

Reflections
SILENT

The Disciples Betrayal

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One day the Master called his youngest disciple to sit and eat with him in private. This disciple had been in the temple for many years and had carefully followed the example of his teacher, learning to emulate the life of the Master as best he could.

The Master was now an elderly man and knew that he was close to death. He was fond of this disciple but knew that he had not yet received enlightenment.

And so he said to him, “You have been a diligent and dedicated follower of my teachings for many years and you may well one day become a great teacher. However you have betrayed me in your thoughts and actions.”

“That’s is not true” replied the disciple; “since I was young I have followed your ways, never deviating from the path that you have ploughed. I never cease to reflect upon your words and I never tire from engaging in the rituals and prayers that you have taught. I swear to you that I would never betray you.”

“This is what I mean”, replied the Master, “The fact that you have never betrayed my teachings, and the fact that you swear never to betray them; this is to betray them already”

Is it not the case that among the most important teachings of a great religious leader to their most dedicated disciples will involve the words, “do not follow me”. The problem of course is that the disciple must take seriously the words of the teacher in order to take to heart the message that she ought not to. The priestly role here is one that rejects its privileged priesthood in order to facilitate a priesthood of all believers. This does not mean that there is no priestly role however, for there is an important place for someone whose job it is to refuse the place. Something Jesus is recorded as doing quite often (for example when the rich young man calls him “good teacher” and he strangely rejects the term “good”, pointing beyond himself).

So then, what if to swear that we will never betray our great teacher is to betray him already (reifying his dynamic way of love into dead letters)?



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