

Repent & Redeem

To make mistakes are human. One of my colleagues made a mistake seven years ago and plagiarized a text. I reported him since it is a duty to report plagiarism for a serious academic. The university found it to be plagiarism, did not punish the action since it was made at another university, but criticized him for using the plagiarized text when asking for promotion. That is it. Nothing more. That is the consequence in Sweden today, for stealing what is not yours.

Is that good or is it bad? Is it a fair treatment? A mistake made seven years ago receive critique in a text read by only a few. And then life continues. Is that fair?

We humans have created mechanisms in order to survive and endure life, accepting the human tendency to make mistakes. The religions are stuffed with instruments that makes it possible to find out if it is a mistake and how we should deal with these mistakes.

To find out if a mistake has being conducted, we have invented the concept of sin. To make a sin is to create an unbalance in society. Plagiarizing is to take something from someone that do not belong to you. This creates the unbalance. To give it back does not nullify the action, only the distribution. If you steel money from the bank, returning the money do not nullify the stealing. The action of the robbery is still there.

The unbalance has to be adjusted in order to arrive back to harmonious balance. The instrument to do this differs but at least in the Christian world we think in terms of redemption and repenting. The person creating the unbalance has to show that he has made a mistake. That is to repent. Then the person has to sacrifice something in order to reestablish the balance. That is to redeem.

I get the impression that Catholics and Protestants differ in their methods. My impression is that Protestants have a harder regime of repent and redeem. I experience it right now, due to this scandal of plagiarism.

The person plagiarizing should have presented the case in full transparency. It would be to show his face in naked truth, to admit his sin in full daylight. It would be to humiliate oneself in front of all the others. That would be to redeem through repent publicly. If that would have happen, I am sure that most people would think that the balance has been recreated. He suffers in front of others. He is redeeming the crime, the sin. Therefor we give pardon. The balance is back. Peace and harmony would be restored.

That is, however, not what has happened. The only thing is a text in minutes of a university. The balance is not back. He is not repenting in front of people. He is not redeeming through actions in front of others. Therefore, according to my morality, he is not released from his mistake. The sin is still there. The mistaken action performed is still there. There is an unbalance.

I am sorry, but according to my morality, I cannot pardon him. I would pardon him immediately if he declared that he repents his action and that he redeems it through public declaration. That is the price he has to pay in order to restore the balance. Without that price, the debt he created is still there. It is hidden but it is still there. And as a protestant, the debt has to be paid, today or tomorrow.

That is my morality, for good or for bad. Which I realized through this case. What is your morality?

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