

Longing

To see danger in the metaphor of “seeing God’s face” reveals both the psalmists’ eagerness and our caution. Simply put, there is risk in wanting to see God’s face. This sense of risk, it seems to me, shows even more clearly the intensity of the psalmists’ longing for God. In the single-mindedness, knowing God was worth any risk. Nothing else mattered.

More halfheartedly than single-minded, it is precisely the anticipation of risk that holds many of us back. We don’t like risk, and even though the frontiers of spiritual growth require it, we prefer to avoid it. Not only would we like to have the frontiers of the Spiritual scouted out for us, we would also like to have the frontier fully tamed and settled, like a new suburban development with well-lighted streets and sewers installed, established zoning codes, houses built and finished save for seeding the lawn and planting the scrubs, shopping centers nearby and adequate police protection. No pioneering for us—no danger from the dark wild, no felling trees or clearing boulders so that we can plant a subsistence garden, no climbing mountain passes or fording swollen streams. We prefer comfortable to risk

The Spiritual world, however, cannot be made suburban. It is always the frontier, and if we would live in it, we must accept and even rejoice that it remains untamed. The Ultimate Reality will not yield to our small-minded blueprints for the City of God. Any realistic longing for God must wrestle with the apprehension that we don’t know exactly what we’re getting into. At times this life can be very uncomfortable, because we know that we will be changed without always knowing in what way. However—where there is discomfort, there is also security. As we pursue this life, a confidence grows that knowing God, whatever the risks, is safer and sweeter than any other path.

Howard Macy, *Rhythms of the Inner Life; Yearning for Closeness with God*

*As for me, I will see your face in righteousness,
I shall be satisfied when I awake in your likeness.
Psalm 17:15*