

TRANSPARENCY

If we look at water, clean water, we can see through it, it has no color, it looks uniform, no separations. They say water looks this way because it is not arrogant, an interesting perspective because we use water for purification. Since we think of water as a way to cleanse ourself, it makes sense that it should be free of arrogance. By pouring something over us which is free of arrogance, immersing ourself in something pure, it affects our own arrogance.

The Abrahamic and other religions all have rituals involving water and cleansing before prayer, or ritual immersion as a form of cleansing. To go on this path to God cleansing is involved, all the religions are concerned with cleansing. If water alone could do the job it would be easy, but water alone does not do it. Water helps but something else must go on, inner cleansing is different from just washing with water. If our hands are dirty and we wash long enough the dirt comes off, but like Lady Macbeth who could not wash her hands clean, we have to find a way of cleaning ourself inwardly.

What is this purification, how are we supposed to understand it? There are qualities which belong to God and qualities which belong to the forces of darkness and illusion. In world politics we see the use of qualities which do not belong to God, leaders who say that for a period of time we will do these things to accomplish certain goals, the end justifies the means, the end justifies what we do. In our own personal situations we notice the same kind of reasoning, we find it is acceptable to behave a certain way if we believe our intention is pure.

This means we have given ourselves a special dispensation to enter the forbidden because we think we can, we think we know better. There is a reason to understand the difference between right and wrong, a reason for religious rules, what is permissible and what is forbidden. When we believe we can go into the impermissible because we expect certain results, we go to a place which is degraded, where we are soiled inwardly. Whether we are dirty for right or wrong reasons, as long as we are dirty we are dirty.

We cannot carry this uncleanness around, we have to be cleansed, we are what we bring with us. If we are angry with people who are doing things we consider to be incorrect, if we use this anger presuming we are dispensing God's anger at something inappropriate, all we are doing is being angry. There is a story about the prophet Muhammad's son-in-law 'Alī which is relevant here. He was in the midst of a battle and about to strike someone when his adversary spat in his face. 'Alī dropped his sword as he realized he would no longer be fighting for God, he would be fighting in anger. When he explained to his opponent why he had stopped fighting the man surrendered to that truth and purity. This is the level of understanding we need: if someone spits in our face, is our anger God's or ours? When we interact with people, are our actions clean or do we become self-righteous, assuming we know better than they do, their religion is incorrect, therefore we will force them to do what we think, force them psychologically, physically or with bribery, whatever it takes.

First, do we have the right to behave in this forbidden way? The answer is we have free will, choice, we can do what we want—whether it is appropriate or not is another matter—but let's not talk about the effect we have on someone else, let's talk about the effect we have on ourselves. The purpose of religion is to change us, it is not to

change our neighbor, our friends, people we know, it is not to change people in other countries but to change who we are, to put us in a state which is appropriate for God.

If our focus changes, if we think we are the instruments of change and justify keeping the qualities of anger, of hatred and mean-spiritedness, this is what we become. We cannot deny this is what we carry around, but we are self-righteous about it, we say this is not about us, we are merely using it against them, this anger is a judgment, it is appropriate. If this is what we think we are missing the point, when we are angry we have anger, when we are spiteful we have spite, and that has nothing to do with anyone else.

We tend not to see the underlying baser qualities in ourself. When a person is jealous he might say to himself, that person is arrogant, my angry response is appropriate for his arrogance, while he fails to see his own jealousy. We should understand our responses, just as water is clear our relationships with others should be clear, should be clean of any forbidden qualities. If others cannot see what we do with clarity, if we are devious and complicated, hard to understand, if we have mixed motives we are no longer transparent, no longer like water.

When we are not transparent it means we have picked up all the stuff, the garbage of the world and made it part of ourself. We incorporate all this stuff and justify our lack of transparency: I have to behave this way in that situation or they will grow up incorrectly; I have to behave this way in that situation or these people will go on the wrong path; I have to be the way I am because this person's arrogance is so great he needs to be corrected.

We think we need to be the cure when the reality is we have to see what purity can do. This is difficult to understand, one reason why we need a teacher. If we are

transparent we can cleanse others with our transparency, just as water cleanses us, but we cannot do that with qualities which reflect something else. If we are in this transparent state it means that God can come through us, there is nothing to block Him. When we are not transparent He cannot, those qualities which are not His block Him. He did not put the things in us which keep Him from being there, we pick them up and swallow them, we make them a part of who we are destroying our transparency. Once that transparency goes we are lost as true human beings. If we want to be true human beings we have to be transparent again, without motive, without judgment, without many of the standard things of the world.

We need a new set of standards to replace the worldly ones, godly standards which understand the sickness in the hearts of others, standards which let us act as a balm for that sickness, as a remedy for that sickness which only purity can cure. There is no other remedy for this illness, we cannot cure people by beating them, by shouting or telling them what to do. When they have that sickness they cannot hear, they cannot see, they have no idea what we are talking about, all they can feel is their pain and the reaction to that pain.

Think for a moment about the things we do in reaction to pain which make us lash out against others. To get beyond this we have to get beyond our pain, we have to come to a transparent place; when we carry our pain around with us we are not transparent, we are filled with pain. People who carry their pain around can be dangerous, terribly dangerous, they make their pain a justification for so much of what they do without realizing their pain means a reaction to many things and a lack of transparency. They fail

to understand they can change their reactions because they do not know how to change them.

We can help them change by showing love, by being love, letting the qualities of love, kindness, mercy and compassion come through without judgment, without trying to mold people. If they feel our love they trust who we are, they know we are standing right there to catch them if they fall. Unless we do that we cannot help, we cannot help unless we understand their state, feel their pain as if it were our own.

Just as we have to do away with our own pain to become a true human being, we can help others by understanding and loving. We do away with our own pain by learning to love, we do away with our own difficulties by learning to love. Love becomes the fire which burns these things away. If we can be a fire for others we help them burn these things too, burn them away through God, through His grace, His glory. This is something we can do only if we are transparent. As long as we have motives, reasons why things should be the way we want them to be, as long as we try to maintain our own vision of the world with our own thoughts and ideas, we are not transparent.

This is not a simple road to walk, but it should be our objective, then we can be helpers, assistants, assistants to the whole world as our transparency begins to appear. Even if it appears for only moments at a time, His will can come through, His truth can come through, we can be small beacons of God's light in the world. This is the work of a true human being, to be a beacon of God's light. As we wash externally with water we have to keep washing inwardly with love. We have to love God, love ourself and love His creation.

Understand what love really means. Apply a cleansing balm on ourself, then through Him we can be a balm for others. This means being detaching from everything we have attached ourself to, things which often have to do with willfulness or a need to be in control. As long as we need to control other people we cannot be transparent, as long as we need to impose our own will we cannot be transparent. Our will colors us, it makes us less than pure, it contains the root of arrogance which is a source of separation from God. Creation moved away from God when it came into existence, and as it moved farther away from Him it acquired the illusion of independence. With that sense of independence came arrogance.

There is no independence from Him, if we were without God for an instant we would disappear, if the universe were without Him for one breath we would disappear. We are always sustained by God. To be true to this, true to truth itself, we must let go of the arrogance which does not accept that we are sustained, which believes we are independent. When this feeling of independence, this need for independence leaves, when we realize our dependence on His glory we become glorious, we do not lose, we gain the thing which created everything, and this becomes part of our existence, part of our being. That happens when we make ourself transparent.

May God help us understand the nature of transparency, may He help us disengage everything we are attached to in this world. May He help us know His will and become beacons of His light.