DIVINE GLORY IN A DARWINIAN WORLD

by Christopher Southgate

Abstract. Faced with the ambiguities of this world, in which ugliness and suffering co-exist with beauty, the article rejects the attribution of disvalues to a Fall-event. Instead it faces God's involvement even in violence and ugliness. It explores the concept of divine glory, understood principally as a sign of the divine reality. This includes both the great theophanies of the Hebrew Bible and Jesus' glorification in his Passion and Crucifixion. It then considers the contemplation of the natural world, using the terminology of "inscape" and "instress." Divine glory can be discerned even in events as tragic as the Indian Ocean tsunami or the activity of the malarial mosquito. A full Christian contemplation of these events will include scientific understanding and poetic apprehension, and consideration of soteriology and eschatology as well as the theology of creation. Glory is understood to include God's power and sovereignty, and also the divine humility and sacrifice.

Keywords: evolutionary biology; glory; God; Jesus Christ; natural evil; natural theology; Holmes Rolston, III; semiotics; theodicy

---

The ambiguity of the world in which we live is evident to any observer looking with any discrimination. This is a world of great beauty, physical intricacy, and biological diversity, in which humans sometimes act with goodness, and occasionally with real heroism. It is also a world in which creatures inflict on each other considerable distress through such behavior as predation and parasitism, and a world in which natural phenomena such as the movement of tectonic plates cause enormous suffering. Human beings, moreover, routinely act selfishly, and sometimes act with great cruelty.

Much Christian preaching and theology still responds to ugliness and suffering in the world with the answer that all these evils can be traced to the sin of the first humans. This answer is now implausible in terms of chronology. We can be confident from the fossil record that both predation and disease predated the human species by millions of years. For a critique

Christopher Southgate is Senior Lecturer in Theology at the University of Exeter, and Principal of the South-West Ministry Training Course. His address for correspondence is Amory Building, University of Exeter, Exeter EX4 4RJ, UK; e-mail: c.c.b.southgate@ex.ac.uk.

 ISSN 0591-2385

of two recent theodicies based on human sin, those of William Dembski (2009) and Stephen Webb (2010), see Southgate (2014, 104–05).

The answer that a rebellious power or mysterious force is responsible for all the disvalues in the natural world is also problematic, both scientifically and theologically (Southgate 2011). Theologically, because that would be to accord more power to a force opposed to God than the Scriptures and the Christian tradition are willing to accede. It would be to suggest that God set out to create straw-eating lions and was unable to do so. Scientifically, because the difficult but fascinating conclusion to be drawn from evolutionary science is that it is the same process—evolution driven at least in part by natural selection—that gives rise to both the values of beauty, diversity, and ingenuity in creation, and to the disvalues of suffering and extinction. Further, it is the same processes that cause so much "natural evil" experienced by humans—earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, and typhoons—that made the world so extravagantly fruitful for life.

This article proposes a theological language with which to engage the thought that God, as the creator and sustainer of the world, is deeply implicated in the suffering of creatures. Not only through the fact of having brought the world into existence, but also through having created processes to which disvalues were intrinsic. I will concern myself here solely with those ambiguities that arise from non-human causes; evils resulting from human choices require separate treatment.

Several thinkers have recently explored the theodical issues posed by these ambiguities (Attfield 2006; Edwards 2006; Deane-Drummond 2008; Murray 2008; Russell 2008; Southgate 2008, 2011, 2014; Messer 2009; Hoggard Creegan 2013). The present article attempts, not the justification of God in the face of evils, but the exploration of God's ways with the world through contemplation, informed both by scientific understanding and by theological and poetic reflection.

The Concept of Divine Glory

I re-present here an ancient theological concept as a vehicle for speaking of God's ways with an ambiguous creation. This vehicle is *the concept of divine glory*.

"The glory of God" is a very complex term. The concept goes well beyond the familiar connotation of bright and beautiful light. I shall endeavor to show that it can engage with the ambiguity of creation as noted above.

The main word for glory in the Hebrew Bible, *kavod*, does not, as might be supposed, connote light or radiance, but *weight* (Von Rad and Kittel 1964; Weinfeld 1995). So when the seraphim in Isaiah 6 cry out that the whole earth is full of God's glory, that can be understood as the earth being full of the importance of God, the weight of the divine reality.

But it is important to note that divine glory is not simply manifested by the beautiful aspects of the world. Indeed, the vision of Isaiah is full of smoke and dread. And in the New Testament, Christ comes into his full glory at his "hour," which is seen by the writer of the Fourth Gospel as beginning with his Passion (John 12:23; 17:1; cf. Moody Smith 1995, 117). So divine glory encompasses also pain and suffering, degradation and death.

Therefore, I propose that the language of glory (as distinct from beauty) can provide a vehicle for speaking honestly of the ambiguity of the created world and of human experience under God. Also, glory in the Scriptures is typically something apprehensible (usually by sight though occasionally by another sense), something that can be contemplated. If we want to understand more of God creator and redeemer by looking at the world God made, and what God has revealed through the Scriptures, then there is a sense in which we must be looking for God's glory (cf. Von Balthasar 1989). Through that contemplation, that search, more can be understood of the God who is ultimately mysterious and beyond our understanding.

It remains to ask—what understanding of glory, a notoriously elusive concept, is both faithful to its use in Scripture and in the best of modern theology, and is also able to contain the ambiguity of the natural world, and the suffering of Christ on the Cross?

In contemplating the natural world and seeking to perceive something of God through that world, there seem to me to be four basic options, four ways of expressing the relation between what are taken to be apprehensible indications of deity and the truth of the relation between God and the world. One is a resolutely aniconic and apophatic one. God is absolutely unpicturable, not capable of being apprehended at all through any physical phenomena. Arguably this is the approach of the Book of Ecclesiastes.

But if that is set aside, there are three other options. First, a naively realist one, which sees deity directly and unreservedly expressed in physical manifestations. On this understanding, Yahweh literally was the "cloud" in verses such as Exodus 16:10, or 1 Kings 8:10. That understanding may indeed represent an important early strand in Hebrew tradition, may indeed lie behind the introduction of the weightiness-term *kavod* as a way of expressing divine presence. However, such a local, physical understanding of God clearly struggles to incorporate transcendence, the sense that the divine *kavod* is important beyond the immediate vision, and in fact across the whole world (as in Isaiah 6:3), and that that importance in turn reflects something profoundly ineffable, something beyond human comprehension (as in, for example, Exodus 33:18–23). To the extent that this naïve realism may have been present in early expressions of Hebrew religion, it is countered (and necessarily so) by the aniconic instinct that emerged in the tradition, and which we see in texts such as Exodus 33, and 1 Kings 19:11–12, and in a reluctance even to write the divine name.

The second possibility is a Platonic metaphysics, in which the material is a copy of a more perfect spiritual world. David Bentley Hart's understanding of glory, in which beauty—expressed in the material realm—is a reflection of the transcendental that is glory, would be an example (Bentley Hart 2003). This is a very compelling scheme—hence its huge influence on Western thought ever since Plato. But it can be argued that this matter–spirit hierarchy is not, in the last analysis, the scheme to which the Incarnation points us. One danger of a Platonic scheme within Christianity is, as James K. A. Smith notes, that of making "materiality and embodiment . . . a kind of necessary evil," rather than something primordially affirmed good (Smith 2002, 176). Such schemes, then, will always tend to be "over-weighted" toward the transcendent and treat the material only as instrumental.

That brings us to what I see as the third and most generative possibility—that of a semiotic scheme, in which the material—not as a sort of expedient but as a necessary outworking of the character of God—carries *signs* of the divine reality. Those signs are however not discerned by everyone—even in respect of the Incarnate Christ, *the* great sign of the nature of God, the writer can note that "he came unto his own and his own received him not" (John 1:11 KJV).

The core of my understanding of divine glory is therefore as follows:

1. Because the depth of the divine reality is utterly beyond human knowing, and because glory is always represented in the Bible as something apprehensible, I propose that *divine glory is always an apprehensible sign, or array of signs, pointing beyond itself to the unknowable reality underlying it.*
2. That sign, being a self-communication of the divine nature, *always calls for a human response*.

For the Christian, this understanding comes easily, because Christ functions as the quintessential example of such a sign. So in John 1:14 "we beheld his glory," which is described as being "as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (KJV). In other words, we saw the weightiness, the importance, the "significance" of Jesus. We saw that importance as being that of an utterly reliable sign of the character of God—so that to see the Son is to see the Father, to know of God's character that, though it is beyond our knowing, it is full of grace and truth. And the coming of this perfect sign asks of us a response, which in the Johannine prologue is "to believe on his name" (John 1:12 KJV).

Carey Newman helpfully insists that the *kavod Yahweh*, the particular technical term used in the Hebrew Bible for the glory of God, "does not denote, at least in the first instance, a character or an attribute of Yahweh." Neither is the meaning of *kavod Yahweh* exhausted by "fire" or "brightness"

(Newman 1992, 24). Glory is not like beauty or majesty or power, although these attributes may be used as images of the character of glory. Rather glory is, I want to suggest, a sign of the Godness of God. The German theological word for glory, "*Herrlichkeit*," helps us here. It could be rendered literally in English as "lordliness." What I want to insist throughout this article, therefore, is that divine glory is not (necessarily) about light or radiance, or yet fame, but about whatever shows us the Godness of God.

Both parts of that last clause are important—glory is about "the Godness of God," but is also about "what shows us." Glory is about that Godness communicated to and for the creation.

The sort of sign that Jesus is of the Godness of God is in many ways a disturbing one. The Fourth Gospel tells us that Jesus' ministry of signs culminates in his making of himself the ultimate sign, at his "hour" he is "lifted up" for the healing of the world. In other words, his signification of God culminates in his Resurrection, yes, but also in his Passion. The Godness of God is the divine Son enduring the agony of crucifixion for the life of the world. Glory, then, may be associated with all those elements that make the Passion of Christ so profound and disturbing for us—abandonment, pain, silence, innocent suffering stretched to its extremes.

This proposal, then, does not seek to take all the light and beauty out of divine glory, but it does seek to offer a richer and more profound picture than is sometimes given. The language of glory provides a way of talking about the Godness of God, with which the creation is "charged" (I return to this phrase of Hopkins' below) without reducing the mysterious divine to one or a small set of God's attributes. Specifically, it avoids a theology that praises and gives thanks to God for all good things that happen, without acknowledging God's involvement in disvalues and suffering.

My understanding of glory also stresses the importance of creaturely response—a remarkable aspect of divine self-communication as depicted in the Scriptures is that the creature is not completely overwhelmed but has a quantum of freedom of response. Even in the utterly awesome vision of Isaiah, the prophet, deeply aware of his own sin and profound inadequacy, yet offers himself in freedom.

In this study I explore the outworking of my understanding, first clarifying the concept, then testing it in relation to texts in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, and considering its relation to other concepts such as beauty and praise. I then explore the claim of Isaiah 6:3 that the whole earth is full of the divine glory, pressing that claim in terms of our contemplation of the natural world.

As well as Newman's masterful study of the sources of glory in Paul, important sources for the contemporary study of glory include Ramsey (1949), Barth (1957, 1961), Von Balthasar (1986, 1989, 1991),

García-Rivera (1999), Bentley Hart (2003), Agamben (2011), Ó Murchadha (2013), and Fout (in press).

Glory in the Scriptures

I now test out my understanding of glory in respect of the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, helped by a fascinating chapter by Giorgio Agamben in his *The Kingdom and the Glory* (2011, Ch. 8). Agamben quotes at length from Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed* on how divine glory should be understood. Maimonides identifies three senses of *kabhod* (sic):

(1) Where it "is intended to signify the created light that God causes to descend in a place in order to confer honor upon it in a miraculous way." Maimonides here cites Exodus 24.16—the *kavod Yahweh* abiding on Sinai—and Exodus 40:34 where it fills the tabernacle.

(2) Where it "is intended to signify [God's] true essence and true reality," citing Moses' appeal and Yahweh's response at Exodus 33:18f.

(3) Where it is "intended to signify the glorification of Him [. . .] by all men [sic]" (Agamben 2011, 198). The quotation from Maimonides ends tellingly "Understand then the equivocality with reference to *glory* and interpret the latter in every passage in accordance with the context." (Agamben 2011, 199, italics in original)

This provides a helpful confirmation of the complexity of the term. I take Maimonides' first use to correspond to the semiotic understanding of glory I expounded in the last section. A created phenomenon signifies something about God (though in the biblical texts the sign is not necessarily light). But Maimonides makes an important point with his second category, namely, that glory may have a more ontological reference, connoting God's essence. It is noteworthy however that in the passage he cites, God does not accede to Moses' request to see the divine glory, but shows him rather the divine "goodness." So there is still the sense that the ultimate character of divine reality remains elusive, and can only be apprehended partially through signs.

I acknowledge however that there is a spectrum of meanings to be found of the divine glory, between the explicitly semiotic and the more ontological. I fully endorse Maimonides' conclusion that both his first two senses must be considered, according to context. Indeed I conclude that the term "divine glory," to retain its richness, cannot be equated either with the divine reality, or yet only with theophanies. It must be allowed to roam along an axis of meaning between equation with the divine reality, and disclosure of that reality. This fluidity of meaning seems to me entirely appropriate to the mystery of the divine self-communication. As I indicated

above, I do not think the term can ever collapse into the ontological end of the spectrum. But neither can it ever migrate so far in the direction of theophanic demonstration as to lose close connection with essential divine reality, because God's self-communication is faithful to God's nature.

The lay enquirer's path along this spectrum is typically from theophany to ontology. She begins by thinking about glory in terms of brilliant radiance, the pillar of fire leading the people, the face of Jesus at the Transfiguration. Then she begins to understand about "weight," that *kavod* connotes "that which constitutes the importance or value of a being, giving it privilege and honor because it belongs to it" (Barth 1957, 642). She comes to "see" these spectacular manifestations as connoting directly God's surpassing reality and importance. Thus, starting from glory as theophany, she begins to approach a more ontological understanding of glory, one that equates it more closely with divine being in itself.

In the discussion of glory in *Church Dogmatics II/1* we see Karl Barth traverse the reverse path. First he talks of the ineffable excellence of all God's qualities, of glory as "the self-revealing sum of all divine perfections" (1957, 643). But he goes on, "It is God's being in so far as this is in itself a being which declares itself" (643). God "not merely is all this [His attributes] and maintains Himself as all this, but . . . demonstrates Himself as all this" (643–44). Note also this passage from *Church Dogmatics IV/III*, "The glory of God . . . however, is the power of God Himself, grounded in His being as free love, to characterize and demonstrate himself as the One He is in all his competence and might" (Barth 1961, 47–48). In other words, an aspect of the Godness of God is God's power to communicate Godself in signs utterly faithful to that Godness.

Consider then the following sequence of quotations from *Church Dogmatics II/1*:

> It is obvious that in biblical usage this [God's self-declaration] is what is specifically meant when we speak of His glory, and not simply of His being. (646)
> It is necessary and rewarding to ask specifically to what extent His glory is this outshining, this self-declaration. (646)
> God's glory is the glory of His face . . . God in person . . . God who bears a name and calls us by name. God is glorious in the fact that He does this. (647)

The great Swiss theologian starts with glory as ontology, and then in order to do full justice to the term he finds himself talking more and more about God's self-declaration, of God showing His face and calling us by name, hence more and more of glory as sign that invites response. Barth moreover makes clear how this self-communication must be distinguished from some generalized emanation of light by a surpassing light—God's

self-declaration does not go out into empty space; rather God calls creatures by name.

Barth then goes on to say that "God's glory is the answer evoked by Him of the worship offered Him by his creatures" (647). This is the third sense proposed quoted by Agamben from Maimonides, but that answer, that response of praise and worship, seems to me to come under the category of creaturely glorification, not of the divine glory itself. I prefer to distinguish between the sign that is God's self-communication and the creaturely response, which adds nothing to God's all-sufficient glory, but (through the power of the Spirit) establishes fellowship between God and creature. Creaturely response only affects divine glory to the extent to which creaturely response adds a greater intensity and intimacy of further divine self-communication. It may seem curious to distinguish so strongly between two uses of the same root word, between glorification and divine glory. But theology must so distinguish, because this is a part of the way we seek to understand the distinction between creature and creator.

One last observation about this spectrum of meanings of glory. God's ways with the world are not merely a constant; Christians express them in terms of a narrative that has a trajectory toward the eschaton. In that final state God will be "all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:28 NRSV); "the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord" (Isaiah 11:9 NRSV). The whole of creation will be perfused with the reality of God, and every creature's whole being will be response. The believer's "glory" will be perfectly attuned to that of God (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:7). So in establishing a spectrum of meanings from the semiotic to the ontological, we should note that a significant element in the Bible's use of the term glory is ontological in that sense that anticipates the eschaton, in which there is no more need for sign or theophany, for God is with God's creatures in a new and perfected way.

Whether visible as a dark cloud or a brilliant light, or yet (as in Ezekiel 1) in the mysterious form of a human figure, the divine glory signifies God's reality through its awe-evoking character, which has a different quality from either ordinary physical phenomena, or the manifestations of the power and majesty of earthly potentates. The *kavod Yahweh* has a particular place in the texts identified by commentators as the Priestly or P tradition, and in Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Psalms. The Temple becomes the special earthly home of God's *kavod* (Psalm 27:8), but it fills the whole earth (Isaiah 63; Psalms 19:1; 72:19). The Psalmist repeatedly pleads for a universal theophany (Psalms 57:6, 12; 96:3; 96:7; 108:6; 113:4). As well as association with the place of worship, be it tabernacle or temple, there is a strong connection between *kavod* (used in various senses) and the king (Newman 1992, 44–52).

It is noteworthy that the divine *kavod* could leave the holy places of Israel. The First Book of Samuel notes its association with the ark (4:21–22), which was captured by the Philistines, but was so destructive to them that

they returned it. Psalm 24 celebrates its triumphant return to Jerusalem, and 1 Kings 8:11 its coming to dwell in the new Temple. Famously, the *kavod Yahweh* leaves the Temple in Ezekiel 10:18–19, only to return at the end of the book. (It is fascinating that the *kavod* leaves the Temple and rests on the mountain to the east of the city (Ezekiel 11:23), that is, the Mount of Olives. I have long been struck by Jesus' rhythm in the last few days of his life—his going every day to teach in the Temple, withdrawing every evening to the Mount of Olives to pray. In a sense that is what the glory of the Lord does in Passion Week—it offers to the world the things of God, then in the face of the world's hypocrisy and false religious pride it withdraws—only to make the supreme offering in the events of the first Maundy Thursday and Good Friday.

We now come on to the use of the term "glory" in Greek, keeping in mind the connotations of *kavod* that we have explored above. The decision of the translators who produced the Septuagint to render *kavod* by the Greek word *doxa* (181 times, Von Balthasar 1991, 52) is one of the most interesting interfaces between Hebrew and Greek in the whole of biblical translation. I am persuaded by Newman's point that *doxa* was not a word that had been associated with pagan deities—also by his observation that both *kavod* and *doxa* have subjective and objective senses—they can reflect what is intrinsic to an entity, and the response that is due to an entity. Newman also notes that the two words had one semantic field in common, that of honor (1992, Ch. 7).

I have difficulty, however, in pursuing the notion (adopted by Fout in press) that therefore honor is the key meaning to be associated with these biblical terms for glory. It seems to me that "honor" is a term that used to be applied to certain positions—as in the title "His Honor" accorded to English judges. That title differs interestingly from the title "Honorable" used for English nobility and legislators. "His Honor" implies the subjective meaning in Newman's terms—the role of judge possesses, ipso facto, honor. "Honorable" implies that the person should be *accorded* honor, and hence connotes the objective sense. (The irony of that title, in British political exchange, will not be lost on anyone who has heard a broadcast of "Prime Minister's Questions.") But the subjective sense of honor seems to me to be a very marginal sense in contemporary English. Even a judge's title can be seen in objective terms—in order for society to work, honor must be accorded to that individual. Therefore the term "honor" seems to me to be weighted too heavily on the objective side, whereas the biblical witness to divine glory, and especially the main connotations of *kavod*, privilege the subjective side, the Godness of God in Godself. Even in the context of biblical anthropology, Malina's account of honor as "a claim to worth that was publicly acknowledged" (2001, 29) has a major objective component. Fout goes on to acknowledge that he does not "mean to reduce *kabod* or *doxa* to honor: glory is a rich term, in accord with the rich (i.e., simple

yet fathomless) identity of the Lord" (in press). So he concedes that he is selecting an aspect of glory—I too approach the subject from my own particular theological concerns, but am concerned to let the term "divine glory" retain the widest, richest range of meaning.

The Fourth Gospel culminates in the necessity for the Son to be "lifted up," an image referring both to crucifixion and to exaltation. Again there is Moses-imagery, deriving from the serpent lifted up by Moses in the wilderness (Numbers 21:9). But vitally importantly there is also an echo of the last servant song of Deutero-Isaiah, in particular Isaiah 52:13. In the Hebrew text, the servant is "exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high . . . [but] there were many who were astonished at him—so marred was his appearance" (Isaiah 52:13–14 NRSV). But the Septuagint (LXX) version of that Isaiah text has "exalted, and glorified exceedingly . . . so shall thy face be without glory from men, and thy glory shall not be honored by the sons of men" (Brenton 1970, 889). So the link between being lifted up and being glorified is already there in the LXX of Deutero-Isaiah, as is the sense that human beings fail to respond to the sign that is the climax of Jesus' mission. The sign of God, the life that is the manifestation of the divine glory, with the power of healing like the serpent, is a sign transformed by the sinfulness of human response; the sign becomes a human being grotesquely marred by bearing the world's cruelty.

As the divine Son, Jesus revises our understanding of the Godness of God by his kenotic acceptance of human form (Philippians 2:7). Like the God of the Hebrew Bible he remains an object of wonder, but he conveys the Godness of God in the love of enemy, in mercy for his persecutors, in the "handing over" of his Spirit (cf. Moody Smith 1995, 120). He thus reveals what has been called the "deep intratrinitarian kenosis" at the heart of God (Southgate 2008, Ch.4). He reveals that divine power is in Wendy Farley's words "mind-bendingly strange" (2005, 97). The New Testament offers a disturbing picture of Satan as "enthroned in glory, possessing all the kingdoms of the world" (Farley 2005, 99). Satan tempts Jesus to perform three glorious signs, and as Farley points out Jesus ends up performing a version of each of them. Jesus goes on to effect a miraculous feeding, to establish a kingdom, to overcome death. But in the frame in which Satan presents them, each of these signs would be false to the divine reality to which Jesus witnesses. This is important to the semiotic understanding of glory that is being explored here; it is not just a vision or an action that constitutes the sort of sign of the divine reality we are designating as glory, it is the context and indeed the intent of the action that must be included in the overall discernment of glory. Jesus's three great actions that correspond to the temptations are all performed out of "divine yearning and zeal" (to borrow a phrase from Pseudo-Dionysius, quoted by Farley 2005, 99); his refusal to act out of the mere display of power is also, in its way, an authentic display of glory.

I have shown that, while a spectrum of meanings is required to comprehend the complexities of divine glory, a semiotic understanding can do justice to a range of important texts. I have also shown that that glory cannot simply be equated with light, but is a mysterious concept involving also the sacrifice and the degradation of the Passion.

Glory in the Natural World

I now explore whether glory can be discerned through contemplation of the natural world in its ordinary operation. This forms a test of the hypothesis that glory is a helpful concept with which to explore the ambiguities of the world, and God's involvement in them. While not at all ruling out the possibility of God giving great revelatory signs within the created order—the Resurrection is the greatest such example—I want here to explore signs of God that have to be worked for, signs that can only be understood by deep engagement with phenomena that might otherwise appear ordinary. We might, like Isaiah, find ourselves caught up in a manifestation of extraordinary holiness, which causes us to confess that "the whole earth is full of His glory" (Isaiah 6:3). But I consider here whether, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it might be possible to look at aspects of the created world in such a way as to discern that glory.

In a contemplation of the non-human world, this insight from the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins is a helpful starting point. He writes, "The world is charged with the grandeur of God/It will flame out, like shining from shook foil" (1953, 27). Not that God continually has to shake the "foil" to disclose God's "grandeur," rather that the world continually discloses it—rather as the Psalmist claims in announcing that "The heavens are telling the glory of God" (Psalm 19:1 NRSV). As modern, scientifically informed readers of nature we think more or less instinctively of God putting in place systems and processes, rather than acting directly and specially in every instance. Our question here is whether (and how) the results of these systems and processes may disclose to the discerning interpreter something of the nature of their creator.

What I want to propose is that, for the Christian contemplative, every encounter with the created world is an encounter that can be eloquent of the divine reality. As Diogenes Allen puts it, "we live in a universe permeated by a divine reality whose hem we touch when we encounter mysteries" (1986, 18). If glory is, as I have suggested, to be found in signs of that reality, then indeed we should be able to discern that "the whole earth is full of His glory." Therefore part of our task as creatures is to learn to contemplate the created world so as better to be able to respond to those signs of God's gracious self-communication.

Wendy Farley puts this sacramental contemplation of the world in an interesting way in her study of desire. She describes the task of a (human)

desire that has concentrated its powers: "it recognizes the two-fold beauty of the earth . . . The world is a sacrament of something beyond itself . . . both itself and a doorway to the Divine Eros . . . Desire [is] for reality, for the mystery creation speaks when it sings out, 'I am not God, but God made me'." This is very much what I want to say about our attending to the natural world. In doing so we respond to the world itself and to the array of signs by which it speaks of the divine reality. What we also see in Farley is a sense that longing is complementary to glory; even as God communicates Godself through the creation, humans' longing for God can and should be expressed in the attention we give that creation. "'Desire," she writes, "delights in [the goods of the world] as they are: lovely, perishable, temporary, replete with faults" (Farley 2005, 13–15).

I am committed to St. Paul's claim in Romans 1:20 that God's divine nature can be "understood and seen through the things that he has made" (NRSV), or to offer a more contemporary quotation from Alejandro García-Rivera, "All finite things in one way or another reveal something about God" (1999, 82). Andrew Louth talks of "the way in which we may overcome our cultivated deafness" and hear the "whisper of His ways, becoming aware of the signs of creation that point to God and do not simply reflect our own expectations" (2003, vii–viii). I am well aware that inferring things about God from the natural world, the enterprise of natural theology, is notoriously fraught and subject to many criticisms. (For recent explorations of the status of natural theology, see McGrath 2009, and the companions edited by Lane Craig and Moreland 2012; ReManning 2013.) In no sense am I seeking to prove the existence of God, or establish definitively any particular attribute of God. What I seek to do is well described in this quotation from John Macquarrie:

> The theist goes over the details of his world, tracing and emphasizing patterns and connections that support his conviction, and presumably also trying to explain the gaps and recalcitrant facts that count against his belief. The very conviction from which he begins perhaps causes him to notice connections that would not otherwise have been noted, or to be painfully aware at other points of a seeming lack of connections. In the long run, the picture must be acknowledged to be ambiguous, in the sense that no finally conclusive proof in support of his conviction can be offered by the theist, or, for that matter, by the atheist who has been calling attention to other elements in the picture. (Macquarrie 1977, 55)

I am arguing, then, for a realist epistemology. We can infer things about God from attending with great care to the natural world, though our conclusions have to be held with all due provisionality. But, crucially, I am arguing for an understanding of reality that requires *both* naturalistic, scientific investigation, and the imaginative resources of the religious (from my perspective the Christian) poet. So descriptions of nature are complemented and fed by descriptions of creation, and vice versa.

But as Allen reminds us, "We are not to take the pleasantness of nature as evidence of [God's] care and ignore the fact that the very same laws of nature also bring us storms, earthquakes and drought" (1986, 49). So I want us to be able to see glory not just in the familiar sunset picture, not just in the sprinting cheetah, but also in those operations of nature that are full of suffering, and may seem to us to lack beauty.

We know very well that the world is not in any simple sense a palace of beauty—it is full of beauty, but also of harshness and pain. It is rather, in a fine phrase of Thomas Traherne's, a palace of *glory* (quoted as the title of Peacocke 2005) in the sense in which I am exploring this concept, a place where the reality of God's nature as creator is reflected (and also a place where God's purposes in redemption are being effected).

God's glory is reflected in this universe in all sorts of ways—in the sheer extent of the divine work, containing even within this space-time continuum a hundred billion galaxies each containing a hundred billion stars, and around these, we are increasingly coming to realize, millions of planets that may well be capable of supporting life; in the vast timescales over which the divine purposes have been in operation, including on Earth the seven hundred million years or so before life even existed even in its most primitive form, and possibly twice that length of time again before the first eukaryotic cell evolved; in the tectonic processes that move continents, with a strength far beyond anything a human civilization could ever contrive; in the myriad ingenious ways that creatures find to live and reproduce; in the human animal, of whom Irenaeus of Lyons famously said that the glory of God is a human being fully alive.

I explore this further via another quotation from Traherne, who writes:

> The WORLD is unknown till the Value and Glory of it is seen, till the Beauty and Serviceableness of all its parts is considered. When you enter into it, it is an Unlimited field of Variety and Beauty where you may lose yourself in the multitude of Wonder and Delights. But it is a happy loss to lose oneself in admiration of one's own Felicity: and to find God in exchange for oneself, Which we then do when we see him in his Gifts and adore his Glory. (quoted in Peacocke 2005, 89)

This short passage has several themes that cohere with our explorations. First, the importance of contemplation. The value and glory of the world must be seen, not just on its surface but in its parts and their interconnection (their "serviceableness").Von Balthasar has a fine dictum for the contemplative, that "There is no seeing without being caught up" (1989, 24). To see the world truly is to be caught up, in Von Balthasar's sense, to lose one's own self, to some degree, for only in that self-giving, that movement of deep trust, does the contemplative become sufficiently open to receive what can be received of God. But even to be thus caught up is not to see God wholly, but to "see him in his Gifts and adore his Glory."

"Serviceableness" in that passage from Traherne is a fascinating word. He will have had a sense (who in an agrarian society would not?) of the redness in tooth and claw of natural processes. He cannot have had a sense of how those processes drive evolution—that had to wait almost two hundred years for the insights of Darwin. But messy as the biological world clearly was, Traherne was confident that it was serviceable in effecting the divine purposes. Not as being the medium of the caprices of a Being who is forever suspending natural laws, but in that the very created processes themselves are "serviceable." Through them God has given rise to astonishing creaturely beauty, diversity, and creativity, so that indeed to attend to them is to be caught up into an awareness of the Creator's glory.

The intensely disciplined contemplation we find in Hopkins offers helpful ways to express this contemplation we are called to. Hopkins used the science of the day to aid his seeing, and brought religiously informed poetic observation of the natural world to a pitch that, arguably, has never since been equaled. He developed an approach to creation based on his concepts of "inscape" and "instress." These terms can be understood as follows:

> [T]he inscape of an entity may be considered to contain what sort of thing it is scientifically—what patterns and regularities govern its existence—but also its particularity, its "thisness" . . . every creature has both its pattern of life and membership of its species, and also its particularity as an individual creature. The scientific account of an organism is based on trends, regularities, patterns, over a range of individuals—the perception of the particularity of a specific creature, its "thisness," is more the preserve of the poet and contemplative.
> Hopkins has another, related term—"instress"—which is still more difficult to pin down than "inscape." The poet seems to use "instress" for: (i) the cohesive energy that binds individual entities into the Whole, (ii) the impact the inscape of entities makes on the observer, and (iii) the observer's will to receive that impact . . . The value of this odd terminology is that it gives full value to descriptions of entities in scientific terms, as being examples of whatever class of entities they belong to, but also acknowledges their particularity and createdness. (Southgate 2008, 97–98)

Hopkins was keenly interested in scientific descriptions of the world, and indeed had letters published in *Nature*. But W. H. Gardner says of him that he would have parted company with the (scientific) rationalists in saying that "the human spirit must be nourished by the spurting fountains of supra-rational instress, by that 'deep poetry' which is nothing less than intuitive ontology—the knowledge of the essence and being of all things" (Gardner 1958, 350). Ultimately, instress and inscape depend on the radical immanence of God in creaturely selves. Those not willing to discern God's presence in this way will not recognize inscape, for as Von Balthasar, who wrote very interestingly about Hopkins, says, "the true inscape of all things is Christ; God's grace is the stress within them" (von Balthasar 1986, 387).

There is a very interesting study to be done of the relation between inscape and Von Balthasar's concept of "form." Brendán Leahy explains that "Form means a totality of parts and elements, grasped as such, existing and defined as such, which for its existence requires not only a surrounding world but ultimately being as a whole. More than the parts we see and make out, it is the outer manifestation or expression of an inner-depth. It *is* this mysterious inner-depth in manifestation and expression" (Leahy 1994, 31). For Von Balthasar, "Admittedly, form would not be beautiful unless it were fundamentally a sign and appearing of a depth and fullness that, in themselves and in an abstract sense, remain both beyond our reach and our vision" (1989, 118).

I prefer Hopkins' terminology of inscape because it seems to me to accord more importance to the particularity of things, their *haecceitas* or thisness (terminology deriving from Duns Scotus), than what Von Balthasar means by form. As Balthasar himself writes, "In the unique, the irreducible, there shines forth for Hopkins the glory of God, the majesty of his oneness" (1986, 357).

One of Hopkins' most remarkable observations in his Notebooks—themselves an outstanding training ground for any poet of nature—goes as follows:

> I do not think I have seen anything more beautiful than the bluebell I have been looking at. I know the beauty of our Lord by it. It[s inscape] is [mixed of] strength and grace, like an ash [tree]. (Hopkins 1953, 122)

That lovely sentiment needs to be held with our understanding of an evolutionary world driven at least in part by processes of natural selection. God is deeply implicated in the violence and suffering as well as the beauty and loveliness of the world. And I noted above that God's glory is seen not just in bluebells but in the Passion and Cross of Jesus. Karl Barth wrote that, "If we seek Christ's beauty in a glory which is not that of the Crucified, we are doomed to seek in vain . . . In this self-revelation, God's beauty embraces death as well as life, fear as well as joy, what we call 'ugly' as well as what we call beautiful" (1957, 750).

Traherne called the world "an Unlimited field of Variety and Beauty." But a post-Darwinian aesthetic will read that world rather differently, seeing beauty even in the midst of ugliness—or not so much beauty, as glory. The deep reality of the creativity of God is seen in the bluebell and the hummingbird, and also in the hunting patterns of orcas and hyenas, and even in the parasitic strategy of the anopheles mosquito, despite the hideous creaturely suffering these can cause. Such an aesthetic of contemplation is difficult to arrive at and maintain. Faced with the ugliness, as good an observer as Annie Dillard wants to "shake her fist at creation"; Holmes Rolston responds that he would rather "raise both hands and cheer." The theologian Wesley Wildman sees the beauty and the

ambiguity, and concludes that belief in a benevolent God is unsustainable (Rolston 1992, 275–76; 2003, 82; Wildman 2007).

One very significant objection to this approach to theology—one which is not afraid to acknowledge that processes involving violence, and to which suffering is intrinsic, ultimately derive from God's creative activity—is that God is made the metaphysical ground of violence (cf. Messer 2009), even, in David Bentley Hart's phrase, "the metaphysical ground of Auschwitz" (Bentley Hart 2003). I am not entirely clear that any theology of creation *ex nihilo* can escape this charge. If God is the ground of all existence, God is the ground of what creaturely existence can do. The charge is certainly not escaped by refuge in mysterious counter-forces that God is not able to resist. It is deeply unsatisfactory to write, as Hart did regarding the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004, of God being unable to prevent the opening of the doors of the sea (Bentley Hart 2005, 63). The God who made the "doors" and used their opening and shutting as part of the creation of a fecund world, is not a God who was unable to prevent the tsunami. Rather we are forced back to the inexorable conclusion that God honors the regularities of the processes God has made (the Resurrection being the great exception). That the tsunami had a force, equivalent to ten thousand hydrogen bombs, is testament, in a deeply difficult way, to the glory of God in creation. It is a very terrible sign of the way things really are, causing as it did, directly or indirectly, the deaths of some 250,000 human beings.

Full contemplation of the inscape of the tsunami would include reflection on the underlying tectonic processes and their importance to a life-bearing planet, and God's compassion for all the humans affected, as well as on the human folly that made the disaster much worse than it need have been. I return to this "instressing" below.

This is a different way to approach natural theology from the more familiar appeals to order, design and beauty in the natural world. It is a shift that may take a bit of adjustment. I am reminded of the shift in aesthetic required to appreciate Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* in Diaghilev's revolutionary choreography, after being schooled in the appreciation of classical ballet. The dancers had to be taught to dance on their heels instead of their points. To ground our contemplation of the natural world on a real appreciation of the ambiguous character of that world is to be forced back on our heels by the weight of the reality of that world, but therefore to dance in a more genuinely grounded way.

It might be thought that I am here simply baptizing every feature of the creation, lovely or cruel, beautiful or destructive, as, arguably, Wesley Wildman's ground-of-being theology does (Wildman 2007). The writings of Holmes Rolston on "cruciform creation" (Rolston 2006, 144–46) may also be charged with doing this. This term has been criticized by Edwards (2006, 108) and Southgate (2008, 49–50). For a sense in which the concept of cruciformity might be redeemed, see the discussion in Southgate (2014,

110). But indeed I do want to say that every inscape, correctly instressed under the guidance of the Spirit, is a reflection of God's glory in creation (which is in turn a sign of God's inner nature).

It is the Cross of Christ that is the lens through which the problem of the ambiguity of the world must be read; not—as Edwards notes against Rolston—as "a principle behind creation" (Edwards 2006, 108). Rather the Cross as lens opens up a view of glory in which what we see of the natural world—profoundly rich and important though the picture is—forms only one element in a triptych of glory. *Gloria mundi*, what the not-yet-completely-redeemed world discloses of its creator, must be appropriated and understood in the context of *gloria crucis*, of the gift—made possible by the character of the creation—of the Incarnate Christ and his self-surrender on the Cross, and this in turn opens up and is informed by what one might term *gloria in excelsis,* the eschatological song of the new creation, in which creaturely flourishing will be attained without creaturely struggle.

The Pauline literature seems to identify our place in the story as being firmly in the eschatological phase (see especially Colossians 1:20). Somehow or other the liberty of the creation depends on humans coming into the liberty of their glory (Romans 8:19–22). So the creation still manifests the protological glory with which it is "charged," a glory full of "groaning," a glory which we confess to be only the beginning of the story.

Gloria mundi, gloria crucis, gloria in excelsis. Too often Christian exposition has concentrated only on the second of these stories, paving the way for the third. I suggest that Christianity has sold itself short through inadequate attention to the first story, to protological glory, difficult and troubling concept though we have found this to be.

In considering the natural world, the Christian contemplative must look at the whole of the three-act story. That story brings to every entity and event in the drama of creation the perspective that God became incarnate and suffered for the transformation of the world, and that there will be a transformed state of that world in which those creatures that appear victims in the first story know flourishing in the third.

This is a move to be made only with the utmost caution. It is very problematic, in my view, to suggest that simply viewing an event of suffering within creation within this larger perspective of redemption and eschatological consummation somehow dissolves out the suffering of the creature, or prevents that suffering from troubling us. Apart from anything else, that would seem to me to make light of the depth of the travail of Christ's Passion.

The Book of Job is helpful here. It might be said that Job fights throughout the Book for a level playing field with God, for some forensic process that will judge the divine righteousness. Instead he gets something very different, which could be represented as a divine rebuff, a rejection of the

possibility of that level playing field, but seems to me to be something much more profound. Job is drawn into a far deeper understanding of the inscape of things—into the glory of creation as it reflects its creator. In fact he receives what amounts to an exhibition of divine glory, including, it should be noted, attention to the appetites of young lions, and prey for the ravens (Job 38:39–41) Furthermore, Job is then not offered an answer but a deepened relationship, and a new life that is not restoration of his former state but a "new creation."

For the rest of this article, however, I want to persist with the exploration of *gloria mundi*, to ask where glory can be seen in this first creation, into which redemption is only gradually working its way. The evolutionary scheme makes possible intricacy of co-operation, loveliness of form, ingenuity of life-strategy. Both individual life and overall scheme testify to the divine glory as creator. But this witness is not the simple one of beauty, but something much more complex.

As I have said, my approach involves fusing, as much as possible, scientific insights with those of poets and other contemplatives. To return to Macquarrie's understanding of the enterprise of natural theology, he writes that "this descriptive type of philosophical or natural theology does not *prove* anything, but it *lets us see*, for it brings out into the light the basic situation in which faith is rooted, so that we can then see what its claims are" (Macquarrie 1977, 56, emphasis in original). The natural sciences help to bring out into the light in very powerful ways the basic situation in which Christian faith is rooted. Biology and ecology show us the extraordinary beauty and intricacy of that world. They tell us (albeit provisionally, since their depictions are always moving on) things beyond all ordinary seeing—how the light-utilizing properties of certain photosynthetic pigments maintain an oxygen atmosphere on Earth unlike that of any other known planet, how the salt-avoiding strategies of certain marine organisms cause the recycling of sulfur, which land-based organisms vitally require, how in Rolston's memorable phrase "the cougar's fang has carved the limbs of the fleet-footed deer, and vice versa" (Rolston 2006, 134). Biology and ecology also prevent us from escaping the ambiguity of that world—they make us confront the conclusion that that same process of "carving" is founded on the inevitability of suffering. The fawn that is too slow to learn to run is cougar-meat; the lamed cougar starves. Also that the biosphere we have now in a sense rests on a vast history of extinction—as many as 99 percent of all species that have ever existed are now lost.

However, as has often been claimed in recent years, science by itself tends to "disenchant" the world, to give rise to reductive ways of seeing that do not do full justice to the human imagination, or necessarily promote human cherishing of the non-human world (cf. McGrath 2003). To put it baldly, science may give us facts, it may even promote wonder (on this McGrath and Dawkins are agreed; McGrath 2003, 171–78)) but it cannot by itself

make us see glory. We need also a process of seeing that is close to the way Rowan Williams describes the making of art—"that form of intellectual life in which the generativity of the world we encounter and experience is allowed to work in ways that are free from many of the requirements of routine instrumental thinking" (2006, 140–41).

What we are exploring is that deep instressing of the realities of the creation. This means drawing fully on the scientific understanding of creatures. We need to take seriously the sometimes paradoxical conclusions that "the unnatural nature of science" (in Lewis Wolpert's phrase) offers us. We are not, then, concerned only with the feelings evoked by entities under contemplation, but with a feeling-aided elucidation of what is objectively present in their natures. But this sort of contemplation goes beyond that to instress the "thisness" of the object investigated—the particular bluebell in the particular moment. Even beyond that, it rests on discerning how God loves the creature concerned, knowing the long history by which it has come to be, knowing how it and its ancestors have striven for selfhood, delighting in its flourishing, entering into the "passion play" (Rolston 2006, 144) of its frustrations and suffering, and how God longs for the creature to transcend its narrow self-interest (Southgate 2008, Ch. 4). This sort of contemplation also involves the effort to discern creation's praise of God, of which there are many hints in the Psalms (especially at Psalm 19.1–4, 148), though there is also a sense, at least in some translations of Psalm 19.3–4, that this is a music we can never properly hear. On this theme of creaturely praise, see Bauckham (2002).

I have built up here a picture of the inscape of an entity or event as a complex matrix. It involves the nature of entities as they can be described scientifically. It involves the existential impact of them on the observer (instresser). It involves an understanding, to the limited extent of which humans are capable, of the place of the entity or event in the story of God's ways with the world. That in turn involves the three phases of that story—God's activity as the giver of existence, form and particularity, and as the one longing to see creaturely self-transcendence, but also God's engagement with the world in the Incarnation and Passion, and also God's promise of eventual consummation, of a state of being of which the Resurrection is the foretaste.

It remains for me to clarify what the relation is between this complex (and in my view immensely rich) way of seeing the natural world, and our chief concern here, that of glory. My position is that the whole divine element in the inscapes of every created entity or event constitutes glory: an utterly reliable array of signs of the divine nature. Not, then, that the tsunami could be called a glorious event, but it contained elements of divine glory. In God's bringing into existence massive forces that have made this planet fruitful for life. In God's faithfulness to those processes. In the capacities of animals, transcending their previous capacities, to sense the tsunami

coming. In God's huge compassion for every victim, God's presence to the puzzled, angry and needy worshipper in Word and Eucharist, and God's promise of redeemed and fulfilled life from which every tear has been wiped away. When we rightly instress the tsunami we see, then, a complex array of signs pointing to the deep reality behind the event. These, taken together, manifest glory, as defined above. And they call, as my definition of glory insists, for a response, or set of responses, which in the case of the tsunami will include for the Christian—properly—the following:

(a) anger, that for all God's power God did not do more to prevent suffering, combined with
(b) compassionate action to help and support all those affected, and
(c) worship, entering more deeply into the mystery of our relationship with this God who seems at once so powerful and powerless,
(d) repentance, for the folly of draining so many mangrove swamps that protected shorelines, for the war in Banda-Aceh that drained communities' strength to respond to the catastrophe, for the false economy of refusing to install the early-warning system that already existed in the Pacific, and
(e) longing, for flourishing life with God that has no end or element of tragedy.

A second case—a golden eagle quartering moorland in the Scottish Highlands, hunting down a mountain hare. Here the inscape of the event includes long evolutionary histories of predator and prey (as well incidentally as the notorious nineteenth-century "clearances" of those Highlands, which have opened up additional habitat for both). It includes the power and expertise of flight of the eagle, its extraordinary visual acuity that picks out its prey at a vast distance, the quickness and agility of the hare, the twists and turns of the hunt, the hunger of the predator, and the fear and pain of the victim. It includes (I venture to suggest) God's delight in all those creaturely skills, and God's closeness to the suffering hare, in a particular and peculiar relationship of love and praise in extremis. So the search for those signs of the divine that constitute glory again involves a complex discernment, with elements of the counter-intuitive. It is emphatically not a way of saying that everything is lovely when seen in a big enough perspective. The world is complex and troubling, and yet charged with the grandeur of God. The three-part story still contains profound elements of tragedy.

My last example is perhaps the most problematic of the three. On the lower slopes of Mount Kenya a young child has her blood sucked by a female anopheles mosquito. The protozoan *Plasmodium falciparens* is transmitted to her blood, through which it travels to her liver to multiply. Sexual

reproduction of *falciparens* becomes possible when the now-malarial child is bitten again by another plasmodium-carrying mosquito. Malaria has recently spread up the mountain because of climate change—the family had neither familiarity with the disease nor with precautions against it. As with my first example, a complex mixture of human casualness and neglect is associated with this suffering. Again as with the tsunami, divine compassion and eventual redemption is a component of the inscape of this event. But another element is the intricacy and efficacy of the complex life-cycle of the parasite. There is a sort of evolved ingenuity even within this form of "cheating" on creaturely co-operation (Southgate 2014) that expresses something of the fecundity and generativity of creation. As such it too, hard and troubling though it is to say, it too is an aspect of the divine glory.

I have deliberately chosen difficult areas of exploration, staying away from those moments, with which every reader will be familiar, when the sheer beauty or magnificence of an element of the natural world evokes a profound sense of wonder, and in the believer can easily evoke the response of Isaiah: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory." I have tried to show that even very disturbing events in nature, rightly contemplated, can evoke that response.

I am well aware of how difficult this territory is. I merely submit that this is the God Christians find in the Bible, the God who in the words of Isaiah 45.7 makes "weal and woe alike" (NRSV), who is yet the God of Calvary and Pentecost.

In acknowledging this, in the way I have asserted to be vitally necessary to honest speaking about God, there is a danger of defaulting into a kind of Marcionism that attributes all the woe to the God of creation, and all the love to the God of salvation. I need to make it absolutely clear that this is not the line I am pursuing. In the position adopted here, the God who brought everything into existence from nothing is also "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation" (2 Corinthians 1:3 NRSV).

It seems to me that an orthodox Christianity that insists on the unity of creation and redemption must suppose two constraints on God. The first is that a world evolving by natural selection, and therefore necessarily involving the suffering of sentient creatures, is the only sort of world in which the values represented by complex and diverse life could arise. That this is a logical necessity is something I cannot demonstrate, but it must be a logical necessity if it is to be a constraint on the power of the sovereign Lord. The second constraint on God, amply familiar from Christian teaching, though still not clearly or univocally understood, is the necessity, oft-repeated through the Gospels, that Jesus should have to

endure degrading execution to release, finally and fully, the redemptive purposes of God into the world.

The first of these constraints is unfamiliar to most Christians. The second is routinely confessed in various ways throughout the Church. But I would submit that they are comparably mysterious—indeed if anything the first is easier to understand than the second, since the first has the intuitions of the natural sciences to commend it, whereas the intuitions of a culture based on a sacrificial system are remote from us. In responding to glory, then, we respond to the mystery of a God of staggering power, and yet a God who can only effect certain things in certain ways, ways that, in both creation and redemption, involve taking creaturely pain into the heart of the Godhead.

So to contemplate God in relation to the natural world is to contemplate both immense, staggering, unimaginable power, and at the same time a powerlessness we cannot quite fathom either—the creation we so delight in and wonder at cannot arise all at once but only by an immensely long birthing, full of "futility." (For a possible evolutionary reading of this word in Rom. 8.20, see Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate 2010.)

I offer one further thought, based on the use of the word "glory" that is most familiar to Christians. The doxology often attached to the Lord's Prayer (based on manuscript additions to Matthew 6.13) might seem at first sight to join three parallel terms "thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory." But I wonder if this need be read so simply. There is sufficient paradox in Jesus' teachings of the kingdom to suggest that it is a place of power-reversal, a place where things are not as "among the Gentiles" (Mark 10.42–45 NRSV). So that so-familiar doxology could be read as saying: God's is the servanthood and the sacrifice, and the power and the sovereignty, and the glory that speaks of all of these together.

Conclusion

Faced with the ambiguity of God's creation, I have rejected accounts of the origin of creaturely suffering based on a fall-event, and proposed that the concept of divine glory provides a way of exploring both the character of creation and its eschatological destiny. I have tested my understanding of divine glory against biblical texts, and major authorities in the tradition. I have then explored how the resources of scientifically informed Christian contemplation (including Hopkins' terminology of inscape) can be used to explore the involvement of God's glory even in situations of great pain and suffering.

Acknowledgments

I am most grateful to Sarum College for the invitation to give the 2014 Sarum Lectures, the first two of which form the basis of this article. I

am also grateful to many colleagues at Exeter for helpful feedback, and particularly to Ms. Bethany Sollereder and Ms. Katherine Manley Frost for detailed comments on drafts.

References

Agamben, Giorgio. 2011. *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Allen, Diogenes. 1986. *Temptation*. Princeton, NJ: Caroline Press.

Attfield, Robin. 2006. *Creation, Evolution and Meaning*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate.

Barth, Karl. 1957. *Church Dogmatics Volume II: The Doctrine of God, Part 1*, transl. T. H. L. Parker, W. R. Johnston, Harold Knight, and J. L. M. Haire, ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.

———. 1961. *Church Dogmatics Volume IV: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, Part 3, 1st Part*, transl. Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.

Bauckham, Richard. 2002. "Joining Creation's Praise of God." *Ecotheology* 7:42–59.

Bentley Hart, David. 2003. *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans.

———. 2005. *The Doors of the Sea: Where Was God in the Tsunami?* Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans.

Brenton, Sir Lancelot C. L. 1970 [1844] *The Septuagint Version: Greek and English*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Deane-Drummond, Celia. 2008. *Eco-theology*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd.

Dembski, William A. 2009. *The End of Christianity: Finding a Good God in an Evil World*. Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster.

Edwards, Denis. 2006. "Every Sparrow that Falls to the Ground: The Cost of Evolution and the Christ-Event." *Ecotheology* 11(1):103–23.

Farley, Wendy. 2005. *The Wounding and Healing of Desire*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.

Fout, Jason. In press. *Fully Alive: The Glory of God and the Human Creature in Karl Barth, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and Theological Exegesis of Scripture*. London: Bloomsbury.

García-Rivera, Alejandro. 1999. *The Community of the Beautiful: A Theological Aesthetics*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press.

Gardner, William H. 1958. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Study of Poetic Idiosyncrasy in Relation to Poetic Tradition, Volume Two*. London: Oxford University Press.

Hoggard Creegan, Nicola. 2013. *Animal Suffering and the Problem of Evil*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hopkins, Gerard Manley. 1953. *Poems and Prose of Gerard Manley Hopkins: Selected with an Introduction and Notes by W. H. Gardner*, ed. by William H. Gardner. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.

Horrell, David G., Cherryl Hunt, and Christopher Southgate. 2010. *Greening Paul: Re-reading the Apostle in an Age of Ecological Crisis*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press.

Lane Craig, William, and J. P. Moreland, eds. 2012. *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*. Chichester, UK: Blackwell.

Leahy, Brendán. 1994. "Theological Aesthetics." In *The Beauty of Christ: An Introduction to the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. Bede McGregor OP and Thomas Norris, 23–55. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.

Louth, Andrew. 2003. *The Wilderness of God*, 2nd edn. London: Darton, Longman and Todd.

McGrath, Alister. 2003. *The Re-enchantment of Nature: Science, Religion and the Human Sense of Wonder*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.

———. 2009. *A Fine-tuned Universe: The Quest for God in Science and Theology*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.

Macquarrie, John. 1977. *Principles of Christian Theology*. London: SCM Press.

Malina, Bruce. 2001. *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.

Messer, Neil. 2009. "Natural Evil after Darwin." In *Theology after Darwin*, ed. Michael S. Northcott and R. J. Berry, 139–54. Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster.

Moody Smith, David. 1995. *The Theology of the Gospel of John*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Murray, Michael J. 2008. *Nature Red in Tooth and Claw: Theism and the Problem of Animal Suffering*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Newman, Carey C. 1992. *Paul's Glory-Christology: Tradition and Rhetoric*. Leiden: Brill.
Ó Murchadha, Felix. 2013. *The Phenomenology of Christian Life: Glory and Night*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
Peacocke, Arthur. 2005. *The Palace of Glory: God's World and Science*. Adelaide, Australia: ATF Press.
Ramsey, Michael. 1949. *The Glory of God and the Transfiguration of Christ*. London: Longmans Green.
ReManning, Russell, ed. 2013. *The Oxford Handbook of Natural Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Rolston, Holmes, III. 1992. "Disvalues in Nature." *The Monist* 75:250–78.
———. 2003. "Naturalizing and Systematizing Evil." In *Is Nature Ever Evil? Religion, Science and Value*, ed. Willem B. Drees, 67–86. London: Routledge.
———. 2006 [1987]. *Science and Religion: A Critical Survey*. Philadelphia, PA: Templeton Foundation Press.
Russell, Robert J. 2008. *Cosmology: From Alpha to Omega*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.
Smith, James K. A. 2002. *Speech and Theology: Language and the Logic of Incarnation*. London: Routledge.
Southgate, Christopher. 2008. *The Groaning of Creation: God, Evolution and the Problem of Evil*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
———. 2011. "Re-reading Genesis, John and Job: A Christian's Response to Darwinism." *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 46:365–90.
———. 2014. "Does God's Care Make a Difference? Theological Reflection on the Suffering of God's Creatures." In *Christian Faith and the Earth: Current Paths and Emerging Horizons in Ecotheology*, ed. Ernst Conradie, Sigurd Bergmann, Celia Deane-Drummond, and Denis Edwards, 97–114. London: Bloomsbury.
Von Balthasar, Hans Urs. 1986. *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics: Volume III: Studies in Theological Style: Lay Styles*, transl. Andrew Louth, John Saward, Martin Simon, and Rowan Williams, ed. by John Riches. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.
———. 1989. *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics: Volume I: Seeing the Form*, transl. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis, ed. by Joseph Fessio SJ and John Riches. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.
———. 1991. *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics Volume VI: The Old Covenant*, transl. by Brian McNeil C.R.V and Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis, ed. by John Riches. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.
Von Rad, Gerhard, and Gerhard Kittel. 1964. "Doxa." In *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament Volume II*, ed. by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, transl. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 232–55. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans.
Webb, Stephen. 2010. *The Dome of Eden: A New Solution to the Problem of Creation and Evolution*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock.
Weinfeld, Moshe. 1995. "kāḇôḏ." In *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament Volume VII*, ed. by G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, transl. David E. Green. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans.
Wildman, Wesley. 2007. "Incongruous Goodness, Perilous Beauty, Disconcerting Truth: Ultimate Reality and Suffering." In *Nature in Physics and Cosmology: Scientific Perspectives on the Problem of Evil in Nature*, ed. Nancey Murphy, Robert J. Russell, and William R. Stoeger SJ, 267–94. Vatican City, Vatican Observatory and Berkeley, CA: Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences.
Williams, Rowan. 2006. *Grace and Necessity*. London: Bloomsbury.