

Issue #33
August 16, 2004

Through a Haze Darkly

Every night, before retiring, Linda and I spend a few moments with our outdoor “kids”—Thornton and Angel. Thornton, our lone male cat, sleeps in the garage, but Angel lives and sleeps outside on the deck. And every evening when we step out onto the deck to say good-night to her, we not only can feel but sometimes *see* the weather.

During these months it is not uncommon to step from the air-conditioned comfort of the house into the breathless claustrophobia of summer humidity and heat. The heavy air wraps itself around flesh like a wet woolen blanket, and the heat and humidity combine to create conditions seemingly unlivable.

On such evenings not only does the body signal alarms about the unpleasant weather, with clammy, sweaty skin, but, lifting our gaze heavenward we can see how it has literally diminished our vision. The stars that

are typically bright and clear pinpricks in the clean air of the Midwest countryside are now gauzed over by all the moisture hanging in the night air. To see stars and planets that otherwise seem almost within reach, we must now strain and squint through the wet haze of humidity that has wrapped itself over our land. Now they are faint, distant, unimportant.

A Sharp Constancy

From night to night the stars do not change; their cosmic dance, to the human eye, is too ponderous to count as movement at all. As seen over the roof edge of a country house, the stars seem constant, their white light sharp and piercing.

Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.
(James 1:17)

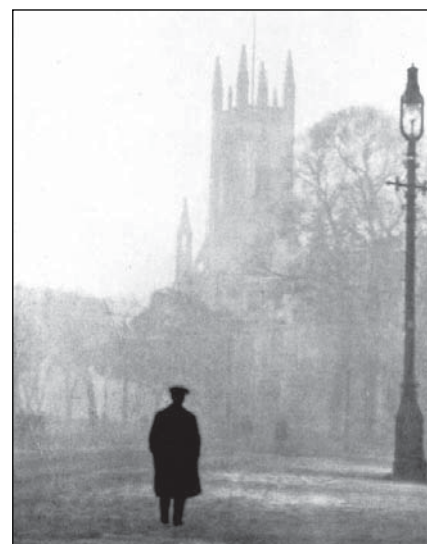
Fill all my vision, Saviour, I pray,
Let me see only Jesus today;
Though thro' the valley Thou ledest me,
Thy fadeless glory encompasseth me.

Fill all my vision, every desire
Keep for Thy glory; my soul inspire
With Thy perfection, Thy holy love
Flooding my pathway with light from above.

Fill all my vision, let naught of sin
Shadow the brightness shining within.
Let me see only Thy blessed face,
Feasting my soul on Thy infinite grace.

Fill all my vision, Saviour divine,
Till with Thy glory my spirit shall shine.
Fill all my vision, that all may see
Thy holy Image reflected in me.

(Avis B. Christiansen)



Even more constant than the stars is their Maker, for He truly does not change or move from our sight in any way. Who He was 10,000 years ago is precisely who He will be 10,000 years hence. His light has not dimmed, nor will His brilliance ever fade.

"For I, the Lord, do not change;
therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not
consumed."

(Malachi 3:6)

What *does* change, however, is our perception of Him.

Military leaders and pundits speak of the "fog of war," referring to the confusion that may occur in the thick of battle or fire fight. When bullets fill the air; when dust and mud and artillery are changing the landscape from moment to moment; when the blood of comrades is being poured out upon the ground, perception and communications can be shredded by the frantic immediacy of just staying alive. Even for professional soldiers and marines that have meticulously trained for battle, reality can become suddenly clouded, opaque in the fog of war.

Just so, Christians accustomed to the sharp clarity of sweet, unfettered communion with Christ can have their vision of

Him clouded by the fog of this world. They may have "trained": studied God's word, familiarized themselves with His ways and precepts, practiced to become proficient in His methods. But in the fog of everyday living in an alien, hostile land, their sight has been encumbered by the thick layer of deceit, hypocrisy, enmity, and malaise thrown up by the world's system. For them His face is no longer in sharp focus.

Good and upright is the Lord;
Therefore He instructs sinners in the way.
He leads the humble in justice,
And He teaches the humble His way.
All the paths of the Lord are
lovingkindness and truth
To those who keep His covenant and
His testimonies.
For Your name's sake, O Lord,
Pardon my iniquity, for it is great.
Who is the man who fears the Lord?
He will instruct him in the way he
should choose.
His soul will abide in prosperity,
And his descendants will inherit the land.
The secret of the Lord is for those
who fear Him,
And He will make them know His covenant.
My eyes are continually toward the Lord,
For He will pluck my feet out of the net.
(Psalm 25:8-15)

When we look up we expect to see God, but sometimes the world in which we must live gets in the way, smothering us in its enticements and lies. We long to see the stars, the clear brilliance of His voice, His glory, but can see only the opaque apparition that seeks to hide Him from our sight.

God is there. He hasn't moved, nor has His brilliance dimmed. He is there, unchanging and bright. The cataracts that cloud our vision are of our own making; they have come from the ground up, not down from the heavens. To clear our sight, and ensure an unobstructed view into God's glory, we must align our sight with His.

Gaining His Sight

We are helpless against the weather. Heat and humidity, clouds and rain will come and go without effective intervention from us. But we are not helpless against the oppressive, cloying haze created by the world's system—the "fog" that clouds our view of Christ. Let others have their sight dimmed; we can resolve to keep a clear and unobstructed gaze upon our Lord.

And how do we accomplish this? Oddly enough, we keep clear our sight of the Lord by acquiring *His* sight. Any attempt to hold our gaze clear by human effort will be as futile as humans trying to hold back a tornado. Supernatural vision is accomplished only by supernatural means, and only God knows how to keep the path clear.

"Blessed be the Lord, who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised; not one word has failed of all His good promise, which He promised through Moses His servant. May the Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers; may He not leave us or forsake us, that He may incline our hearts to Himself, to walk in all His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His ordinances, which He commanded our fathers. And may these words of mine, with which I have made supplication before the Lord, be near to the Lord our God day and night, that He may maintain the cause of His servant and the cause of His people Israel, as each day requires, so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God; there is no one else. Let your heart therefore be wholly devoted to the Lord our God, to walk in His statutes and to keep His commandments, as at this day."

(1 Kings 8:56-61)