

Would you like that in a bag, Sir?

CAST: SALESPERSON
CUSTOMER

PROPS: A pizza
A bible
A plastic bag

SCENE: Profound-stretcher's showroom

[Enter CUSTOMER; SALESPERSON approaches almost immediately]

SALESPERSON: Good Morning! And may I say what a pleasure it is to welcome you today to Profound-stretcher's, your local low-cost faith superstore,™. How may I help you?

CUSTOMER: Erm, I was just browsing thanks.

SALESPERSON: *[Not to be put off by having been turned down flat]* Were you looking for anything in particular?

CUSTOMER: No, not really. *[PAUSE]* Well, actually... Yes I think I am, I'm searching for something, but it's just... to be honest I don't really know what. I thought I'd come and have a look round and see what grabbed me.

SALESPERSON: Well in that case, might I recommend this week's special bonus-super-value Postmodernism starter pack? *[Holds up a pizza]* As you can see, it comes with an easy-to-swallow New Age base, with your own personal choice of two philosophies on the side. Personally I recommend relativism and Eastern mysticism, but it's really up to you.

CUSTOMER: That does look nice... but I always thought religion was a sort of an all-or-nothing thing?

SALESPERSON: Oh no, not at all! Our starter pack gives you three-for-the-price-of-one today, and if you subscribe to our monthly magazine, you can introduce a new doctrine any time you notice a gap in your old ones. You see, postmodernism gives you the freedom to mix'n'match the best bits of any other beliefs.

CUSTOMER: How can that possibly work? Surely there must be times when one of these religions' beliefs contradicts another's?

SALESPERSON: Fortunately not, that's where Relativism comes in.

CUSTOMER: Ah yes, so you mentioned. That's where you say there are no absolutes, isn't it?

SALESPERSON: Spot on. No absolutes at all.

CUSTOMER: How does it help then?

SALESPERSON: It simply means that all the pieces are right, from their own point of view, so everybody's happy. And the best thing about it is that you don't get other relativists trying to tell you what you have to believe, because they know it only has to be true for themselves. That's why I recommend it to everyone I meet.

CUSTOMER: So what you're saying, is that relativism somehow lets me take otherwise contradictory ideas, and make something coherent out of them. Like hiding them all underneath a layer of tomato sauce and melted mozzarella.

SALESPERSON: Exactly, with a little practice you'll soon be able to believe anything!

CUSTOMER: Hmm. Is it actually good value for money? I mean, I'm buying this pizza from you, but from my perspective it looks like all I'm getting is a justification to believe whatever I want.

SALESPERSON: That's why it sells so well! But, if you'd prefer something more structured and well-defined, you could try Agnosticism.

CUSTOMER: So what does that say then?

SALESPERSON: Don't know.

CUSTOMER: That's not much of a sales pitch, is it.

SALESPERSON: No I mean... agnosticism says it's impossible to know the answer to questions like "Does God exist?".

CUSTOMER: But I said I *wanted* the answers! I'm not about to buy questions from you, I've got enough of my own already.

SALESPERSON: Well if you like, you can believe that he does.

CUSTOMER: That doesn't help me! I was looking for guidance here.

SALESPERSON: From whom?

CUSTOMER: *You!* Well, initially anyway. I know I'm looking for something more solid than being given a pizza and told to get on with it. Are you suggesting I could sensibly choose to believe in a God I don't know anything about? And that I wouldn't even be able to discuss with other people whether I've got it right or not, because you say it still might not be true for them?

SALESPERSON: Alright! I take your point, I can see this aisle isn't for you. Perhaps you'd prefer instead a structured corporate belief system based around mutual aggregate veneration of a primary deity figure?

CUSTOMER: Um. I guess so...

SALESPERSON: We can handle that. There are plenty of beliefs which involve a central spiritual figure, somewhere beyond what we would otherwise understand to be "the world".

CUSTOMER: Well, I can accept the premise, to be going on with. But what do I *do* about it?

SALESPERSON: Well you try to reach it, of course.

CUSTOMER: Ok, but how?

SALESPERSON: Meditation's one way. There are plenty of good techniques.

CUSTOMER: How do I know which one works best?

SALESPERSON: Just use whatever makes you feel most comfortable.

CUSTOMER: Comfortable? But I thought....

SALESPERSON: It will really help you relax.

CUSTOMER: I'm not meditating for relaxation; I thought you said I'd be doing it to get closer to God! It's supposed to be for him, not for me! You know, it seems like everything you're trying to sell me are ideas which just centre around myself. Why do all your religions just keep telling me to do what I like?

SALESPERSON: The ones which say that tend to be more popular, but not all of them do. Perhaps you'd be interested in the Karmamechanic.

CUSTOMER: I did read "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance" once, but I don't think it was quite the sort of...

SALESPERSON: Not the same thing.

CUSTOMER: Oh. What is it then?

SALESPERSON: It basically means that every time you do something bad, something bad happens to you.

CUSTOMER: Well it would keep me out of trouble... in a self-preserving, ulterior motivated sort of way. It doesn't exactly have the purest of intentions, does it?

SALESPERSON: But that's just one in our extensive range of moral frameworks.

CUSTOMER: There are so many. Which should I choose?

SALESPERSON: What aspect of morality are you particularly interested in?

CUSTOMER: I'm not sure. Finding the balance between different aspects of morality seems like a moral decision in itself.

SALESPERSON: Perhaps you should choose one moral code now, and then another one next week once it's helped you decide how to choose.

CUSTOMER: Or perhaps I can employ some kind of external reference... Hey, I don't suppose any of them could help me reach this spiritual plane you mentioned?

SALESPERSON: Not as such, or at least not directly. If you think it would help, you could just do what you think the spirit wants you to.

CUSTOMER: How can I know what it wants, when I don't even know who it *is*?

SALESPERSON: Who do you want it to be?

CUSTOMER: I don't know! That's why I came here in the first place!

SALESPERSON: Look, it's obvious that what you need is a set of rules to live your life by. Why don't you just choose any one of these and see how it goes for a while?

CUSTOMER: I'm still not convinced they have anything to offer me.

SALESPERSON: Don't worry. If you also buy our extended guarantee, we'll give you your money back if you're not completely fulfilled within one month.

CUSTOMER: [*reluctantly*] Alright then, I'll take it... I suppose it can't do any harm in the long run.

SALESPERSON: Would you like that in a bag, sir?

CUSTOMER: Thanks.

SALESPERSON: Paper or plastic?

CUSTOMER: What does it matter?

SALESPERSON: Well the paper bag is recycled, so it's a bit more environmentally friendly. A couple of brownie points for looking after old Mother Earth, and all that. But between you and me, the plastic bags are a bit more convenient for carrying around.

CUSTOMER: Okay, I'll take a plastic one in that case.

SALESPERSON: Excellent. So long as you're comfortable with the purity of that decision within the confines of your new moral framework.

[CUSTOMER starts walking off stage. The audience might think the sketch has finished, but no...]

CUSTOMER: Hang on... Wait a second, there's another whole aisle over here? You didn't show me!

SALESPERSON: Well it is very unfashionable, people usually aren't so interested in the Christian material. *[Customer heads away from salesperson, toward the back of the stage]* Please be careful sir, that aisle's rather narrow...

CUSTOMER: *[Picks up a Bible and heads back to salesperson]* Why didn't you show me any of these ingredients?

SALESPERSON: Ah, the thing is, you see, it doesn't really go well with the pizza.

CUSTOMER: How do you mean?

SALESPERSON: Well, it's just that some Christians think that anything less than 100 percent their way isn't like being a Christian at all. You can't just include bits and pieces of it and expect the result to taste right - you've got to take or leave the whole thing.

CUSTOMER: So what is it that I'd be taking?

SALESPERSON: Their belief is that the way to God is open, not because of anything you do yourself, but because God sent his own son to earth, to die and to save us from sin. He said it's the only way to reach God.

CUSTOMER: But it sounds like exactly what I was looking for! Have the pizza back, I'll take one of these instead.

SALESPERSON: Are you quite sure, sir? The cost can be quite high.

CUSTOMER: Oh, that shouldn't be a problem. I'm not short of money. *[hands over a credit card]*

SALESPERSON: Ah no ... that wasn't quite what I meant. Money won't be necessary. The message itself is free. You have already been paid for.

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