

THROUGH A GLASS, DARKLY

A Monkey Mind Column

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As I reflect on our collective experience, mine and yours, during these hard weeks I find myself thinking of that line from scripture, how we see "through a glass, darkly." There should be little doubt among us that each of us is only seeing a part. Our perceptions, our concerns about global issues, and I don't really mean only geo-political, but all those greater issues of our lives, are always constrained.

Most of us tend to return to those horrific images of that plane crashing into one of the towers, of people leaping to certain death, of the towers collapsing, of those billowing clouds of smoke, and those seemingly endless personal pictures of confusion and pain. And all of us are painfully aware of just how close this terror was to our own lives. We all are aware of just how close it all is.

I've seen great heat begin to rise in our conversations about what we should be doing next. There are those who really believe we need to attack, quickly, and decisively. If there be collateral damage, well, then that's the price to be paid for harboring evil perpetrators. Others do seem to simply see how we ourselves have brought this down on our heads through our complicity in realpolitik and age old policies that have created terrible suffering in the lands that have in turn birthed international terrorism.

So, how do we respond? What is appropriate action for us? I must confess I don't know. I am inclined to that group which is larger among our congregation but much smaller on our national scene; who call for reflection and consideration, and to seek a clearer understanding of who and why. But, I also understand the urge to immediate action, to a direct and powerful seeking of justice. For that matter I understand the urge for vengeance, simple and unadorned.

I feel all these things, and I remember that passage from Corinthians, how we see only in part. Of course there is a second half to that line about seeing through a glass, darkly. There is a "later" called upon, a time of reconciliation when a greater perspective is gained. "Now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

Most of us are wary of putting our faith in such a future, particularly a mystical future where the world itself is abandoned. But, I suggest perhaps there is an intuition described here that we can draw upon for our own reflections. It has to do with parts and wholes. I believe we truly can learn from each other. If we allow ourselves the movement of respect, and I hope even of love to inspire our drawing together, then in that drawing together we really can come to some greater wisdom.

The truth is that even our "greater" wisdom is still in part. The universe is large, and we are very small. But, in our hesitation to cry out "I know." In our willingness to bring our partial

understandings together, to test and question, we really do stand a chance of bringing a certain grace, at least a larger perspective to our decision making.

If we allow ourselves the possibility of correction, of seeing a larger picture; then I think we stand a good chance of muddling through. And from there, maybe even doing a little good in this world. And, you know, perhaps that itself is a picture of heaven.

See you in church!

James