire to be pleasing to him, whether we be distant or at home — it is necessary that all of us appear at Christ's judgment-seat, in order that each may receive what he deserves for the way he has lived in his bodily existence, be it good or worthless (vv 6-10).

Paul's faith and confidence in the will of God rather than any human view of 'the appearances of things' teaches him that courageous living through his 'tribulation' is, in God's design, the only way to 'be pleasing to him', with whom he desires to be 'at home'. The reference to the judgment Christ will pass on the things each one (literally) 'has done through the body' is an indication of the seriousness with which Paul took history.

Paul's mature view of the Eschaton

We have seen how theological reflection upon his 'tribulation in Asia' led Paul to recognize in the painful experience of living

through his 'sentence of death' the manifest will of God and to revise radically his earlier somewhat light-hearted view of the eschatological process, which he came to regard as personal, moral transformation through 'the obedience of faith' (Rom 1,5). He was brought thus to a deeper respect for 'the body' and for 'the flesh', as he saw himself (and all believers):

bearing about in our body the killing of Jesus, in order that Jesus's life be made manifest in our body. For we the living are continually being handed over to death on account of Jesus, that Jesus's life may be made manifest in our death-doomed flesh (2 Cor 4,10-11).

Somewhat later, in composing his impassioned plea to those 'bewitched' Celts (Gal 3,1) in the galatian communities, he made use of a hellenistic forensic term, 'adoption', to counter the insidious attacks on his gospel by judaizers (Gal 4,4-6), and so prevent these gentile Christians from 'completing in the flesh' what they had so well 'begun by the Spirit' (Gal 3,4). In his letter to the Roman Church, Paul lays under tribute all of these experiences, and so provides a definitive picture of the *eschaton*.

He opens this almost poetic presentation by introducing the principal actors in the drama:

All who are moved by God's Spirit are sons and daughters of God. For it was not a spirit of slavery you received, resulting once again in fear. No! you have received a spirit of adoption. By the fact that through it we cry, 'Abba! (dear Father!)', the Spirit himself renders testimony together with our own spirit that we are God's children. Now if his children, then also heirs — heirs indeed of God, and so co-heirs with Christ, provided we suffer together with him, in order that with him we also may be glorified (Rom 8,14-17).

It is the Spirit of God, dwelling within human hearts, who brings that *familiaritas cum Deo*, the sense of belonging to God's family (so dear to Ignatius Loyola), which had been lost by Adam's disobedience (Rom 5,19; see 7,8-12). This graced instinct creates a sense of liberation, the antithesis of that bondage to 'the elements of the world' (Gal 4,3; Col 2,8). It is this Paul calls 'a spirit of adoption'. He teaches that the Spirit of God stands at the very heart of christian affectivity in prayer by uniting his testimony with 'our spirit', our self-awareness, as at public worship³ we pray the prayer Jesus taught us, 'Abba! dear Father'. Paul thus discloses his insight into the real meaning of this gift of Jesus. What he bestowed upon

us was more than merely a formula (Mt 6,9-13; Lk 11,2-4). He magnanimously permitted us to make our own his filial attitudes towards his Father. This gracious gift however carries with it responsibilities: to share the Son's relationship with the Father, his 'glory', presupposes participation in his filial obedience, which entails suffering and death. Each Christian ultimately attests his Spirit-inspired sense of his own identity when 'we suffer with him', for only when suffering and death, the legacy of Adam to the human family, are united to these human experiences of God's Son, can they become redemptive and salutary. This is the sense of the neologism Paul here employs, 'we may be glorified together with him'. He has composed it from the relational term 'glory', to symbolize our eschatological communion with God as his children.

Paul now makes an unprecedented theological conclusion, which appears to be original with him among all other New Testament writers, an insight, eventually to receive amplification in Colossians, regarding the cosmic effects of the redemption (Col 1,14-20). Paul asserts that the world of things, the material creation, is together with humanity the direct object of Christ's redemptive work — a conception which, since the patristic age, has received little if any attention from scholastic theologians. Indeed, to my knowledge, its first impact upon official ecclesiastical statements is seen in the pastoral constitution from Vatican II, 'The Church in the Modern World'.⁴ In view of this, it is interesting to find an echo of this pauline teaching in a remark of Ignatius Loyola. 'We must consider all creatures, not as beautiful and lovable in themselves, but as bathed in the blood of Christ'.⁵

This next paragraph is also of considerable significance for the theme we are exploring, Paul's conception of the *eschaton*. For the first time he takes cognizance of a further stage in the Christian's adoptive filiation, thereby indicating that his initiation into it in this present life by faith and baptism (Gal 3,27-28; 4,4-6) confers only an inchoative status that awaits final development at the parousia. This two-level adoption appears as a parallel to the two stages of the status of the risen Jesus as Lord, which we noted earlier.

I am convinced that our sufferings in the present divine dispensation (*kairos*) are not worthy of comparison with the glory about to be revealed unto us. For the eager expectation of the created world keeps waiting for the revelation of the sons of God. Indeed, creation itself has been subjected to frustration, not willingly, but by the One

who made it subject, upon the hope that the created world itself will be liberated from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of God's children. We are aware in fact that the entire creation groans in chorus and is suffering the pangs of childbirth until the present moment. But that is not all. We for our part, although possessing the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves in our eager anticipation of our adoption, the redemption of our bodily persons. In that hope we were saved. Yet a hope that is seen is no hope at all! — who hopes for what he can see? But if we hope for what we do not see, we are keeping up our eager expectation through endurance. Likewise also, the Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness — for we do not know how to pray as is needful. Actually, it is the Spirit himself who is interceding through our inarticulate groaning (Rom 8,18-26).

With this breath-taking vision of 'the glory about to be revealed', Paul has said 'the last word on peace in the *eschaton*'. God's consummation of mankind's 'adoption' is to bring him perfect freedom with his resurrection to glory, a glory which the entire irrational creation is *pro modo suo* to share. The priestly editor-author of Genesis, Paul knew, had hinted at this solidarity of destiny when he pictured God's appointment of men and women to stewardship of his creation (Gen 1,26). It became Paul's singular privilege towards the close of his apostolic career to articulate the 'blessed vision of peace' in a world transfigured by 'the freedom of the glory of God's children'.

NOTES

¹ Buckley, Michael, S.J.: 'The Contemplation to attain love', in *The Way: Supplement* 24 (1975), p 94.

² Moule, C. F. D.: 'St Paul and Dualism: the Pauline conception of Resurrection', in *New Testament Studies* 13 (1966-67), pp 106-23.

³ Paul's bilingual citation of the introductory words to the dominical prayer indicates its liturgical provenance in greek-speaking communities which sought to preserve the aramaic original.

⁴ *Gaudium et Spes*, 39.

⁵ *Monumenta Ignatiana I (Epistolae et Instructiones S. Ignatii)*, vol 12, p 252. The letter, dated Rome, 8 October 1552, is addressed to 'Sociis ad laborandum missis'.