Why God Permits Evil By Miller Williams And The Guy In The Glass By Dale Wimbrow: Literary Analysis

Half-Christian

In the poem “Why God Permits Evil,” Miller Williams uses allusion to display doubts that people place against God. Starting from the first line, Williams states that the question of why God permits evil is “Of interest to John Calvin and Thomas Aquinas” (1) who were both Christian theologians. Aquinas, born three centuries prior to Calvin, was a Catholic priest, whereas Calvin played a major part in the Protestant Reformation. Although their beliefs within Christianity differed greatly, Williams is saying that the two influential figures likely questioned why God allows evil to exist.

In addition, Williams mentions “Job… who never got / one straight answer but only his cattle back” (2-3). This refers to a wealthy man who appears in the Book of Job from the Bible. Job is a faithful follower of God and is careful to avoid sinning. However, one day, Satan tells God that Job does good only because He blessed him in wealth, family, and flocks. Satan says that if Job is punished, the man will curse God and turn away from Him. As a result, God allows Satan to test Job, who consequently meets terrible misfortune. He loses ten of his children, his livestock, and his servants, to which Job mourns but still prays to God. Then, Job gets terrible skin sores after God allows Satan to torment Job again. Seeing such misfortune inflicted on Job, his wife and some of his friends tell him to curse God and give up, but Job refuses. By alluding to Job in his poem, Williams is showing a clear example of God permitting evil. Job very likely questioned his faith countless times in the face of this adversity and clearly wondered why he suffered such horrible trials even after trying his best to do good.

Religion has always been a part of my life. I have attended church ever since I was a baby being baptized by the head pastor. Due to my parents both being Christians, church is a fundamental part of my life. I identify as a Christian. That is what my parents, my church friends, and most of my Sundays spell out. However, I have many doubts about God that prevent my faith from taking root and growing. Although I can pray to Him for good, bad things can follow, so I find myself questioning the power of God and prayer. Furthermore, I sometimes question His existence. If I were put through Satan’s trials, I would not have been able to bless God in my prayers like Job did. I would have completely forgotten about God and pitied myself instead.

My Christian label aside, I haven’t given much thought about other religions or atheism. I hope that, one day, I will be able to feel God’s presence. I prefer Christianity over no religion at all because it is comforting to think that we are in the care of an almighty God who created and creates all, knows all, sees all, and loves all unconditionally. It is also comforting to believe in heaven, a blissful afterlife.

As I see my mother, crying and despairing that she will not see her parents in heaven because they are not Christian, I feel desire to gain faith in God. The nothingness after death that faces me otherwise is too vast and lonely for me to even begin to imagine. For my whole life, I have only been going through the motions of being a Christian. I have been waiting for the moment when God finally enters my heart—it hasn’t come yet. For now, I identify as a half-Christian.

Do It for You

“The Guy in the Glass” by Dale Wimbrow uses rhyme to warn readers about the consequences of living by trying to please others. With an abab rhyme scheme in each four-line stanza, Wimbrow allows the poem to read easily and sound witty. For instance, Wimbrow advises that “When you get what you want in your struggle for pelf, / Then go to the mirror and look at yourself” (1-3). The word “money” can replace “pelf” but the latter is more descriptive and very fitting in the context of the poem, as it is money that is obtained in a negative way. In addition, pelf rhymes with self.

Also, Wimbrow states that “it isn’t your Father, or Mother, or Wife” (5) who you have to prove something to, but “The feller whose verdict counts most in your life” (7) is yourself. In these lines, the poet tells his readers that meeting the standard of others means nothing if one cannot meet their own. In addition, by rhyming the last word of every other line in each stanza, Wimbrow’s wise advice is catchy and memorable.

Lastly, in the fifth and final stanza, Wimbrow cautions that you can trick everyone for your entire life “And get pats on the back as you pass” (18), but a facade—of “normalcy,” of happiness, of anything—will only result in pain and sorrow “If you’ve cheated the guy in the glass” (20). Again, the poet makes clever word choices by rhyming “pass” and “glass.” He warns readers that they are cheating on and bringing unhappiness upon themselves if they act only to please others. Therefore, Wimbrow is able to make his advice descriptive and memorable through the use of rhyme.

I stood out in my time at a middle schoolers’ summer rowing program—I stood out in the sense that I did not stand with a crowd. On pre-practice runs, I always ran in the middle. A group of people held lively conversation behind me and a group of people chatted as they jogged in front. I always thought it was funny how a six-minute jog was able to define my social life at crew.

To be honest, I envied the girls who could talk and be listened to, laugh and receive laughs in return, and surround themselves with people. Instead of working to talk to people, fear of humiliation closed my throat and I could only stand off to the side. I had tried before, only to be quickly interrupted and forgotten. Due to this, I rather enjoyed the chores in crew that many found quite annoying. Such tasks eliminated the chance to mill about and feel ignored. Whenever a chance appeared, there was a bustling mass of people and there I was, standing out of the crowd.

However, in the few times that someone talked to me, I felt so happy. It made me angry after some thought, for me to be so elated about a “Eunice, what time is it?” or even just a simple hello. These small interactions with certain people raised my hopes of befriending someone. But by the time I had thought of something to say in return, they had already begun to walk away.

In addition, sometimes I found myself walking with a group, listening but not contributing to the conversation. Often, I was shocked by the things my fellow rowers discussed. They constantly insulted people’s appearances and gossiped about the smallest things. Many times, I was tempted to speak up, but I was too afraid of becoming their next subject for conversion. Looking back on this, I am regretful that I stayed silent. Doing so made me feel terrible and, as Wimbrow

stated in “The Guy in the Glass,” I was not proud of the person looking at me in the glass.