

THE CALIFORNIA MEDITATIONS

BY HELEN M. LUKE

JUDGE NOT

The words that follow are not ‘and ye shall be judged virtuous or worthy of reward’. They are a promise that he who does not judge will not be judged at all. ‘Judge not’ - it is something beyond the opposites - no mere exhortation to be just and tolerant of our neighbor but, like most of the words of Christ when listened to with the whole mind and heart and body, something which blasts to pieces all our excellent human categories.



Sure it is that we must know how to “Judge righteous judgment”, to cease from calling evil good and good evil. It is forever impossible for anyone to pass beyond the opposites of judgment if he has not first fulfilled the law, paid his debt to life, lived his ‘Karma’ - “Not one jot or one tittle shall pass from the law till all be fulfilled.”

A man must be able to look into himself, to recognize what he finds there as well as that which is outside, and to judge it all with the purest objectivity of thought and feeling. Only then may he find himself beyond the Day of Judgment, in the state of nonjudgment here and now in which there is no ‘I want or do not want’, ‘I like or do not like’ but only the Glory of God,

Nevertheless it is false to say that because we fall so far short of objectivity we should not try here and now with all the strength and love that is in us to come to that state of emptiness. For the converse is also true - that no man can attain to purely objective judgment until he has touched that which is beyond, “You could not seek Me if you had not already found Me.” (Pascal). All the Zen stories are directed to awakening precisely this state of nonjudging in those still partially blind and bound.

To judge not at all - neither oneself, nor others nor any created thing - not because we are unconscious of difference with the innocence of pure instinct, but because we shall have dared to submit in all things to the operation of grace, to the terrible purity of the Judgment of God, dared to become aware of every detail of the pattern, dark as well as light, to see everywhere and in all circumstances the undimmed glory. ‘That which containeth all things hath knowledge of the Voice’. This, paradoxically, is ‘Holy indifference’ - this is the life of grace, the gate of the Kingdom, the mind of Christ.

“Judgment is recognition.” (Fr.. McLane)

THE GAP

God cannot give Himself as long as there remains in the soul any need at all for consolation, any demand whatsoever for His gifts. (Cloud of Unknowing)

To be completely shut off from God, without feeling, without vision, and yet to remain in a strange sort of dry adoration before That which is unseen, unfelt, unknown — is this what it means to stand in the “gap” as did Moses?

DETACHMENT

Suffering is the way because without it we would hardly begin to detach from - to be conscious of - the 10,000 things. But it is only possible to suffer consciously, instead of emotionally, in the exact measure that we are willing to detach from our pleasurable feelings also.

“ASK NOTHING — REFUSE NOTHING”

St. Frances de Sales

It is very simple to offer for the Glory of God the content of every moment exactly as it is, emptied of all demand and of all refusal, whether it be joy, sorrow, pain, fear, ecstasy or boredom, strength or weakness, triumph or shame - very simple and yet so immensely difficult. For in order to come to this abandonment two things are necessary at one and the same time. The whole content of the moment must be accepted and experienced without any vestige of evasion, physical, emotional or mental, and yet the soul must remain in unchanging detachment from it. Without the full experience the offering remains unreal, discarnate, an insincere image, a ghost. Without the detachment no offering can even be conceived, for there remains only identification or repression as the case may be; and the soul is torn and rent by demand and refusal.