
Seeing meditation

There is more to life than meets the eye; things are what they seem but also more than they seem. We talk of the need to 'see through', to 'see another side', to 'see for myself'. Living in the light of heaven is an acknowledgement that there is more to life than we yet know – that there is something beyond – perhaps in the future (time) or over the horizon (space) or again behind or beneath 'the foreground of existence'.

The images of catching a glimpse through a blowing curtain, peering through a clear spot on a steamed up window, squinting through a chink in a door, 'seeing through a glass darkly', all capture this well. But perhaps above all it is clouds that convey it best – clouds in their infinite variety of colour, form, and scale, beautiful and ever-changing, veiling in layer upon layer that which lies beyond, parting unbidden to reveal the wide blue yonder or pierced by rays of sunlight that promise so much. The clouds are literally heavenly:

The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge.

There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard;

Yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

Our desire to see beyond the veil - for the clouds to part - is not simple curiosity about the nature of things. It is a yearning to 'see face to face', to encounter fully One who knows and loves us better than anyone else. Kerry Eden, a hospital chaplain puts it this way:

We say God and life and death are mysteries ... not because they are unknowable, but because there is so much to know that you can never know the depths of it; there is always more you can learn...The more you learn, the more you want to know...I suppose it's faith. Belief that there is something deeply good in the mysterious heart of the infinitely knowable other.

We will only see this clearly the other side of the grave. Yet it begins now, and if we keep our eyes open we may experience little foretastes when, as for Jesus, the clouds part and love shines through:

And when Jesus had been baptised, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."