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Subject: Re: hope none of you are them

Posted by [Hydra](#) on Sun, 16 Jul 2006 06:03:33 GMT

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Crimson wrote on Sat, 15 July 2006 21:57: 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?  
If you haven't read the book, why are you quoting from it? [/NITPICKING]

I feel sad for you, Crimson.

Notice I did not say "I pity you" (I don't view you as somehow lower than me simply because we disagree) but that I feel sad for you.

I feel sad that you have such a cynical view of not only all Christians but religion in general.

I'm sorry so many of my colleagues in Christ have failed to live up to the name "Christian"; though they may call themselves "Christian," many are hardly worthy of the title.

I'm sorry you think that the Christian faith is simply a tool to be used to "control the masses"; Christianity has a rough history, I'll give you that.

I'm sorry so many of the terrible news stories that you hear about often have to do with terrible "Christians" committing some bad act against children or whatever.

But what I'm really sorry for is that you haven't seen all the good that Christianity is doing and has accomplished.

How many Christians, who wanted to provide a medical service to the people in the area REGARDLESS of who they are or what they believe, have started and successfully maintained hospitals throughout the United States? How many churches sponsor mission trips to places overseas to help out with orphanages and areas of natural disaster? How many Christians have donated millions upon millions of their own, private money to charities that OTHER Christians have already started? How many Christians and Christian groups have risked their own lives to travel to Iraq to help the struggling country rebuild its infrastructure after so many years of tyrannical rule? How many Christians have started group therapy organizations for recovering alcoholics or drug abusers? How many Christians have created similar groups/permanent centers for teenagers with crisis pregnancies? How many Christians have started homeless shelters and food drives for people living on the street? How many Christians have helped those same people living on the street, who acknowledge that they've royally messed, to get back onto their feet?

I could make my fingers tired from writing so many examples of exemplary Christians who have done extraordinary things to help their fellow men for a cause that, you say, is used only to control them.

Is it naiveté to look up at the sky at night and see the infinite complexity and order to the universe and not think that someone or something set it all into motion? How could our vast and great universe possibly have come about to exist if something didn't create it in the first place?

Is it childish to believe that we humans have some higher value than the cow squeeze and slaughtered pig meat that I ate on my pizza tonight (cheese and pepperoni, just to clarify)?

Like I said before, I'm sorry for the actions of my fellow "Christians" who judge and condemn others to Hell when it most certainly isn't their place. Though they are obviously too abrasive in their tactics and don't know how to present their ideas in a tactful way, they really want the best for everyone.

What they mean by, "Believe in Jesus, or you're going to Hell!" is that they want you to experience the most beautiful gift God has ever given to mankind. They don't want you to be left behind in the dust when the taxi to heaven drives off. Though they may not say it in the best way possible, they really want the best for you.

It's the same way with the advice given in the Bible says, "Don't do thus and such." Sin isn't an incarnation of Christians to keep people from enjoying "harmless pleasures" (in fact, you'll have to tell me which "harmless pleasures" the Bible prohibits, because I'm not immediately aware of 'em (though I have a good idea what you might mean, which I will address in a second)). When you think about it logically (of which many atheists are fans), it makes very good sense not to do many of the things the Bible says not to do.

Take adultery for example. The Bible supports sex within the context of marriage fully ("Be fruitful and multiply (or something or other)" Proverbs, I think (never said I was good with Bible verses)). Sex outside of marriage? How can you fully devote your soul's entire love to your spouse if you have an affair every once in a while?

Now examine premarital sex. First of all, humanity's desire for sex is insatiable--no one can get enough of it, am I right? So if I go out every night and try to pick up a one-night stand, first of all, that's gonna cost me an arm and a leg in drinks and mickeys, and second of all, how is that going to fulfill me? I'm just going to go out the next night, and the night after, and so on. And plus, with each additional woman I bang, that increases my chances of catching a VD or having an unwanted child on my hands. Why would I want to have sex when I am neither financially, spiritually, nor maturely ready to have a child?

You can probably apply that logic to whatever other "harmless pleasures" you can think of. As you can see, the Bible doesn't tell us we can't enjoy ourselves; it's just showing us how we can live a life that will fulfill our every need (whether it's a spiritual, financial, relational, even sexual need).

Some people spend their entire lives searching for their own truth, like trying to drill for an oil well in a number of different places. They'd like to say that they've struck oil so many times even though the best they can find is tar.

We Christians believe we have struck oil. We believe our well is bursting out of the ground, and we feel it is our duty to try to supply everyone with as much of it as we can. They can obviously reject us, as so many have done, and be superficially satisfied with their barrel of tar, yet deep down, something inside of them tells them that their tar isn't the oil they're looking for.

(I probably could have expanded upon and elaborated that analogy a little more extensively if only it weren't 2:00 in the morning....)

So please don't chastize us for only doing what everyone else, including yourself, has done--proclaiming we have struck oil and that our truth is absolute. How "open-minded" is it to say we haven't struck our oil when you haven't even begun drilling yet (that was a figurative "you," by the way)?

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