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Subject: Re: hope none of you are them  
Posted by [Crimson](#) on Sun, 16 Jul 2006 01:57:44 GMT  
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There are many people who have, from time to time, been tempted to think for themselves -- who have found themselves questioning beliefs they inherited but really never examined. This is nowhere more apt to be the case than in the area of religious beliefs. Our religious beliefs came to us in a protective coating of age and respectability, like the invisible "force field" of science fiction.

It takes a degree of intellectual courage to penetrate this penumbra of sanctity and inspect a belief on its own merits. Still, many people have done so. They have found themselves asking such questions as, how do I know that this book called the Bible is the supernaturally revealed and infallible word of God? How do I know there is even such a being as God? How does anybody know there is such a thing as immorality? When people begin seriously to raise questions of this sort, they find that their "faith", that is, their accustomed belief-patterns, seem increasingly insubstantial.

To lose one's faith may seem, in prospect, like being turned out of a comfortable home and left to fend for oneself in a vast and trackless waste. Those with a persistent curiosity and adventurous spirit will never-the-less leave their cozy shelter and set out to learn for themselves what it is like "out there." Although their first steps may be taken "in fear and trembling," they begin to find that they are not alone. They discover stalwart companions. They learn, indeed that they are "compassed about" with a "cloud of witnesses." As their minds become strengthened by use, they begin to see what others have seen, that their "spiritual home" was in reality a prison; its walls were built of ignorance and fear, and reinforced by habit and custom.

No one is kept in this prison but by oneself; it is a prison where every inmate is his or her jailer. Everyone, aware of it or not, already has the key that will unlock the door: the freedom to seek the truth.

- From the book *Secular Nation* by Thomas Vernon

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I have not read this book or know anything about the author, so don't get all ad-hominem on me.

However, the point stands. When (and if) you realize that this life is all you have and there is no great reward or punishment after you die, you are freed. Freed from fearing that who you love may decide your ultimate fate, freed from fearing that enjoying harmless pleasures won't condemn you to the imaginary pits of hell... As a child, the idea that this God person was there was told to me by my mom. Neither of my parents made me go to church more than a time or two, though I have attended at least a dozen sermons in my lifetime and attended Vacation Bible school twice. But even as a pre-teen, the whole god thing never stuck with me. It seemed like a weird story. Little did I know at that point how even intelligent people fell for this stuff and how deep this belief that some people have has gone back through the ages. Only recently did I really come to see clearly how religion was created by man to control people en masse, and as I discover people who I thought were intelligent being so the opposite, and so closed minded about religion.

It makes sense, of course. What better way to cement your religion than to convince the followers

that non-believers are EVIL and are going to hell. Then if you hear common sense from us atheists you say the devil is speaking through us and shit. Such a beautiful near-perfect manipulation I see before me. I think less of you for falling for this shit, and you think less of me for not believing. What a beautiful situation that has been created, no?

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