

Thinking back to my high school years, I remember a conversation with a friend. We talk about girls and grades, we gossip of teachers and their pets, we dream of successful futures and of following our aspirations. Soon, God becomes the topic of discussion and we both immediately explain our positions, following with an irrational attack of character. One comment my friend throws at me, which I am at this point unable to respond to is, “Christianity is just a crutch for the weak!” Some hold a view of believers in God as weak and inferior to the independent free thinkers and humanists; my friend portrays me as inferior to him. In my defence I respond saying, “it is not!” After all, Christianity can’t be just for the weak; something that the smarter and more advanced people can do without. In the book, Intellectuals Don’t Need God and other Modern Myths, Alister E. McGrath tackles atheistic and agnostic viewpoints similar to this.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary describes the word ‘crutch’ to be a supporting device for use by the disabled for walking. Made out of wood or metal, “[a] crutch must do 2 things—reduce weight load on one of your legs and broaden your support base to improve your balance and stability. The support also should assist upright movement and transmit sensory cues through the hands.” (Hartmann, 2) Merriam Webster labels a Christian as someone who conforms to a religion derived from Jesus Christ, based on the Bible as sacred scripture. The late German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, adds to this common view as he says, “In Christianity neither morality nor religion come into contact with reality at any point” (Pain, 5). To the world, Jesus is just another man and Christianity is just another religion. When our school systems teach evolution and

emphasize independence, it is easy to perceive the muddle of religions to all be simple variations of each other, placing false hope in imaginary and unscientific god(s).

C.S. Lewis writes in Mere Christianity, “If you are an atheist you do have to believe that the main point in all the religions of the whole world is simply one huge mistake. If you are a Christian, you are free to think that all those religions, even the queerest ones, contain at least some hint of truth” (Lewis, 35). The negative statement directed at Christianity, as a crutch for the weak, comes from an atheistic point of view. For an atheist to comply with the given statement he or she must also conclude that all followers of all religions... the Hindus, the Buddhists, the Christians, the ‘911’ Muslims...are weaker than those who reject a belief in God. “The implication would seem to be that Christians are so unrealistic about life that they need fictional morsels to keep them going...” (McGrath, 107) The fact is, as human beings we are all weak and we all need something to fall back on. When tragedy strikes, we need assurance and hope. It is only when we rely on our “inner self” that we end up crashing. By accepting tragedy and disaster as bad luck, bottling up emotions and establishing there to be no purpose to this life of struggles we can’t win, is not power or weakness, but foolishness.

Christianity is a crutch...it is a support, but not a support in a false belief according to preference, because on the other side of the spectrum, which C.S. Lewis pointed out, Christians look at other religions and recognize a similar realization that there is something greater. We search for something above us, a purpose to live for and a sense of hope that can not be found in ourselves and in our materialistic gods.

Christianity recognizes there to be a greater being, and in searching for truth, it is the Bible, and Jesus Christ in which we put our faith. The one thing which sets Christianity apart from any other religion is forgiveness and unconditional love. There is no way that as selfish and weak humans, we can deserve an eternity with the Creator of the Universe, because we choose to sin and follow our human nature. God loves us all equally and unconditionally, and to demonstrate his love, He sent His only son, Jesus, to take our place of death and offer a way out...a crutch.

Andy, author of www.godlessbastard.com, gets lost in his own argument when he writes, "I'm the first to concede that it's perfectly human (and normal) to be weak...Atheists, like me, get their strength from within...It's because people who cling to god (which is a wilful act) have little or no inner strength, and that means they're weak" (Andy, 3). Andy has made the point that weakness is natural and human, however he also says atheists go against what's natural and human. "The paradox of hedonism- the simple fact that pleasure cannot satisfy...Even in our contentment we still feel in need of something that is indefinably missing...Pleasure, beauty, personal relationships: all seem to promise so much, and yet when we grasp them we find that what we were seeking still lies beyond them" (McGrath, 33). The larger issue is in the belief that only atheists have the power to overcome weakness. A slight glance at suicide; divorce, abortion, rape, prostitution, drug abuse, murder, theft, self-help promises, and depression, make the blatant point that as humans, we do not have things under control, we are weak and give into our natural desires. Alister writes,

“To use [Karl] Marx’s famous phrase, Christianity is ‘an opiate for the masses,’ a kind of anaesthetic or narcotic that dulls our senses and prevents us from changing the world for the better...It does enable us to cope with suffering in the present life. Just as a soldier fights on toward the end of a long war, sustained by the knowledge that peace will one day come and he will be reunited with his family and friends, so the Christian continues his pilgrimage, sustained by the knowledge of the joys that await him.” (McGrath, 107)

If any argument were to exist, it would have to show Christians as stronger individuals who are taking a stand and going against culture. As Christians we are called to go against our sin nature and not to love the world (James 4:4, 17 NIV). Not to say that Christians claim to be perfect, rather, they just accept their faults and recognize their imperfection, choosing to change and better themselves.

This is not an argument about the existence of God, but rather reality. Newspapers flash the terror that engulfs humanity due to our selfish human nature. When premarital sex, pornography, divorce, and alcohol are the societal norms, we can clearly see the problem with serving our bodies. We give into temptation and lust after things we are not meant to have. This is the weakness of humanity derived from chosen sin nature. It is tragedy and suffering that point these things out; it is broken homes, depression, addiction, and disaster which show us we are not in control. I would challenge an atheist or agnostic to look at their own life, and conclude that he or she has everything under control, no problems, and a purpose for their lives. It is the weak who need the crutches...and the prideful fools who choose to limp and continue there hopeless suffering.

The question to ultimately tackle is if we really do need God and the crutches. Why not something else? McGrath approaches this by looking at philosophers Plato and Sartre. Plato made the comparison of humans to leaky jars that can never be filled and therefore never fully happy as nothing on earth will satisfy that emptiness (McGrath, 30). “There is a sense of divine dissatisfaction with all that is not God. Sartre is right: the world cannot bring fulfillment...But the Christian view goes on to affirm that here, in the midst of the world, something that is ultimately beyond the world makes itself available to us.” (McGrath, 31)

To take a trip back to my High School conversation, there are many ways, in which I would handle such a situation differently, but I now understand the comment was not an insult towards Christians, but towards the whole of humanity. I may not win such an argument by telling my friend he is right in his statement, but there will come a day, when I let go of the crutches and walk flawlessly in perfection with my God, while the “stronger” humans search within their inner self to find a way off of their knees.

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