



AFTER A FEW YEARS MORE THAN A HALF CENTURY breathing the air of this temporal plane, I have reached the conclusion that the main reason I so favor the climate of the hinterlands, over that of this country's left coast, is that here stuff regularly falls from the sky. Here in this place our more sophisticated brethren dismissively refer to as "fly-over country" (meaning, a foreign and insignificant region experienced only through the window of a jetliner connecting them coast-to-coast), no matter the season, something is usually falling to earth from some place overhead.

I was born and raised in these parts, and the rhythms and ways of this land were ingrained in me from the beginning. In the winter months, snow, rain, even ice would fall from the sky—if not with clockwork dependability, it was at least sufficiently reliable to remove winter coats from the basement and to wax the runners of my *Radio Flyer* sled in anticipation. Every winter the city would block traffic

from the street in front of our house—a perfect incline for sledding—and the fresh snow would quickly become compacted and slick under the sled runners of all the neighborhood children.

In the spring, rain would reliably fall from the sky, reawakening life from the frozen soil. Rivers of runoff would flow down the gutters on either side of our hill, and on my walks to and from grade school—dressed, of course, in my yellow slicker with detachable hood and my buckle boots—I would step over the worms that the rains had brought to the surface, scattered about the worn and pitted sidewalk. In the summer, rain would continue to fall, if less frequently, keeping our backyard garden green and growing.

As summer dwindled down to the faded, drier days of autumn, soon a different form of precipitation would fall: colorful, drying leaves. As if prefiguring in dry form the approaching snowfall, the leaves would fill the air, drifting down to collect upon the browning

lawns of the neighborhood. Dutifully—as if playing our assigned role in a grand pageant—we would get our rakes from the garage and collect the leaves into huge piles. And, again, as if it were written somewhere in a script, we kids would run and leap into the aromatic piles, scattering the leaves again, before Dad would finally set match to the reorganized pile.

“perfect”

When Linda and I lived on the west coast, the natives there declared the weather “perfect.” To us, however, the weather seemed unnatural, artificial. There wasn’t that comfortable seasonal rhythm in which our bodies and minds had been born and raised. Winter snow was nonexistent, replaced by infrequent rain. Summer rain was virtually unheard of. The musky, melancholy grace of autumn never occurred, since most trees in the area never shed their leaves. And temperatures (at least to our senses) were maddeningly constant.

For two decades we yearned to return to where something more natural than smog fell from the sky.

Now we live in the same climate in which we were raised—where the same seasonal rhythm is played out, with only minor variation, year after year. I may no longer go sledding down the nearest hill after a winter snowfall; I may no longer dodge rain-coaxed worms on a wet sidewalk on my way to grade school; I may no longer heave my considerable bulk into the nearest pile of fallen autumn leaves—but those same bits of precipitation and drying foliage still come down from the skies at their appointed times.

youthful suppositions

Along with being reared where there was weather, I was born and raised to believe in God. As a child I was taught that God lived in heaven and, in practical terms, heaven was located somewhere over my head, somewhere far above the trees, the clouds—above even the breathable air. Heaven was out there beyond the stars, beyond the cosmos, beyond anything known by man.

In any case, no matter where I might be, God was up.

So it was only natural that I would come to associate the stuff falling from the sky with God. After all, the rain and snow seemed to fall from nothing more than thin air. Even after I learned that they actually fell from clouds, it still seemed more poetic to someone born a dreamer that they emanated from nothing more material than the Almighty’s hand. Yes, I knew that the leaves originated in the branches of the trees, but standing there in the dry musk of autumn, looking straight out at them drifting down to the ground, it seemed as

if they were falling from the barest wisp of ether in the heavens. Only later did I learn that God’s word confirms my youthful suppositions.

Ask rain from the Lord at the time of the spring rain—
The Lord who makes the storm clouds;
And He will give them showers of rain, vegetation in the field
to each man.

(Zechariah 10:1)

“It shall come about, if you listen obediently to my commandments which I am commanding you today, to love the Lord your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your

soul, that He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early and late rain, that you may gather in your grain and your new wine and your oil. He will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied.”

(Deuteronomy 11:13-15)

*“There shall be showers of blessing”—
This is the promise of love;
There shall be seasons refreshing,
Sent from the Saviour above.*

*“There shall be showers of blessing”—
Precious reviving again;
Over the hills and the valleys,
Sound of abundance of rain.*

*“There shall be showers of blessing”—
Send them upon us, O Lord;
Grant to us now a refreshing,
Come and now honor Thy Word.*

*“There shall be showers of blessing”—
Oh, that today they might fall,
Now as to God we’re confessing,
Now as on Jesus we call!*

*Showers of blessing,
Showers of blessing we need;
Mercy-drops ’round us are falling,
But for the showers we plead.
(Daniel W. Whittle)*

sovereign

The meteorologist knows that there is a specific, natural explanation for every drop of rain and every flake of snow that falls from the sky. The naturalist can expound at length about the climatic and seasonal influences upon deciduous trees that cause them to drop their leaves every year. But the poet knows that above science is heaven—and the hand of God. The believer knows that even before He created man, God created (and thus controls) science. Science may have its rules, but God created the rules; clouds may form according to natural laws, but God created those laws.

So it is perfectly acceptable and right to see God in the rain, the snow, even the cascading leaves of autumn. It is a righteous supposition to see His purposeful hand in all the stuff falling from the sky, for He is sovereign over it all.

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Do any of the worthless idols of the nations bring rain?
Do the skies themselves send down showers?
No, it is you, O Lord our God.
Therefore our hope is in you,
for you are the one who does all this.
(Jeremiah 14:22 niv)

