

## Conclusion – A Parable: Smog

Once upon a time there stood a startling geographical wonder. The San Gabriel Mountains, they called it. As much as the football game itself, these mountains impressed millions of sports fans everywhere during the New Year's Day telecasts of the Rose Bowl from Pasadena, California. How gorgeous they were! So royal!

The San Gabriel Mountains ruled over the San Gabriel Valley. Here thousands of local natives went about their daily tasks—watering lawns, driving trucks, writing term papers, eating Big Macs, selling shoes—and planning future Rose Bowl games.

Every once in a while, however, the natives just had to look up and draw in a glimpse of those towering rulers. How it made their spirits soar! In a moment, living itself seemed more grand, more majestic, even during their everyday routines.

But a mysterious spell hung over the Valley. Periodically, a brownish mist, evidently some witches' brew, shrouded it unmercifully. This mist had the power to actually make the mountains disappear! In September, for example, they might vanish for a week at a time. Down in the valley, no one's vision rose higher than the tallest office building. And the mountain climbers in the foothills simply got lost. Nothing seemed to go right without that refreshing, exhilarating vision of the peerless peaks. Truly a sad state of affairs.

But lo! The spell worked another ghastly ill. The trucker, the student, the shoeman, the climber— everyone, in fact, was forced to cough and wheeze as they trudged through their routines. Many people covered indoors, barely daring to breathe.

The valley natives cursed the potion, calling it "smog." It blinded. It suffocated. There seemed to be no relief, except to cry out, "Curses on that wicked witch!"

And so it is that in every generation the world mission of Christ's disciples faces the threat of a similarly blinding, suffocating haze. Whenever Christians turn away from the world, things soon end up like the air trapped in the Los Angeles basin. We become small-minded, self-centred, picky, schismatic, obese, lost. History bears us witness: boxed up spirituality turns stale fast. No outlet means no uplift!

Under this spell Christians eventually go blind: blind to God's worldwide purpose in Christ; blind to the world full of possibilities for serving it right now; blind to the world full of people without any knowledge of Christ; blind to the Church's world-sized part in reaching the world for Christ.

What's more, under this spell Christians eventually suffocate: unable to build a clear vision of all that Christ's global cause should mean to them; unable to become rescue teams sent out into the canyons of the world with a life-giving mission to those trapped and dying there, especially those whom most other Christians have forgotten; unable to resuscitate asphyxiated disciples, giving them a fresh vision of where Christ is going and of how they can go forth with Him.

One day the ancient Santa Ana winds rose up. Boundless! Breaking the spell, flushing the smog from the valley, restoring sparkle to the mountains and oxygen to the natives.

Again the stars studded the night sky. Again the robins returned to sing. The natives rejoiced. And throughout the mountain ravines the trapped and dying were rescued. What a glad, glad ending!

Similarly, Christians can escape the sorcery of self-centeredness. Like a mighty wind the Spirit of God can reverse the introverted patterns in our discipleship. He can uncover for us a crystal view of God's majestic horizons—Christ's global cause. He can inject the grandeur of the eternal mountains into all our efforts down in the valley, wherever God places us and whatever He assigns us to do. He can fill the lungs of our souls with His Breath, so that we'll have the strength and vitality to rescue the perishing everywhere.

God's Holy Wind can free us to move out, breathing deeply and seeing clearly. No blindness. No gasping. Released to be all we were meant to be. *Free to be World Christians.*



**Update Note:** To explore how my thinking has expanded the past thirty years – in terms of how I see Christ, His global cause, the hope He sets before the nations, what it means to be a World Christian in today's world, how to mobilize a renewed missions movement – be sure to look at my most recent book (by visiting [www.ProclaimHope.com](http://www.ProclaimHope.com)): **CHRIST IS ALL! A Joyful Manifesto On The Supremacy of God's Son** (New Providence Publishers).