



Morals, Manners and Lemon Chess Pie

The world is full of folks who think that believers have a monopoly on morality. Not long ago, Sister Singleton and I were sitting around the dinner table with some nice folks when one of them just upped and asked how we could have any morality without God. Can you believe that? And before either my beloved or I could empty our mouths in order to set this particular ninny straight, she follows up with “You’re too nice to be an atheist.” And she was looking at Sister Singleton. Brother Sam felt downright omitted.

Now, my true love is the kind of atheist you see every day without knowing it. Since she doesn’t wear her atheism on her sleeve, and is everybody’s idea of a very nice lady, some folks just assume that she must be a believer. So they feel at liberty to speak openly about nonbelievers around her in the way that, say, women talk about men when there are no men around. A lot of the time, she’ll just let things pass unremarked. But some stuff will flat get a rise out of her. And she got at this dinner guest of ours before I could swallow.

“I’ve got a better question,” she says. Oh Sister Singleton stays cool. Not a bit like ol’ Brother Sam. Real polite and all. She says, “How can you have any kind of morality with God?”

This dinner guest didn't say a word, just fiddled with the last little dab of her second slab of Sister Singleton's lemon chess pie. Lord help me! Goddamn that's good pie! Anyway, she doesn't say anything, so Sister Singleton goes on, very calm, respectful.

Says, "I hope that you realize that when you say that your morality comes from God, that you can't possibly back that up. And no matter how much I love you, there's just no way in the world that you can expect me to accept something as wild as that. Why, that'd be just as unfair as if I insisted that you believe that I can read minds and see through walls. I wouldn't presume on your good nature that way. Wouldn't be respectful. I'd hope I'd have more sensitivity than to put one of my friends in such an awkward position.

The dinner guest made like she was about to interrupt, but Sister Singleton wasn't ready to yield the table.

"You're basing your morality on something false. Falsehoods and moral truth are—"
That was my cue to pipe up with "Irreconcilable!" Goddammit.

And Sister Singleton just says, "You want some more pie?"

I do love that woman so. And anybody says you can't be an atheist and be good and honest and honorable; well, just mind your Ps and Qs, that's all.

from the pulpit of

Sam Singleton™

ATHEIST EVANGELIST

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