



The Weight of Glory

We all know what the *weight* of glory is, whether or not we have read Lewis' golden sermon.

We know it from the magic words of the poets; or we know it from the wordless word of great music, work of the Muses, not of man; or we know it from the word spoken by human love, the moment when the world's most prosaic word suddenly becomes the most wonder-full word in the world, the word "we"; or we know it in high liturgy, in the solemn joy of adoration before the astonishing mystery of God-with-us, when we are side by side with Mary, hailed by the angelic annunciation of the heavenly glory, visited from another world, another dimension; or we meet the glory in great art, when a picture becomes no longer an object in this world but a magic window opening up onto another world for us, a hole in our world, as the stars were to the ancient Greeks and as the painting of *The Dawn Treader* was to the Pevensie children; or we know it in the electrical shock of an absolutely perfect flower, or in the high, clear, crystal glass of a winter night, or in the seagull's haunting, harking call to return to Mother Sea.

For some, the glory is not so much in the far country as in the magic word "home", the fairest place on earth, attained after Ulyssean adventures, Herculean labors, or prodigal wanderings aplenty. All of us will know it flat in the face when we die; we shall be hailed by the Angel of Death with the same lightsome glory with which Mary was hailed by the Angel of Life, because Christ has made Death into life's golden chariot, sent to fetch his Cinderella bride out of the cinders of this fireplace of a world, through a far midnight ride, to his very own castle and bedchamber, where Glory will beget glory upon us forever.

Suppose you reply that you have never felt this "weight of glory". That is too bad, but here are two things that are much worse, two dangerous conclusions you may be tempted to draw from your not feeling the "weight of glory". One: Since I have missed out on this most precious secret, I must be worthless and may as well despair. *It* is worth much, therefore *I* am worth little. Two: Since I have never experienced this thing, those who do are foolish dreamers of foolish dreams. I am worth much, therefore it is worth little.

Both conclusions are not only logically fallacious but spiritually destructive. They amount to a sigh and a sneer, despair and pride—the two things we can most profitably exorcise from our lives, especially the sneer, the lowest thing in the world.

But *no* one is devoid of the invitation to glory. Hide as we may, we are all hailed by the angel. Ah, but we hear the hailing only on the "hailing frequency": that spiritual ear that is buried at the very bottom of our being, buried under the louder shouts and bellows of a hundred hungry, howling animals, the this-worldly desires. So you may never seem to hear the heartbreakingly sweet voice of the nightingale that sings every night in our heart. But it is there whether we hear it or not. Be sure of that. If you are a human being, made in the image of God, then you too are a potential god or goddess, creature of the Creator, glory reflecting Glory, deep calling unto deep. All are weighted by the Glory. But not all feel the weight.

There is no escape from the glory, for the glory is the glory of God, and there is no escape from God. But there is an escape from knowing it, like the dwarfs in *The Last Battle*. We cannot turn the universe inside out, but we can turn our own minds inside out: we can believe we are mere mortals dreaming the dream of immortality, while in fact we are immortals dreaming the terrible dream of mere mortality. We can dream that we are only dreaming the glory, while in fact we are never so wide awake as when we open our eyes to the glory. We can follow Freud the Fraud and

call it all illusion, soporific, and wishful thinking, while in fact it calls us to waken to Ultimate Reality. We can think of it as airy and insubstantial, like the creatures in *The Tempest*, while in fact it is the "enormous bliss of Eden", bigger than a twenty-billion-light-year universe of a trillion trillion suns and heavier than death. And stronger too.