

## *Justice and Judgment*

**A**S SPIRITUAL aspirants, we seek to improve our faculty of judgment, in the sense of “discernment” or “discrimination.” Conversely, we seek to overcome any tendency to judge our brethren—“judge” in this context meaning “to criticize” or “condemn.” Judgment as employed in the second sense is under consideration here.

The New Testament makes clear and urges the virtue of non-judgment: “Let us not therefore judge one another anymore: But judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way” (Rom, 14:13).

The irony of judgment is that it perpetuates the act it judges and, by its censure and verdict of repudiation, it reinforces that which it might have wished to balance out or obliterate. To bring judgment against an action by punishing or persecuting the actor strengthens the injustice and makes the prosecutors equally, if not more, guilty of violation and negativity. Punitive “justice” is a pernicious downward-cycling of offense. Illegal offenses are not neutralized by legal offense waged against the “malefactor.” Murder in passion is not adjusted by the certified murder known as capital punishment.

Life is holy and whole. All that would tend toward separation is sin. The *lex talionis* morality of “eye for eye” would reduce human life to nothing, for there is none without sin. The accuser, the fault-finder, would do well to take to heart the words of Christ Jesus: “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone” (John 8: 7). Rather, if thine eye offend thee—that is, if one perceives offense—pluck out the eye. In other words,



*Christ the Judge*

Fresco, detail of the vault of the Stanza dell'Incendio, Pietro Perugino, Vatican, Rome

there is nothing unclean of itself, but if we deem it to be, so is it. (Rom. 14:14) Let us first attend to the beam in our own eye before we fault the other for the mote in his eye.

This mechanism, whereby we see our own errors and inner conditions generally as objectified and proceeding from others, is termed “projection” in clinical psychology. The science of Spirit describes it as “seeing through the aura.” If our own desire and mental atmospheres are murky and agitated, we see through a glass darkly; we see distortions, and we locate negativities in our surroundings. When our auras are bright and clear, when we exist in and express love, optimism, and harmony, then we see “face to face.” We discern the good, the noble, and the true in others, for these qualities condition our own beings. Their high vibratory nature discloses similar vibrations and creates immunity to the influences of dark, selfish, and coarse elements in our environment.

To judge with an eye to condemnation is to see with the physical eye only, to see the outer, the obvious, the literal, the superficial, to see, ultimately, the transitory. Thus, of the exoteric mind it is said, “having

eyes to see, they see not” (Matt. 13:13-14). The greater effort we make to see spiritually, the more we shall understand what we see and have no need for judgment, condemnation, and alienation. Judgment declares: “I am not what I see. I would separate it from me, cancel it out, kill it.” But this process of denial energizes the object of judgment, which is a thought in the judge’s own mind. The salutary solution is to comprehend all content of consciousness but to let the negative be, honoring it with no energy of denial or requital, although always affirming and reinforcing the positive content of awareness.

From another angle, “judge not, lest ye also be judged.” Or again, “with what measure ye mete, so shall it be measured unto you” (Rom. 14:13). All sin and error are the expressions of ignorance. Thus, one who knows fully does not express anger with those who live ignorantly, for that knowledge includes loving. Therefore, those who live in darkness and error evoke understanding and pathos in the compassionate Spirit. For this reason, Christ Jesus would have gathered the people of Jerusalem into the circle of His solicitude as a mother hen gathers her flock under her wings. For this reason, also, did Christ Jesus petition from His cross of agony: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” If they had known, they would not have done it.

All actions carry with them, germinally, but implicitly, their own consequences; they are, in fact, their own judgments. Man need not set himself up as “impartial” judge and arbiter of another’s acts and destiny. To do this simply points to the arrogance and ignorance of him who deems himself so qualified. “I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? No, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren....Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not suffer yourselves to be defrauded?” (I Cor. 6:5, 7) Christ Jesus suffered the judgment of death. He took and takes the wrong of humanity on

His blameless person, that man’s planetary complicity might be annulled and that man might live, not by law, but by love.

As a further implication of judgment, we may say that constant self-criticism frustrates spiritual development. Paul writes that he judges not himself (2Cor. 4:3) and even less heeds he the judgment of men. Yet we know that the man who dies daily is more demanding of his conduct, speech, and interior life than is his harshest critic. He answers not to the judgment of men, but to that of

God. He does not pretend to know God’s judgment, other than by professing and preferring God’s infinite Love in the Being of Christ Jesus, Who gave Grace and Life to man in return for sin and defiance.

Let us be honest, if not bold, and spare ourselves unnecessary self-deprecation and the pretension of personal judgment. Legitimate moments for impersonal self-observation and remorse may be reserved for nightly retrospection of the day’s events. We should realize that much that passes for pious self-criticism is a subtle form of self-love, whereby one is

special by dint of particular faults or inabilities that account for failure. Self-judgment then becomes, in effect, self-justification.

Let our own persons be the sole objects of our judging, and that with a mind to self-improvement rather than pity or moribund self-disparagement. We would do well to remember that our moral eyes are focused on the mortal man, the lower self, in order to raise it, transmute it, and align it with our higher natures. Our constructive self-analysis is directed to reflecting and expressing our innate divinity in our lower vehicles, making of them clear vessels that they might fully reveal and magnify the Love, Light, and Life of the God within. Finally, we may bear in mind the words of Christ

“I came not to judge the world but to save the world” (John 12:47). □

—Carl Weaver

#### RETROSPECT

If words be crystal goblets,  
What have I served in mine?  
The milk of human kindness,  
Or gossip’s giddy wine?

The bitter brew of satire,  
An acid sip of wit,  
Or did I seek with honey  
To flatter, just a bit?

And what of those left empty?  
With rash, unlovely sound  
They struck a golden moment  
And dashed it to the ground.

—A. Nolten