

In Michael Buckley's gloss on this scene of the Transfiguration he suggests that 'God reveals Christ to us too' and I thought, 'But isn't this rather about Christ revealing God to us?' and then I wondered at the truth of both statements: revelation is saying something about God, of course, but also about us, and Christian revelation is saying something about how both come together in the incarnate Christ – God made human that we might become God – the stress, though clumsily put, perhaps, that the Orthodox tradition has preserved and developed where we in the West might have stressed our separateness and sinfulness instead. And something of this different emphasis, perhaps, is apparent in the differing translations of the original Greek where some might emphasise Peter's reaction, and that of James and John, as one of fear rather than one of awe, but fear seems to contradict his also saying, 'It is wonderful for us to be here' – wonder being much more consistent with awe than fear.

Now, to bring this 'down to earth', if that isn't also a contradiction of transcendence, it's worth exploring incidents in our own lives which provoke awe and wonder. For me, it was a sudden glimpse of children at school (with whom, as a teacher, I was highly vexed) surrounded by an aura, literally, and, to me, shining; and this stopped me in my tracks and the vexation turned to wonder and also to a realisation that these charges of mine, for a short time only, were children of God and there was no need for me to fear that they were getting out of control and that I needed to shout at them: they were not ultimately my charges after all and were already being looked after. Now, the interesting thing about this is that, not only were they transfigured, albeit briefly, but, in a way, I was transfigured, also – there was a sort of reflected glory going on which only lasted a moment but was there to re-visit many times since when similar moments of fear and exasperation have been visited on me.

In short, there's more to us and the world and to God, one might say, than is usually apparent and, just occasionally, the veil is lifted and, more than that, like Moses on the mountain, this experience of glory may well be seen by others but not necessarily seen or known to ourselves: that is the reflected glory which is, perhaps, like holiness and being in love, our best witness of who or what God in Christ is really about. 'Transparency' perhaps sums it up – or even what rising from the dead might mean.

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