

Standing for Christ in an Age When Atheism Is Fashionable

We live in an age where many question Christianity. It somehow has become fashionable to be an atheist. The mainstream media constantly focus on negative news about Christians. Believers in God are told that they are old-fashioned, outdated and simply out of touch with reality. And many young people struggle, as they don't quite know how to approach this fervent disdain.

This is why it is more important than ever to educate yourself on how to defend the faith, how to rationally and spiritually explain the Christian belief to those who, out of ignorance, think that belief in God belongs to the past. Read *The Culture War: How the West Lost its Greatness* and get the tools. Remember that atheism is a faith like any other, the belief in "nothing" and the assortment that "the universe is empty." None of them ever went out there to check, so how do they know there is no God, angels or devils out there? They assume based on faith. Atheism is a religion, they strongly believe that "God is dead" and mankind is the only source of light, which is impossible to prove empirically.

The question becomes who really is out of touch with reality, as several of the most important values in our culture come from Christianity and its ethics. Professor at Yale and Harvard, historian Robert R. Palmer has pointed out that it is simply impossible to exaggerate the importance of Christianity's influence on the development of Western values. The whole foundation of our Western civilization lay precisely on the very values that stem from Christianity. Let me name a couple.

It was the profoundly Christian thought that introduced the principle of equality in the West, the revolutionary idea that

each man, regardless of class, gender and race, has a unique value. The leading French atheist, Michel Houellebecq proclaims that he is convinced we would never have human rights without the originally Jewish-Christian hypothesis, the incredibly bold idea that man is created, formed in the likeness of God and therefore also sanctified. The ideal of equality would later in history be seen as a secular idea, and one of the cornerstones of secular society, yet there is no doubt about its religious origins.

As believers, the example of Jesus stands high above any other. As we examine his life, we see, for example, how he completely revolutionized the view on women. He freely engaged with them in a way that broke with the traditions at the time. The story of the Samaritan woman at the well serves as an example. Remember, as a Samaritan, she was a complete outsider to the Jewish community. Jews did not mingle much with them, and they were considered a disrespected sect due to the way they worshipped, which differed somehow from the Jewish traditions.

On many occasions, the revolutionary Jesus broke off from the socially acceptable and freely engaged in apologetic debates with all kinds of "outsiders." His disciples were quite shocked to see him speak to the Samaritan woman, engaging in discussion, showing her profound love that made her a believer. She felt honored to have met a prophet and went and told everyone. Jesus was arguably "the first feminist"; he deeply respected women. He was often criticized by the religious communities for allowing a "bad woman" to wash his feet, stopped the throwing of stones and told the woman at the well to "Go and sin no more" (John 8:11b). He had the habit of saving people's lives. By his example, he opened up profound freedoms that to this day permeate the Western culture.

Jesus showed a remarkable empathy and kindness for the weak, the poor and the sick. We should follow his example in our everyday lives. This was also a highly unusual approach, not

distinguishing between rich and poor. He was born in a stable in opposition to the arrogant and selfishly rich and affluent, again a dramatic statement of the value of human life—regardless of class, social standing or ethnicity. The early Christians worked to relieve suffering, help the poor and so on. They taught humility and that all men were brothers. As we see, the Christian contribution brought revolutionary elements to Western values and taught that in the eyes of God all men are equal. What a wonderful Christian ideal this is in our culture. {eoa}

Hanne Nabintu Herland, *historian of religions and author of The Culture War. How the West Lost Its Greatness. Visit for more information.*