

THE CALIFORNIA MEDITATIONS SEPARATION

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It is for man to journey to the extreme of separation from God before he can “return.” Or rather the extreme of separation is surely found suddenly to be the Return. “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” Christ on the cross, God separated from Himself — this is the uttermost agony without which no Resurrection — and so at all other levels. Without Ascension, the going up of the human, felt immanence of God into the transcendent impersonality of the Godhead, (could this be compared to the dark night of the Spirit?) — no Pentecost or descent of the Holy Spirit, which is both immanent and transcendent (union of God and the soul in this life).

Without total detachment from friends and people, no “unity of the Spirit in the bond of love.” Without the “going out of one’s mind,” no birth of the divine knowing.

The Ten Lepers

The healing of the ten lepers was their chance to turn the degradation of the separation of the unclean from society into the willed detachment of the clean in heart. Only one of the ten made this choice, when he returned to give thanks. The other nine (and most of us after our lesser cleansings, are with them) simply say “How nice to be clean! Now I can go and connect up again with society, indulge my particular attachments from which I was separated by my uncleanness or my sin.” And the last state is worse than the first. The defilement may become progressively more subtle — from leprosy through ingratitude to decay of the will.

Separations of the Bible

The lesson for the “Solemnity of St Joseph” -- how lovely a thing! “The blessings of Heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breast and of the womb — The blessings of thy father have prevailed — unto the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills, they shall be upon the head of Joseph and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.”

Joseph separate from his brethren, David from Saul, from Jonathan, from his son. Rebecca from Jacob, Ruth from her home, Moses from his mother, Elijah from all men, Elisha from Elijah. New Testament — The Apostles from their worlds, Mary Magdalene from her lovers, Paul from the Jews.

At the root of all — the initial separation of Adam from God — to be redeemed at a moment in time, and throughout all eternity, by the supremely glorious separations of the Incarnation — the Mother from her Son, the Son from His Mother, the Son from his Father, God from God.

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Julian of Norwich: “When Adam fell God’s son fell; because of the rightful one-ing which had been made in Heaven, God’s son might not be dis-parted from Adam (for by Adam I understand All—Man). Adam fell from life to death into the deep of this wretched world; God’s

Son fell with Adam into the deep of the Maiden's womb, who was the fairest daughter of Adam. For in all this our good Lord showed His own Son and Adam but one."

Fall and Redemption are therefore inevitably a simultaneous happening — as in the Cosmos, so in the individual. Each falling of the soul, each turning away from God, each separation, carries within itself the possibility of return with increase of consciousness, increase of love. So Charles Williams speaks of every possible happening no matter how evil, as a potential "occasion for love."

The separations of life are three-fold, as the separations of Christ were three-fold: Son from Mother, Son from Father, God from God. In the outer life these are:

1. Birth — physical separation from the mother and adolescence; — emotional separation from the mother
2. Maturity and intellectual freedom — separation from the father
3. Death, the separation of body from soul, tearing apart of the two great realities — God separated from God

In the interior life it is the same pattern, this time lived in full consciousness. "Flesh knows what spirit knows, but Spirit knows it knows." (Charles Williams)

1. Purgation — the dark night of the senses with separation from the collective Mother
2. Illumination — the dark night of the Spirit — separation from collective mind and spirit — spiritual poverty
3. Mystical death — "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" — separation from every thought, feeling, desire — from everything but the fact, the thing in itself. This is the cross at every moment — the "condition of complete simplicity, costing no less than everything." (T. S. Eliot) This is the extreme of separation which is in the same moment union, God and Man whole and entire.

Out of each and every separation at whatever level of being, from the simplest most unconscious separation of the infant from the womb, to the agonies of the lonely spirit as it tears itself loose from all consolation, from all the cushions of its past, from all the people and things and ideas and feelings to which it has hitherto clung as aids on the path to God — out of each and every separation comes birth, transformation, newness of life, until finally the I AM of eternity remains alone.