

C. S. Lewis on the Reason for Praise

C. S. Lewis tells of encountering, early on in his Christian life, "a stumbling block in the demand . . . made by all religious people that we should 'praise' God; still more in the suggestion that God Himself demanded it."^a It suggested to his mind a very unappealing image of God, like that of people we know who constantly want to be admired and flattered.

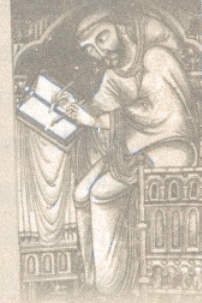
Lewis came to understand the demand to worship by analogy:

Many objects both in Nature and in Art may be said to deserve, or merit, or demand, admiration. . . . [Likewise, God] is that object to admire which . . . is simply to be awake, to have entered the real world. . . . I did not see that it is in the process of being worshipped that God communicates his presence to men. . . . But the most obvious fact about praise—whether of God or anything—strangely escaped me. . . . I had never noticed that all enjoyment spontaneously overflows into praise. . . . The world rings with praise—lovers praising their mistresses, readers their favourite poet, walkers praising the countryside, players praising their favorite game. . . . I had not noticed how the humblest, and at the same time most balanced and capacious minds, praised most, while the cranks, misfits and malcontents praised least. . . . Except where intolerably adverse circumstances interfere, praise almost seems to be inner health made audible. . . . I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation.^b

a. C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1958), 91. I heartily recommend the entire book, especially chap. 9, "A Word about Praising."

b. *Ibid.*, selections from 92–95.

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things. Everything depends on his gracious **will**, by which all persons, animals, and things **came to be and were created.**

Reflection and Application (4:10–11)

The words of the twenty-four elders point to a truth we do not often think about: we owe God gratitude, honor, and praise for our very existence, even more than we owe honor and gratitude to our parents. Do we think to praise God for the wonder of our existence and of all creation? Two psalms that can help us to do this are Ps 104 and 139.