



From Laurence Freeman OSB, *The Power of Attention*, THE SELFLESS SELF (Norwich: Canterbury, 2008), pp. 31-35.

It would be easier, we think, to turn away from [self-consciousness and] introspection if we knew what we were turning towards. If only we had a fixed object to look at. If only God could be represented by an image. But the true God can never be an image.

Images of God are gods. To make an image of God is merely to end up looking at a refurbished image of ourselves. To be truly interior, to open the eye of the heart, means to be living within the imageless vision that is faith, and that is the vision that permits us to “see God” in all things.

In faith, attention is controlled by a new Spirit, no longer the spirits of materialism, comparison, self-seeking and self-preservation, but the ethos of faith, which is by its nature dispossessive. We can glimpse it simply by calling to mind those moments or phases in life where we experienced the highest degree of peace, fulfillment and joy and recognize that those were times, not when we possessed anything, but when we lost ourselves in something or someone. The passport into the kingdom requires the stamp of poverty.

[. . .] And yet learning to be other-centered is a discipline, it is discipleship and it means an asceticism. There is nothing more difficult than to learn to take the attention off ourselves. And for us today, there is an even greater challenge to face, because it seems almost sacrilegious to take our attention off ourselves, so much do we equate growth, fulfillment

and development with constant self-analysis and the conscious building up of a positive self-image . . . We are all too prone to let our attention drift back into self-consciousness, self-infatuation, and distraction.

But there is a simple truth to discover. When our attention is on ourselves, . . . everything is a distraction from God. When our attention is in God, with the vision of faith, everything reveals God.

After meditation: It Stops Working by Kabir in **LOVE POEMS FROM GOD: Twelve Sacred Voices from East and West** (New York: Penguin Compass, 2002), p. 238.

It Stops Working

Look
what happens to the scale
when love
holds
it.

It
stops
working.

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