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Experience, Belief



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Affirming Common Roots In reading Merton's quote at first glance I was in disagreement with him, however, after carefully reading the quote several times and dissecting it I came to both understand and agree with his overall view. According to the Merriam-Webster the definition of Conjecture is merely one's interpretation of what is according to their experiences, etc. (Merriam-Webster, 2013). Merton's quote has reminded me of my own spiritual path and the questions of validity that arose during my late teenage years, also, I it is clear within the quote the importance of opening one's mind to interact or at least come to clearly grasp the understanding of your neighbor's faith, beliefs, practices, etc. I have never been one to judge another for not believing as I do, but, yes I have pondered as to why their beliefs are not in line with my own, or how is it possible that others do not or cannot embrace the God I serve, the very God that is responsible for their existence? Again, Merton's quote almost demands that judgment of any kind be eliminated, which is in alignment with me, as a Christian should embrace, not judging my brother or sister, but showing them love and compassion, and even yes an understanding of their belief, even if I am not in agreement. Merton makes many powerful and direct statements within his quote, one which caught my attention is the following; " The true way is just the opposite: the more I am able to affirm others, to say 'yes' to them in myself, by discovering them in myself and myself in them, the more real I am. I am fully real if my own heart says 'yes' to everyone. I will be a better Catholic, not if I can refute every shade of Protestantism, but if I can affirm the truth in it and still go further (Merton, 1966)". This quote in my opinion speaks

volumes against judging others and religions that are different from my Christian worldview. I have come to understand that we all have a purpose in life, we all have at some point come to question our existence, how did we get here ?, and who or what is responsible for our existence? I can look at someone of a different faith and identify with their quest, their journey, albeit under opposite worldviews, it is when I can honestly identify with another, and agree that there are some commonalities as well as differences, I can continue my own journey guilt- free and in a non-judgmental way of others. My viewpoint towards our shared goal would be that of embracing an open mind to learn of other religions, while holding steady to my own beliefs. I at one point could not have stated the previous, as I viewed learning of other faiths as a forbidden act on my part, and while I do believe that we are not to put anything or anyone in front of God, as it is stated in the Bible; God is a jealous God, meaning that what belongs to God is his alone, we are to worship and service God only, not man, or other religions just teach opposite of God's word. This was something that I struggled with when I began learning of other faiths here at Grand Canyon University. But, I know it is okay as God has commanded us to love one another, accept one another, and not judge. I can now say with honesty that my present attitude will not enable me in fulfilling our shared goal, as stated in the previous paragraphs, being open to others perspectives and reasoning behind why and how they have come to believe as they do will allow me to learn accordingly, and add to my prior knowledge learned in previous courses while here at Grand Canyon University. While, I may not share the same practices, rituals, etc. It is well understood that for many the journey to find the truth and or spread

their truth is a continuous act. As a Christian, my worldview is that Jesus is the son of God, the only true God, and we should live to bring glory to Gods name, by loving one another, not judging and opening our minds to learn about others are amongst the list of our shared goals in this lifetime, regardless of one's faith. References and In-Text Citations List Merton, Thomas, (1966) Conjectures of a guilty bystander. Retrieved January 27, 2013 From, <https://lc.gcu.edu/learningPlatform/user/users.html> Merriam-Webster, (2013). Conjecture. Retrieved January 27, 2013 from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/conjecture>