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the ART KATZ essay

The Reality Principle: Some reflections on conversing with a Jewish friend

Something is being pressed just now upon my consciousness that has been percolating for some time in my inner being. A recent two hour conversation with an unbelieving Jewish man made me to further realize that I am definitely at odds with the world, its logic, and its premises.

As believers, our every assumption that there is a living God, that His word is incontestable, that the tragedy of our human failures is proportionate to our indifference or rejection of Him came up again and again as points of contention in our conversation. The final insult was to suggest that our diaspora condition as Jews, perhaps the Holocaust itself, was in some measure the judgments hinted at through Moses in the books of Deuteronomy and Leviticus.

This was "the straw that broke the camel's back" making further conversation, or even continuation in friendship, untenable.

Two principles or assumptions of what constitutes reality were at odds with each other. We were diametrically opposed on issues regarding the meaning of friendship, the purposes of discourse, and the weightier matters of judgment and righteousness. I found myself being equated with anti-Semitism in the same way that Jesus was identified as a glutton and a winebibber.

How formidable a task to bridge these two realities; how great the unimaginable shock and distress when one passes into eternity to learn too late the prevalence of the lie to which one had unquestioningly given oneself an entire lifetime long!

As Basilea Schlink wisely said, one learns, in that moment, that all values to which one has unmindfully subscribed to, have been utterly and irrevocably reversed!

We are striplings, Davids in a Goliath world totally out of place in view of their more commanding and visible "reality."

The contemporary Jew confident in his categories, reliant upon his intellect, persuaded by his prejudices is for us a Goliath that can only be brought down by a polished stone. Like David, in that day, it must be found "on our knees" at the flowing brook and be cast with all our might in the vigor and velocity of the faith that is not intimidated or afraid. Then we can paraphrase the trenchant comment of Hamlet at Yorick's grave, "Where be your taunts now? your frolicking?" with, "Where are your Talmudic tractates and rabbinical pieties now?"

Oswald Chambers in a devotional commented: "The kind of religious life we see abroad today is entirely different from the robust holiness of the life of Jesus today. That robust humanity was not the result of an asceticism or isolation from the reality about Him, but that He was inwardly disconnected all the time. He was not aloof, but he lived in another world ... Â...never allow anything to interfere with His consecration of spiritual energy.Â"

Likewise for ourselves, as in the Lord's example, we are to be in the world but not of it; to be disconnected fundamentally, not externally.

Source: http://www.benisrael.org/Home_Page.html