

RELIGION AS CRUTCH: THE CRUTCH THRIVES ON DISHONESTY AND DISREGARD FOR TRUTH

Using religion as a crutch or seeing it as a crutch leads to a form of intellectual dishonesty called cherry-picking. You see it all the time. When bad things happen to a holy person of prayer, the people will ignore the bad and consider anything good to be proof that God is with the person and answering the prayers. Or they will say the bad happens for a reason so it should be welcomed. It is certainly welcomed as a rationalisation! It is looking at the good and being unable to face or look at or acknowledge the failures. They do not worry that it is mercenary to condone what they see as a supernatural being doing what he is doing. It is bad enough to condone a God hurting you in your life but off the scale bad and fairly callous to judge that he is good to another when he clearly is not.

A cherry-picker of the Bible or his religion cannot complain if another cherry-picker decides to prefer the nasty bits of the religion and the Bible to the kinder bits. A Catholic who does not believe the pope is the head of the Church cannot complain if a Catholic decides that God still wants us to stone heretics to death. The benevolent cherry-picker enables the violent one by simply proving to him that she does not know what she is talking about and is a hypocrite anyway. The cherry-picker is definitely using religion as a crutch. The "good" cherry-picker and the "bad" one have the one attitude in common. It is just down to luck that one's selectiveness results in good and the other's in bad.

Another form of cherry-picking is when the Catholic claims to adore God and does not take God's ban on divorce and heresy (two examples out of thousands) seriously. Cherry-picking is saying that you want to be part and considered part of the religion but you don't want to accept all its teaching. You admit that you consider it bad to follow the religion properly. Then do the decent thing and get a better religion instead of this dishonesty and this pretence that your religion is not a standard but about you. Cherry-pickers on the bright side tend to be as critical of their religion as atheists are.

It is a kind of compliment to atheists when believers call their religion a crutch. It is confessing that atheism is right to be suspicious of religion. It follows that the believers must think that the happy atheist is strong enough to give up the comforts and conveniences of faith and following religion. And they are agreeing with atheists who say religion has the same function as an imaginary playmate does. Illogically, they deny that religion is not to be taken seriously if that is what it is! Hypocrisy at large again!

If faith is your crutch, it is only faith and could be misplaced or wrong. Therefore you have to expect and welcome the knowledge that it can be challenged even if you don't know what the challenges are or want to know.

If the crutch matters, religion in a sense does not. It would follow that the argument, "Don't criticise her religion for she needs to believe" is wrong as debunking her faith would be fine if you have a better one for her.

The perception that people are in their religion not because of sincere faith but because they use it as a crutch accuses them of dishonesty and leads only to one religion being suspicious of and untrusting towards other religions. If your faith is a crutch or if you are conditioned to believe, the end result may be called faith but it is not faith. It is habit. Arguments that faith should be left unchallenged then do not even apply to it.

THE DEFAULT CRUTCH

An atheist can be an optimist. Many optimists do not base their outlook much on God or religion. Some are not religious at all.

Both atheists and believers have the feeling that great suffering or death will never happen to them or their loved ones. But the feeling that does not make it true. And the danger is that it can make a person unrealistic. The atheist sees the illusion and goes along with it. She forgets it's an illusion and enjoys it. The believer also enjoys the illusion but turns it into a motivation to follow God and religion. The believer mistakes the feeling for a sense of divine protection. The believer and the atheist have the same illusion. The believer simply adds a new illusion to it. The believer does not understand himself and his feelings. The feeling has nothing to do with God. It is just part of our programming to help us cope in life. The illusion is the reason an atheist and believer can both feel grateful say that they survived something really bad. If you take belief in God away from the believer, you are only opening their eyes. You are not taking away their crutch for God is only what they think is the crutch. The real crutch is the feeling of invulnerability that deludes us to how vulnerable we are. It will stay there unless the person has clinical depression.

Those who say we need religion in order to have a sense that our lives have a purpose are telling us that religion is a crutch and we need this crutch. It's an admission that religion only thrives where people prey on the vulnerable. Religion thrives not on being good but on looking good.

If it is just us, and there is no angel or god looking after us, we need to know that so that we can find solutions about how to support each other best. If we are on our own we need to look after each other more not less.

IS CHALLENGING FAITH CRUEL?

Religion is not the only thing people have faith in. Yet it seeks special protection and even some atheists enable this unfairness usually on the grounds of "tolerance".

There are far more immediate and urgent matters than how somebody feels about their place in the universe with God and what will happen to them after death. You don't look for a crutch with more urgent and serious matters such as your child's cancer battle. A crutch is not needed or looked for in the biggest things.

If somebody has horrible side-effects from their tablets and they are still better off taking them, you do not encourage them to have faith that going off them will be for the best.

If a child is dying you do not encourage the parents to have faith that she is going to live.

If somebody needs to believe that they own property when they do not, you have to tell them.

When people of faith, seem to be helped by that faith we must remember that there is more to their faith than just religious faith. Faith is complex and consists of many faiths. Nobody has faith strictly speaking. What you have is faiths. You have faith that you will go to Barcelona in the autumn, that your kid will go to school this year, that there won't be a global nuclear war. Thus to challenge religious faith is not to challenge the rest of the faiths that a person has. The person still has plenty of crutches if you could take away the religious one.

Religious people are just bigots when they have faiths not faith and are so over-protective of their religious faith. If you intend to challenge their religious faith, you will find it helpful to help them to see how little religious faith matters to them when they think about it carefully. They need to see that it is only a small part of their faith setup.

Religious people by their manner and the way they behave and talk, forestall attempts to debate religion with them or attempts to invite them to rethink their doctrines.

The dictionary defines a bigot as an obstinate person meaning one who does not welcome hearing his faith being challenged.

The religious person has others thinking, "I will not say anything that questions what he or she believes as he or she will not thank me for it. They might complain that I have taken their faith away or tried to. They may resent me for asking them to rethink something that is important to them in terms of comfort."

When people feel that religion should be challenged and especially when its a dangerous form of religion and say nothing for the sake of peace, they are showing how they think religious people are vicious and stubborn bigots who want to stay ignorant. That is no way to promote peace and harmony. It shows you think that if you rock the boat at all they will throw off their robes of charm and holiness and show their true colours.

The impressionable religious people could end up feeling that they have to be bigots to be true servants of their religion. Anything that encourages them to put faith before truth is giving them that message.

If a believer is afraid of the way the world is going, the believer can be very insecure if his religion is challenged by those who disagree with it. This person is using the faith to cope with the fears that changes bring. The person may use religious faith to cope with sickness or the fear of death or to feel that he or she has a friend in God. A crutch is little help if it is so fragile. It is better if it breaks.

If your faith in what you call the one true faith is a crutch then you are going to by default oppose other faiths. You accuse people in other religions of being in bad faith or of not being good enough to make a crutch as good as yours or as correct.

When religious faith has meaning for a person chiefly because it helps the person feel less alone, that is an indication that the person is dissatisfied with his or her relationships and friends and needs to believe in a God that suits him so that the needs are fulfilled better. The person may be a bit of sociopath and will turn vicious if his crutch is challenged. That would be the kind of person who would describe an activist for atheism as a disgrace or fitted only for everlasting damnation.

The religionist who listens to the person who tells her why she should wean herself away from religion may say, "I regret

that you are taking my faith away from me." But nobody ever can take one's faith away. We never ever change anybody's minds. We give them the tools so that they will do it themselves.

Religions that love to display their good works tend to attract the people looking for a crutch the best. The crutch seekers feel uplifted by seeing the good works.

People want to believe in something that can make life okay or bearable in times of trouble. That's what's attractive about believing in God.

What helps is belief. Many say the power of religion is not in the power of God but in the power of belief. Belief is your creation, your self-empowerment. So it's not God that helps but belief in God. But why does the belief need to be in God? Why not believe in your power to find strength within, a strength that is all your own? That would be better and more effective.

To talk about belief in belief is to talk about belief as a crutch. To say, as Jesus did, that there is a God who deserves all our love is to say that God matters even more than belief in him does. He matters more than any belief. So it's a sin for a Christian to advocate belief in belief. Belief in belief really translates as, "Belief is desirable and beneficial. It matters not what you believe as long as you like the belief. To hell with anybody who says you must try to believe only what God approves of or you must believe only what the evidence supports."

One thing for sure is that it is not right to manipulate people to think they need belief in God when this belief is really a hidden form of belief in themselves.

The Roman Catholic Church, as a faith, has deceived the people and especially the poorest and most vulnerable members of society. There is no such thing as a good Catholic. No. What is called a good Catholic is a good human being who has the Catholic label. The point is that it is people who are good - not religions. It is people who make up charities that look after the poor not charities. Same principle!

Members of religion tend to do what they like until they get older and realise that death is a possibility and then they get religious. Religion thrives on exploitation of the vulnerable.

When people accept a religion without having investigated it carefully and well, that is a sign they are using it as a crutch. They use it to indulge their laziness instead of the painful and difficult task of checking things out.

If you are in your religion just because it is there, you are using it as a crutch. That is laziness.

To take your child and influence or brainwash her into religion and into adopting it as a crutch is child-abuse. It is trying to create a form of addiction in the child. The child could end up scared of other religions in case they challenge her crutch. The child will be damaged by the manipulative tactics you have deployed so shamelessly. What if the child would not need the crutch? You have given her a crutch she does not need and made her think she needs it! How cruel! What if the child could get a better crutch?

If it is okay for you to have your religious crutch, it is certainly not okay for you to have your child needing and using a similar crutch.

I find the following method of making life bearable and more enjoyable extremely effective. The person you are most interested in is yourself. Therefore if you make the habit of recording your day in detail in a diary and putting in times and the most mundane things you are making sure you will remember the good in that day. You will be able to look back at the bad and good later with fascination. It makes the bad less bad because you know that reading about it and the lessons in it will bring you enjoyment and wisdom. When you experience something bad you can say that in years to come you will still be able to look back on it and want to. It will console you and make you more determined to live a happier and more fulfilling life. Great suffering can be waiting for you around the corner - all you can do is get through it without making it worse. If God is what gives your life meaning then surely you crave being with him? Thus your suffering will only be worsened by belief in God. The more you suffer the more you will want him and to be with him.

We all have the feeling that we will be okay at some point in the future. We all have that crutch in common unless we suffer depression or something. This is not a religious crutch though the person might mistake it for a religious sentiment. Challenging that person's religious dogma then is not the same as challenging his or her crutch.

Challenging religion is a good deed not a bad one.

ACCEPTANCE

Making a conscious effort to accept whatever comes needs to be a daily exercise and done several times a day. Some people can accept life in a passive way. They end up becoming do-nothings. If you believe that acceptance is a gift from God then acceptance can become like opium. You do not need to believe in God for that to happen but God makes it more likely to happen. If God is going to do what is best, it follows that if you do everything or nothing, the best will still happen. God will reason, "Okay X has done nothing in the past but the past is the past. I cannot let the world suffer over the fact that he cannot change the past. I have to act."

THE CRUTCH IS BASED ON PROTECTIVE THINKING AND THEREFORE FEAR

Religion is a crutch for it is full of protective thinking and is based on protective thinking. Needing the crutch is a symptom of fear and fear leads to more fear and hate. It leads to psychological disorders. There will be a lot of denial in the persons meaning that if they know there is something wrong with them they risk never getting to the bottom cause.

When we talk about negative thinking, we must realise that our thinking is never negative. It is protective. Protective thinking, as Tony Humphreys puts it, is about guarding yourself against the pain of failure and rejection.

For example,

#"I am never going to be right with God." That looks very negative.

But it seeks to protect you from erroneously thinking you are right with God when you are not.

But it tells you that you at least know there is such a thing as being right with God though it will never happen to you.

But you are trying to get God to reduce his expectations of you. You feel the standard as it is, is too high.

But you are trying to see that he can cut the standard down a bit for you and should. You love yourself in the sense that you want God to help you that way.

But you are trying to blame God and God's standards if he rejects you. This protects you from feeling more hurt by the rejection than you are or could be.

You are emotionally unable to follow God's standards as he wants so you project your inability to God. You blind yourself to the disappointment in your inability by blaming God. You are protecting yourself from that pain.

So it is not so negative after all. It is positive in the sense that it is a strategy to protect yourself.

Protecting yourself is more important to you than God could ever be.

There is enough to worry about in life without caring about God.

#Here is another, "All I can do to help this dying person is to pray".

This is protecting yourself from the feeling of helplessness.

You do not have much faith in yourself when you are so sure you will feel helpless and can't deal with it.

ATHEISM - A CRUTCH?

It would be strange if the religious person was allowed to have their crutch and have others making crutches while the atheist isn't allowed to do the same thing with atheism! But that is what happens!

Some object that if religion is a crutch or necessarily a crutch then atheism is a crutch too or can be. Perhaps the atheist wants to believe there is nothing to fear after death for he feels he should be punished after death for his sins. Or perhaps he likes to feel that he is his own God and therefore hates God. This assumes that atheism is protective against God. But that implies that there are no real atheists but only people who fool themselves that they are atheists. But there are. You cannot call atheism a crutch. Most atheists stress the importance of logic and reason and evidence and it is not their fault if these things tell them that religion is superstition.

Some say that atheism is a crutch for if there is no God to answer to then there is then no accountability for the way you live your life. But most atheists live reasonably good lives.

If atheism is a crutch then everything is a crutch. Belief in God or atheism cannot both be crutches for they are polar opposites.

And even if both could be crutches, the question we should ask in the light of the fact that a smaller crutch is better than a bigger one is, "Is atheism the biggest crutch or is it belief in God?" In fact atheism would not be the biggest crutch for the simple reason that if the atheist just wants independence from God the believer wants a lot more than that. He wants God to punish those who hurt him and to protect him and bring him to Heaven forever when he dies. And the atheist is unlikely to want independence from God when the atheist seeks to avoid being independent of others to the extent that he doesn't care how he treats them.

The religionist says, "God tells me in my heart that this religion is true." The atheist says, "The evidence tells me religion or God is superstition." Who is the most humble person? The religionist would need to know as much as God be so sure that God is speaking. The atheist is set on going wherever the evidence leads. The believer is arrogant and the atheist is humble or should be! The atheist has no crutch while the believer is happy to imagine he knows what he does not know at all.