



## Scriptures and Doctrine :: Just a Psychological Crutch

### Just a Psychological Crutch - posted by Chicku (), on: 2010/7/22 2:13

I remember getting into a cab outside a central London church.(1) The cabbie took one look at my Bible and launched into his opinion of Christianity. He explained to me that belief in God is a crutch for weak, pathetic people who don't have the strength to take responsibility for their own lives. When I answered, "Thank you very much," with just a hint of irony, he blustered on with, "Well, I'm just saying it for your own good. A girl like you doesn't need religion!"

This idea that Christian faith is a psychological crutch for needy people is a pervasive one, based on a number of assumptions. The first is that God is merely a psychological projection: he doesn't actually exist in any real sense, but exists only in the minds of his followers, who have created him out of their own need—a need for a father figure or a need to give significance to their existence. The most famous proponent of this view was the Austrian neurologist and founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). In arguing against the existence of God, Freud theorized that one's view of God springs from the view one has of one's father. When people grow up and find themselves thrust into the cruel, cold world, they look for a haven of security and protection from it. An adult can no longer look to parents for this protection, if he or she is to maintain dignity. Yet, Freud mused, we look for another 'Someone' to do this job for us and this leads to the idea of a 'Higher Power' or God.

From this perspective, God is merely a creation of the human mind, a projection emanating from human need and desire rather than a distinct reality. For Freud, God is made in humanity's own image, the 'ultimate wish-fulfillment,' the end product of human desire for a loving father.

Can God really be explained away so easily by one aspect of psychology? One obvious point to make is that the argument about projection cuts both ways. After all, isn't it equally possible to say that Freud and other atheists deny the existence of God out of a need to escape from a father figure, or to argue that the non-existence of God springs from a deep-seated desire for no father figure to exist?

Clearly this doesn't prove that God is real, but it does show that Freud's arguments cannot prove that God does not exist while at the same time helping us tackle the question of projection. After all, dismissing God as a psychological projection while claiming neutrality in our own psyche is disingenuous at best and cannot be an adequate basis for rejecting God.

It also quickly becomes apparent that a Freudian belief in God as a human projection cannot provide us with an explanation for the Christian faith of converts such as C.S. Lewis or Alister McGrath, who would rather not believe but find themselves compelled by the evidence that Christianity is true and real.

In fact, we may go further by suggesting that a desire for a God who can fulfill our needs and provide moral order exists precisely because human beings have been created to desire him. The man floating on a raft at sea is unbearably thirsty, but he won't get a drink of water simply by being thirsty. But the very existence of his thirst does show that a way for his desire to be satisfied actually exists: fresh water. As C.S. Lewis put it, "Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists." Ultimately for the Christian the important question is not whether I have a psychological need for a father figure, or a desire for a father figure not to exist. Rather, the question is about what actually exists: Is God really there? The way to come to any conclusions about that is to investigate the evidence for his existence.

The second assumption we encounter is that because belief in God provides the faithful with a crutch, this means it is somehow suspect. The skeptic implies that since the believer finds protection from the cruelty of nature and the evil of the world, the idea of God is like a talisman, an irrational superstition. But surely, if belief in God provides a positive moral framework that helps people to live constructively, that is not a reason to disbelieve in him. Similarly, if relationship with God enables the believer to find healing, wholeness, and comfort in the midst of human suffering, we should not be surprised. After all, if God is real, his existence will have a massive impact on life and on the experience of life. It is only if he is not real that we ought to be worried about the 'crutch' he provides.

Finally, the third assumption is that people who make use of this 'crutch' of relationship with God, and find it practical, meaningful, and effective, must be weak or inferior. This is a rather strange idea, since surely it makes sense to access real sources of support and relationship that are there for us. If a God of love does exist, the rational thing to do is accept

his love, to come to know him. Entering into that relationship will have a positive effect, and that does not make the person weaker than or somehow inferior to anyone else. On the contrary, it is the logical, reasonable response if God himself is real.

**Re: Just a Psychological Crutch - posted by Miccah (), on: 2010/7/22 2:23**

The cabbie is right, God is for the weak. We need to become weak, so that we may be strong in Christ, and so He can be glorified.

**Re: Just a Psychological Crutch - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2010/7/22 7:49**

This cabbie is poor, blind and naked - a modern emperor without his clothes.

One time I had a lengthy discussion with an atheist...I asked her where the concept of goodness comes from...and so the discussion began. I kept asking questions knowing they all led back to Jesus. At the name of Jesus she fumed "don't ever use that name!"

I suspect this is this cabbie's problem: it is Jesus. Many will agree there just might be a god but he cares nothing for the world...but just mention Jesus name, they get angry. This should tell you something.

**Re: Just a Psychological Crutch - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2010/7/22 8:07**

I just checked my email and found this article sent by Ravi Zacharias International Ministries. I suspect there may be copyright issues here that needs to be considered...

**Re: - posted by Goldminer (), on: 2010/7/22 8:58**

where's the link ginnyrose

**Re: Just a Psychological Crutch - posted by Lysa (), on: 2010/7/22 9:39**

Link:

<http://www.rzim.org/resources/read/asliceofinfinity/todayslice.aspx>

The article was written by Amy Orr-Ewing.

End of Article Notice:

Amy Orr-Ewing is curriculum director for the Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics and training director of RZIM Zacharias Trust in Oxford, England.

(1) This article was originally written for Pulse magazine, a publication of Zacharias Trust.

**Re: Just a Psychological Crutch - posted by ChrisJD (), on: 2010/7/23 13:56**

Hi everyone.

"Can God really be explained away so easily by one aspect of psychology? One obvious point to make is that the argument about projection cuts both ways. After all, isn't it equally possible to say that Freud and other atheists deny the existence of God out of a need to escape from a father figure, or to argue that the non-existence of God springs from a deep-seated desire for no father figure to exist?"

Every argument that does not begin with God at its foundation can be turned against itself and the one using it against Him (Proverbs 9:10, 21:30).

He has made it so we cannot escape Him (Psalm 139), and, I agree with Miccah, He is for the absolutely poor and needy (Psalm 34:6).

Only the sick need a physician.

**Re: - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2010/7/23 17:27**

Ok, now for the link. Lysa did share some info but there is more.

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<http://www.rzim.org/terms.aspx>

I have used materials from this site in our church bulletin by emailing them for permission to do so. At the time when I did it, there was a notice that their articles were not to be posted on any internet sites. However, in reading through this 'terms' page I do not see it. Nevertheless, they do ask at a minimum that you will reference the article to its author and the source.

Hope I did not cause you too much agony...

Personally, I love to hear Ravi speak. I have listened to many of his sermons several times online. What is better yet is to listen to these same sermons on CDs - the ones posted online have been edited to a certain length to fit the broadcast time slot.

ginnyrose

**Re: Just a Psychological Crutch - posted by StevenL (), on: 2010/7/24 12:24**

I'm going to need a crutch until I get my new legs.

**Re: Life support., on: 2010/7/24 12:27**

Tozer said that FAITH is DEPENDENCE. More than a crutch. Life Support.

**Re: , on: 2010/7/25 16:34**

Following Jesus is not a crutch. It's more like a Weight Vest(a vest with weight on them used for strength training by athletes, etc)

Only Real men and women can follow Jesus. We're choosing to be humiliated and leave ourselves vulnerable and choose to not focus on the comforts of life which is the easy way or the crutch. Life would be so much easier if I didn't have to speak about Jesus or if I spent more time making money.

No cowards allowed.

The cabbie was talking about the fake christianity that is preached in lukewarm churches of how God is only lovey dovey and where you see pictures of Jesus petting lambs.

**Re: - posted by InTheLight (), on: 2010/7/25 20:27**

Quote:

-----Tozer said that FAITH is DEPENDENCE. More than a crutch. Life Support.  
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Amen. Christianity is only a crutch for those who don't care if Christ is real, they just want to cope in this world. For the true believer Christ is all and in all.

He is a crutch in the sense that we can not go it alone, we must always lean on Him because we will not be fully healed on this side of eternity but, He is much more than that, so much more that we would never use the term "crutch".

Instead we use terms like "all in all" and "the Way, the Truth, and the Life". Christ is not a crutch but a way of life. It is Christ Himself, not our faith, who leads us through every valley. Bless the Lord O my soul!

In Christ,

Ron

**Regarding the Cabbie, on: 2010/7/26 0:53**

About the cabbie being "poor, blind, and naked."

Christ's comments about being poor, blind, and naked were directed to a congregation, not an unbeliever.

Similarly, Christ's comment about the blind leading the blind referred to religious people leading their religious followers into a ditch.

Working out our own salvation with fear and trembling always requires us to examine ourselves both as individuals and as congregations, to see if we are sliding into negative spiritual poverty, spiritual blindness, and spiritual nakedness.

**Codek's Cowards, on: 2010/7/26 1:02**

"The cabbie was talking about the fake christianity that is preached in lukewarm churches of how God is only lovey dovey and where you see pictures of Jesus petting lambs."

So the best way to reply to the cabbie might be to say something like, "I agree. Many people DO use Jesus as a crutch. Personally, I try not to use religion as a crutch. Jesus is more than fire insurance. Jesus is my example of great courage to stand on the side of the oppressed and against injustice."

Or something similar.

To me, the fact that the cabbie discerns the weakness of certain forms of Christianity is evidence that he is created in God's image, and has the capacity to discern between something a fake and the genuine article.