

“You have not approached...”

“You have not approached that which can be touched...you have approached God, the just judge of all...” (from Hebrews 12:18 ff)

The word “religion,” partially useful in everyday conversation, is of little value in thinking or in one’s quest for truth. It is a topic of common speech, and little more. As with many seemingly weighty terms in common use, “religion” is so vague that one can read almost any desired meaning into it. Or out of it. Other than in everyday language, “religion” is about as meaningless and as empty as “democracy.” In fact, the two words are virtually twins in their analytical worthlessness: useful shorthands in the marketplace, useless concepts in “critical science,” in any genuine philosophical analysis. That many people are not aware of this uselessness in genuine thought does not render the point less valid. So if I do not sprinkle around words such as “religion” and “democracy” in what I say or write, now the reason is made known: the terms are too vague, too general, too ill-defined, too unanalyzable to be of theoretical or analytical value. This point, I trust, has been made sufficiently clear—whether accepted as true or not. That many would disagree is irrelevant. Many speak of “motors,” when engineers have more precise terms. Many play church, rather than seek the living God.

“You have not approached that which can be touched...” Many human beings want a tangible God. They want holy books, laws, rules, rituals, sacraments, vestments, holy water, priests, bishops, and all sorts of “religious things.” Those who want such “things” are finding ways to touch what cannot be touched, to possess what cannot be possessed, to have present to them that which is not present in space-time, not present physically. Only by letting go of “what can be touched,” can one begin to seek that which cannot be touched; only by seeking what cannot be touched, can one come to a true appreciation for what can be touched, and ways in which the touchable may in truth communicate the untouchable. The God that can be touched is not God. The many want their touchable gods—by whatever names: Bible, priest, Sacrament, church.... Many Catholics, Protestants, Hindus, others, are in the same boat: to paraphrase a popular song, “they are looking for God in all the wrong places.” They are looking in places for that which is unplaced. They cling to words of the unspeakable. They want a holy thing of that which is wholly non-thing—and perhaps not “holy” in our sense at all.

What many call “religion” is generally touchable, and as such, it is a hindrance to the ascent of the mind into the untouchable. For those who want “holy books,” there are many lying around. (And if not used properly, all such “holy books” lie.) For those who want “priests,” they can find no lack; for pretenders are ever in abundance. For those who want “the church,” and “sacraments,” and so, they may choose what they want. For those who want “holy things,” how many indeed there are.

Perhaps faith begins by giving up religion. One does not learn to swim by clinging to the sides of the pool. One learns to swim by entering into the deeps, where the bottom

cannot be touched, and there are no supports except one's buoyancy in the water, aided by slow movement of arms or legs. "Launch out into the deep" is ever a call to abandon all "religion," all political attachments, all "democracy," all that is familiar and known or assumed to be known—even oneself. Launching out, one abandons all that is thought to be known and loved, for that which is essentially and utterly untouchable. Unless one abandons "God" and all the trappings of "God," how can one find that which is? Unless one suspends all beliefs, how can one simply trust? Unless one releases from an inner grasp all that one thinks is real and true, how can one venture into the unknown true? Unless one suspends all attachments to holy books, proven facts, political leaders, religious leaders—unless one suspends all such attachments, how can one enter into the wholly unattached state? Suspending all beliefs, one can begin to exercise naked faith. Nay, rather, unless one separates his or her willing from all that can be touched or known or believed in any way, one will not fare forward into the deep darkness of the nameless—into what feels and seems to be sheer *nothingness*. Oh, how terrifying a sound to those who want stuff—even religious stuff.

How frightening it is for many to leave the comforts and supports of beliefs, knowledge, science, religion, politics, and all such mental drugs. How frightening to let the self seemingly be dissolved into the unself. If one truly had naked trust and non-attached love, one would fare forth into the seeming and feeling darkness of nothingness. If one truly believes, and does not have mere beliefs, how empty, how dark, how uncertain the way forward. So many are afraid to venture into the heretofore non-experienced. And why are they so afraid to let go? Could it be because they know that they cannot control the uncontrollable?

Into the one most emptied of religion, democracy, science, and so many "holy things," the darkness of non-thing enters in. Into the mind that suspends all belief in what it "knows," empty unknowing enters. Into the heart devoid of all "loves," the non-lovable non-imaginable is present. Only in silence and unknowing, can the unspeaking and unspeakable speak. Only into that which is not can that which is not be.

"You have not approached... You have approached..." What have you approached? If you think you know, then surely you do not know in truth.

Wm. P McKane
MTmonk
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