

The God Squad - Jack Buchanan

We are all familiar with the concept of religion. And we're all aware of the major part it plays in human existence and no matter how hard we try it's always there, looming over us like the shadow of the devil himself. Either in the news or knocking on the front door of your own house you will know about it. In the papers and on TV you might have heard about the apparent minister, and I use the term loosely, who believes that holding your very own burn-a-Koran day will bring peace between us and Islam. Or, as I said, they will be knocking on your front door, insisting on "saving you" from eternal damnation...it is usually at this point that I tell these parasitical little Jehovah's Witnesses that I'm the son of the local Humanist Celebrant and am afraid that, according to my RE teacher and probably them, I'm doomed to an eternity of suffering.

On the night of September 11th 2001, when I was innocent and young, I didn't know what a fundamentalist was, let alone a religious fundamentalist. I only knew that someone had flown a plane into a couple of buildings. It didn't seem relevant to me and I didn't know it was anything to do with religion; I still went to Sunday school in the local village with my little brother, a choice my parents supported even though it wouldn't have been theirs. Looking back, I'm not even sure I believed any of what they said. Admittedly, I did get teary eyed while listening to the ministers sermons on occasion, but this was most likely due to extreme boredom rather than being moved by the holy spirit.

Eventually I learned more about religion. I learned I didn't believe a word of it. I learned that there was nothing wrong with believing or, in my case not believing in god. I also learned how much fighting there was about him. Yes, lower case "him" because, unfortunately for you, I'm not imbibing this sacred text with his spirit. And my beliefs, etched into my being during primary school, tell me only people, places and titles begin with capital letters and for this to happen they must be real. Or indeed imaginary if you are doing a creative writing project and have to make them up. Much like the Bible, the most famous and the single greatest story ever invented.

However what I found to be most aggravating and utterly wrong about organised religion was conversion. The people who make it their lives work to convert as many non-believers as possible to their chosen religion, the sort of insanely contented and upbeat prick who will only talk to you if you've joined them, or if they think there's a possibility you will. Much like politicians, who could make the idea of butchering kittens and consequently making a stew sound like a beneficial activity for Britain, and something we would enjoy doing.

I refused in school to take part in the shoebox appeal because although you are sending someone in need help, Blythswood decided they would also help even more by adding a religious text to each one. Spreading the word of god, in my opinion, is one of the most evil acts in the history of mankind, except for maybe the invention of Desperate Housewives. By all means educate us to the point that people know you exist and what your religion is 'all about'. But don't shove a fistful of it down my throat and tell me I'll live forever if I swallow.

I recently heard about a group called Prom Praise based at All Souls, Langham Place. This is a collection of admirably talented musicians who banded together to spread the glorious word of god through music. My mother's friend, also a Humanist Celebrant, was invited to one of their concerts courtesy of her sister, who plays with them. Not in the Catholic Priest way, you understand, but instrumentally. The friend explained to me that the scariest thing about this group was how convincing their speakers were. These were people who could sway the minds of thousands. Who claimed they could save you from death. Who

could let you live in bliss for all eternity. These were people who could persuade a crowd of hundreds to stand up and admit they believe you can live forever by symbolically eating and drinking a celestial Jewish zombie they think proclaimed ultimate truth. These speakers are obviously not your average Christian Jesus-freak. Oh, I've no doubt in my mind that every single one of them could be the next Jesus Christ. Fortunately for the general public, whenever one of them admits this, there's a special place they go. It's called an asylum.

These new Jesus' whose sole aim, and I quote, "to allow schoolchildren to experience Christian word and worship" is conversion at its most domestic and obvious form. At school age, children are extremely impressionable. They accept most things they learn in school as truth and so this group of Christians had the disgusting, albeit clever, idea of preying on this.

Prom Praise is so inherently wrong and against my natural programming that I've decided to create my own Hell and send them there. And believe me this one is real. Why is it real you ask? Because I say it is. And also because now I've written it down it must be true and we should take it literally, otherwise we'll all end up there. Hey, if other people can invent a Hell and send me there, why not vice versa? If Richard Dawkins, the newly labelled "fundamentalist Atheist" heard about this group (which I'm sure he has) his softly spoken, polite-yet-forceful demeanour would be replaced by that of an insane chimp, and he would probably let loose an onslaught of statements and arguments that could overthrow god himself. Hopefully he would refrain from throwing his faeces at others and attempting to dominate them, but if he did it would be their own fault, and not entirely undeserved in my opinion. But then again, they might see it as a complex sign from god, telling them that they're also spreading shit.

I do not want this to be seen as an attack on religion as a whole. There are a great number of people who have done a number of great things in god's name and I respect the beliefs of everyone. But I do want to attack the people that feel the need to convince everyone to believe what they do. The world can be a beautiful place and is it not enough that 2 million Scots can appreciate this without god? If everyone lived under the basic rule of nearly every single religion "don't give the crap you can't take", the world would be a happy place and we wouldn't need the second coming. Far too many people have debates about which religion got that basic rule right... I however have unlocked the secret of the differences between them all: the spelling of them.