

Why Believe in a Fairy Tale for the Weak?, Ps.38, Rom.3:20-28

Why? Questions for Christians #12

◆ **Intro:** Years ago a show (I think 20/20) did a piece on near death experiences. The researchers found that many folk are similar in having experienced a tunnel of light as they were in the throes of death. They discovered that there were numerous electronic impulses near the visual sensors of the brain which increase as a body dies. Their conclusion? A dying brain produces visions of tunnels of light. Of course they assume that the lights aren't there, they are projections. (This theory of course makes the assumption that nothing exists that cannot be seen all the time by everyone else.) They assume that the brain is making the vision rather than a vision affecting the brain.

◆ This is the question often raised about the Christian religion: isn't it just a projection of a weak and needy brain? *Isn't Christianity just a big illusion invented by needy persons who desperately want some comfort, as a man crawling across a desert might hallucinate an oasis with a pool of water?* Why would strong, healthy people need the a fairy tale?

◆ You see, the good atheist among us asks herself, "If there is no God, then why are there so many people looking for God? I know; they must have a need and they are projecting a solution in religion." This is not an uncommon philosophy. Karl **Marx**, the father of communism called religion the "opiate of the people", their drug. He claimed it was an invention of the controlling upper class to keep the poorer classes in servitude and to prevent uprisings. The

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oppressive ruling class invented the religious virtues of service, suffering, and humility, as well as an eternal hope in heaven, instead of a demand for rights here on earth. It's all a fantasy. Freud, the father of psychology, called religion a psychological fantasy, or wish-fulfillment. People, he said, wish that life was different, more exotic, smoother -so they live these longings out in stories. He said, "Nature rises up against us, majestic, cruel and inexorable; she brings to our mind once more our weakness and helplessness..." -like when you're caught in a hail storm with your new truck, or when lightning strikes and burns down your house, or a tornado is approaching. Freud believed that because of these things that prove our vulnerability and weakness as humans, we postulate (make-believe) that there is a God out there who can help us or at least we can negotiate with, all of which makes us feel better. After all, native pagans supposed that the rain had a god, and the wind had a god, and the willow tree had a god. Isn't Christianity just doing the same thing?

◆ So that's the question we're tackling this morning: Since now we know that rivers are just water, and rain is a simple evaporation-condensation process, why think Christianity is anything more than a fairy tale for the weak who need comforting?

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◆ **1.** Christians agree that people make things up. In fact, Christians maintain that all other religions are in fact made up attempts at finding the one true story of God our Father and his son Christ Jesus! This is what we've been looking at in this whole summer series on Questions for Christians. Where do the facts lead? A quick review of some themes we've pondered: (available on our webpage sunriseccrc.org)

◆1. Just because people make things up, doesn't mean everything is made up. There must be something that is true. It's perfectly rational that there is a true story about the universe, and we ought to find out what it is. There is nothing arrogant about asserting such truth. In fact, the Christian willingness to admit sin and guilt actually demonstrates humility as opposed to the charge of hypocrisy and arrogance.

◆2. The Christian faith accounts for our human sense of moral right and wrong, the presence of good and that of evil, better than other systems. Evolution for example, has no explanation for this.

◆3. The more we find out about science and history, the more supported the accuracy of the biblical account. (the accuracy of the biblical texts to their origins thousands of years ago, archeological verification of biblical accounts, etc.) In fact, the scientific method itself actually arose from

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the Christian faith which believed God's truth can be found consistent throughout the universe.

◆4. The historical reality of Jesus' empty tomb and the instant formation of the Christian church in the First Century defies all other explanation, except that it is based on a real event. So what was it?

◆5. The Christian gospel of grace and unearned forgiveness is unique among all world religions.

◆So yes, lots of people make things up. That's why it's important to carefully consider all the data and determine which faith system accounts for it best. It is my hope that we have been seeing how reasonable the Christian faith is, and that you can learn to show this to your questioning friends. So one of the first things you can share with your co-worker who makes the challenge that Christianity is just a fairy tale for the weak is this: any tale that alters the course of human history as much as Christianity has, is worth a closer look.(That by way of summary of where we've been so far.)

◆**2. Christians also agree that people absolutely do find comfort and consolation in Christianity.** Need and difficulty does lead people to consider faith issues.

◆A. But because something brings comfort does not make it unreal. Medicine brings comfort. It's not wish-fulfillment. Food brings comfort. It's not a projection of the mind. That

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Christianity satisfies a physical or psychological need in no way makes it a fantasy.

- ◆ A grouchy grandfather who lived a lifetime of manipulation, abuse, and selfishness can find forgiveness in Christ for his most hideous evil -and have his personality change!
- ◆ People can venture to new lands, new cities, new lives with courage and security knowing that God is already there and sovereign.
- ◆ Families whose lives would otherwise have been destroyed by the grief of a loved one's death live on, *not* escaping into the latest popular drug, *not* in bitter withdrawal, *not* in road rage or school violence, but in hope in the promises of God.
- ◆ So a second way to respond to those who call Christianity mere wish-fulfillment is that a story that makes people better people is worth investigating.
- ◆ B. We might also observe that psychological need also produces atheists. I know hosts of people who have *rejected* the Church of Jesus because of psychological pain.
 - ◆ Some were abused by parents, or a religious leader, or teacher. So in response they walk away from any consideration of faith. Freud himself says of his own childhood that his mother made him look into the cook stove to imagine the punishment of hell he was going to get for misbehaving. A girl who was abused by her father may have a very difficult time considering God her father. A man

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burdened by the guilt he carries for wanting to indulge in a sinful desire, may very much like the idea that there is no holy God he is accountable to. So a third response to the charge that Christianity is a fairy tale for the weak is: Since need and pain can equally push people away from God, as to God, it is not a measure of truthfulness.

◆**3. Christianity is as dangerous as it is comforting.** Why invent a dangerous religion? Consider several things the Bible teaches about God and about you, that you wouldn't wish for if you were making up a fairy tale so that you feel good about yourself.

◆A. God is holy. The Greek and Roman gods were not holy. In fact, according to their religions, the gods were often as bad as people they ruled over! Greek gods are notorious for their immorality and deception of men. The bible says the true God is a consuming fire that eradicates all sin and darkness. God rebukes and punishes sin. That's a danger!

◆read verse 1-5 of our Psalm! God told Moses that he lets no sin go unpunished! None!

◆verse 18. God's holiness only serves to reveal our sinfulness and guilt. This is not the tale of wish-fulfillment.

◆What kind of religion looking purely for comfort and wish-fulfillment would make up the story of a holy God.

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◆B. God is all-knowing (omniscient) (v9). One of the greatest fears people have is of others finding out how bad they really are sometimes!

◆*"Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed." John 3:20, NIV.*

◆As an illustration, can I have a volunteer stand a share a secret sin they are presently dealing with? I thought not. If you're going to make up a religion that merely fulfills your wishes, why would you ever pretend that God knows all your secrets?

◆C. God is sovereign. The pagan gods are not sovereign. They don't even pretend to be. They have power over limited arenas of life. The God of the Bible claims complete control and jurisdiction over the universe. That means we don't make the rules. Why would pained people trying to fairytale their way out of their problems make up a God sovereign over all. If he was merely, say, an advisor who really couldn't make you do anything, or if he didn't exist at all it's much easier to chose any behavior you like and call it legitimate. People do this all the time.

◆Some parents beat their children (as opposed to spanking them), or verbally belittle them, and feel no remorse.

◆Instead of humbly repenting of sin, today people just "come out" and call it "pride". It's a lot easier than fighting desires that a God says are against his designs for healthy living. God draws lines in the sand about good and bad.

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Following them is no picnic. It means self-denial and suffering!

◆ look at verse 19-20 in the Psalm. He's trying to do good and he's the one slandered.

◆ The Christian faith isn't the feel good fairy tale. And in our mixed up culture Christians are singled out as transphobic or homophobic and slandered for holding to moral truth. It's not happy ending story for the teenage girl to disagree with her classmates because she stands on biblical teaching.

◆ D. Close corollary to what the Christian faith says about God is what it says about us: People are guilty of sin.

◆ v3-4 The Psalm writer makes no pretense of sin being a problem in the human life. It a common admission of a God-follower.

◆ *"Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." Psalms 51:1-5, NIV.*

◆ So a further response to the challenge that the Christian faith is a made-up tale of comfort is this: Why would anyone make up a faith with so much discomfoting news if all they want is comfort,

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wish-fulfillment and ease? No, the Christian worldview is no fairytale.

◆ So yes, the Christian faith is a comfort: forgiveness of sin that we do not earn but cost the life of Jesus. Call it a crutch if you want, but don't forget that every human is crippled in sin. And here's the hardest part: you have to admit you are weak, and sinful to receive the gift.

◆ *"Therefore no-one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. ... Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded..." Romans 3:20-28, NIV.*

◆ Its good news but it's hard news too. There's no pretending everything is sugar and cream!

◆ **Conclusion:** Frederica Mathewes-Green writes, "Picture yourself walking around a shopping mall, looking at people and the window displays. Suddenly, you get a whiff of cinnamon. You weren't even hungry, but now you really crave a cinnamon roll. This craving isn't something you made up. There you were, minding your own business, when some drifting molecules of

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sugar, butter, and spice collided with a susceptible patch inside your nose. You had a real encounter with cinnamon—not a mental delusion, not an emotional projection, but the real thing.”

◆That’s how it is with the Christian faith, friends. You and I have a craving inside. We want meaning. We want to matter. We want life. We know we struggle with evil, and frequently chose very bad things even if we don’t want to admit it. And should we admit it, your and my equally natural desire is to excuse it or make up for it on our own, earn our forgiveness.

◆And here comes the aroma of the gospel story, sweet as the aroma of a cinnamon. And your soul encounters it. It’s not a projection, but it only smells good to the seeking heart, the heart that has a appetite for cleansing, and power, and life everlasting. Do you smell the aroma? If you haven’t believed in Jesus, do it now. Ask for his forgiveness. Ask for his promise of eternal life. If you have a broken leg... if you have a broken heart... if you have a broken home...

Children’s Message:

Once there was a land where all the people were born with one leg. As you can imagine they did not walk very quickly. Ping pong was ok to play, but kick ball was really rather difficult. Then one day a smart little fellow invented crutches. Now, although he still had one leg, he could move around much faster than before! So now it didn’t take nearly so long to get to the kitchen for lunch or

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the playground for recess. He told all his friends that they should get crutches too.

A few of them did and really found life a lot better. But some did not. Do you know what they said? "Crutches are for weak people who can't handle life on their own." And so they continued to hop slowly around on one foot. Who do you think is being smart in this story?

Did you know that some people say the same thing about loving God? They say it's for dumb, weak people who can't handle life on their own. They think following Jesus is a crutch for people who can't handle everything alone.

Know what I think? I think that loving God helps me walk through life a lot better than I could without him. I'm glad that God is like a crutch, cuz if I'm like the people with only one leg; there are things I can't do. I can't even be good all the time! But God helps be more than in can be alone.