

# Between Christianity and ... Nothingness: A Liminal Point of View

Cruz Victorio

To be liminal is to make yourself an outcast from two places. It's to be in two worlds that do not mix, and although you may try to please both, trying to fit into one or the other, you'll only end up feeling like you don't belong to either. For me, it was the religion I was born into, along with my lifestyle, that directly contradicted one another. Although I do believe in my religion, I am constantly left doubting myself and my actions. I do not follow God strictly, yet I want to.

Back when I was a kid, since I was five, I remember that my parents were quite religious. My parents would teach me the importance of God's rules. They would tell me not to lie, steal, hit others, because doing so was directly defying God himself. I would wake up early every Sunday to go to church, and before leaving, we'd always pray for understanding of His word. Every morning and before a meal, we'd pray. It was something we did regularly. A norm: nothing could be done before praying, and we were used to that. But as I soon came to understand, if your household norms aren't similar to the ones outside of your home, then they are not norms anywhere except your home. If your norms seem weird to everyone else, you will be made the outcast.

Oftentimes when I was young, I would find myself watching other kids do things that would go against my religious morals. I watched a kid steal a marker from the teacher, and heard a small voice in my head say, "Thou shall not steal." So I did what any Christian would do, I walked up to him and said, "God doesn't like it when you steal. You shouldn't steal so you don't go to hell." My first lesson in human interactions was that, if you are not important to someone, or if you simply don't know them, do not talk to them, much less reprimand them. It was then that the kid grabbed my shirt and said, "You better not tell or I'll hit you." I realized that not everyone believed in God like I did, or was made to believe. One of my religion's requirements was to speak of "the word of God and spread to the people," but I was just a kid. I didn't want to go around telling people things they didn't want to hear, and constantly be threatened by them or made fun of when they didn't want me around. Like many five-year-olds, I wanted to be liked and I wanted friends, but in my case, I also wanted to please God. I wanted to go to heaven with the friends I would make, but it seemed that I would have to pick one or the other.

Often times, even today, my mind goes to religion. I do fear God, and I do wish to please him. I am afraid of my actions, as anything I do can possibly lead me to hell, but time changes things. With time, I learned to ignore many things I was taught. If there was a song I liked, or a violent game I found appealing, I used to feel guilty for listening to it, for playing it, for ignoring God's rules. But guilt is not something anyone wants to live with, so you learn to forget and ignore. When

talking to friends, I curse, I look at girls, I play fight, I do whatever I want, and rarely does the topic ever go to religion. When it does, there's usually one or two atheists in the group that don't care at all: atheism, the easiest religion of all. As to my friends who have other religions, I learned to respect them, let them lead the life they want. It's a mutual understanding that neither of us would ever try to change the other, even if our religions required us to do so.

Nowadays, I find myself between two worlds. Between good and evil, right and wrong, Christianity and ... nothingness. But Christianity doesn't allow you to be nothing. If you are not with God, you are against him, one of the cruelest rules of my religion. I wish to be in as liminal a space as I possibly can, but alas, I cannot, because by default, if I'm not fully Christian, I am with the devil, and I don't think many people like hearing that they're with the devil. However, to me, being fully Christian means breaking many bonds I've made throughout my life. It means converting all my non-Christian friends, and potentially losing them because I can't take no for an answer. It means not being able to play music, video games, or see movies if they are not focused on God, which most of them aren't. It means having to quit so many things from my life that have become normal to me. Having a girlfriend, going to movies, watching literally anything on YouTube: I cannot let all that stuff go, but I don't want to give in to atheism. If I do, I feel that will be the last remaining bit of good in me will be gone, and I will be lost in a sea of people, with no direction, no moral obligation, no respect for human life. I do not wish to be one of them.

What's required of me by my beliefs constantly contradicts my actions, and yet my guilt has become easier and easier to ignore. It is difficult to be between these two worlds because they are polar opposites of one another. I'm constantly being pulled in one or the other direction, but I must choose a side eventually. I know taking a liminal position here is impossible, and yet I find myself trying my best to do so by ignoring one side, then the other. I sway between atheism and Christianity when it suits me; I take advantage of both sides when the opportunity presents itself; I lecture my little brother, teach him good Christian morals, the same morals I've learned to ignore. Am I a hypocrite? Absolutely, but I will continue to be one until I decide what I truly want to be. Until then, I will continue to do as I have done, and exist in this liminal space of mine.