

Thursday, May 17, 2007

Answering Ecualegacy, Pt. 3

We continue now with my response to [Ecualegacy's comments](#).

I wrote:

Sending other human beings to represent it will always be insufficient

Ecualegacy replied:

He could have just created us with a certainty of His existence in our minds. But I think I beat the dead horse enough about that line of atheistic objection.

Saul of Tarsus was not “just created... with certainty of [Jesus’] existence” already in his mind; at least the story implicitly assumes that he was not, since he is first introduced to us as a persecutor of Christians, not a committed believer. So why does Ecualegacy think he needs to take the discussion in this direction?

Over and over again, he continues to avoid my point, even though it is exemplified in the book of Acts. In order to manifest its reality to Saul of Tarsus, the god named Jesus appeared before him as he was traveling to Damascus to persecute early Christian believers. That’s the story we read in the book of Acts. That’s the model that the New Testament gives us. Why is it wrong for me to point to this model as an example? Christians believe it actually happened as it is reported in the book of Acts, do they not? St. Paul comes across as quite confident in what he claims in his letters. Do Christians think that Jesus was violating Saul’s free will by appearing to him?

In fact, many apologists claim that the Christian god did create us with certain knowledge of its existence already implanted in our minds, or at any rate made this knowledge in man somehow inescapable. They go on to claim that non-believers are actively and willfully “suppressing” that knowledge. They cite passages from the first chapter of Romans to substantiate these assertions. For instance, Greg Bahnsen writes:

With respect to the revelation of God in nature, Paul categorically declares that those who do not believe it are “without excuse” (Rom. 1:20 - etymologically, “without an apologetic”!). After all, they do not merely have some vague and uncertain evidence for the living and true God, but actually “know” the truth about Him (vv. 19, 21). It would be an unwarranted misreading of Scripture to understand the kind of “certainty” that it claims for the truth and believability of the Christian message to be a “practical” or “moral” certainty of dedicated conviction - and not at the same time an intellectual or rational certainty. (*Van Til’s Apologetic: Readings & Analysis*, p. 71)

Christian believers do this so that they can feel better about believing in their imaginary god by vilifying non-believers as dishonest suppressors of “the truth.” And yet not one of them can prove his god’s existence.

Again, one can make any claim he wants about something that does not exist in the first place. All he needs to do is imagine it, and if the distinction between reality and imagination is unclear to him in the first place, then he may very well think he’s talking the truth when he tells us about his imaginary deity.

Now it’s true, Bahnsen and his bible are not very clear on this point. Is it saying that man was “born” with this knowledge already implanted in his mind? Well, such a supposition would make one believe that such knowledge is universally inescapable. There’s some suggestion of this in what is being claimed here, for it is used to hold every human being liable to such knowledge. On such a view, knowledge is automatic, not the product of mental effort. How is this possible for minds that we are constantly being reminded are fallible, finite, inferior, incapable of anything on its own? The other alternative is that this “knowledge of God” is thought to be inferred from nature somehow. But what specifically in nature is the focal point where this alleged inference begins is not stated, nor does the claim identify the steps one needs to make in the chain of inference to go from “nature” to “God.” They say the devil is in the details, and that’s probably why Bahnsen never points them out. To make matters worse for Bahnsen, if the “knowledge of God” so claimed is thought to be inferred from nature, who is doing the inferring if not the fallible, finite minds which Christianity condemns as worthless to begin with? Again we’re back to men as the origin and medium of god-belief claims. The objects I observe in the natural world do not come with a label or stamp

indicating “Made by God” or “Made in Heaven.” If I accepted the rudimentary error that the world was created by an act of consciousness to begin with, what would lead me to suppose that it was the Christian god as opposed to some other invisible magic being which did the creating? The Lahu tribesmen tell me that Geusha is the world’s creator. Geusha is not the Christian god; for instance, Geusha did not send a son to be crucified by Roman authority. What makes the Christian claim true but the Lahu claim false? Both the Christian god and Geusha are equally indistinguishable from what people may merely be imagining. So to go with Christianity, we have to arbitrarily special-plead the case. An honest man would not do this.

I wrote:

for human beings can be deluded, they can lie, they can be sincerely mistaken.

Ecualegacy responded:

Here we have some classic objections to Biblical authenticity. Were the NT Scriptures:

- A) products of an early 1st Millennium JK Rowling?
- B) products of a prolific, but deluded band of apostles?
- C) products of sincerely mistaken apostles (Hey Thomas, I could have sworn I saw Jesus at the Bizzare [sic] yesterday!)?
- D) the true and accurate Word of God?

I'm never going to be able to prove to you that A) is absolutely false, so I won't bother trying.

It is good that Ecualegacy admits this in regard to his point A) above. So long as the possibility that portions of the bible are fictitious cannot be ruled out, it must be reckoned with. Christianity views human beings as innately depraved creatures which can produce no good of their own. And yet human beings are the only medium through which this omniscient and omnipotent deity chooses to reach human beings? This makes as much sense as trying to dig a hole with a shovel whose handle is made of rope.

Ecualegacy writes:

At the same time, I'm not going to waste time trying to argue that Homer wrote the Iliad, that Caesar wrote the Gallic Wars, or that Plato wrote The Republic.

Good call. Neither will I. I don't base my life on those writings, either. In fact, it wouldn't change my life one iota if the texts Ecualegacy mentions turned out to be pseudonymous. For all I know, they very well could be. I'm just being consistent here. Unlike Ecualegacy, I have no confessional investment in who the authors of any ancient texts might have been.

Ecualegacy writes:

Not exactly the same league or importance as the Bible, I'll admit, but we have copies of the New Testament BY FAR closer to the autograph date than for any of the other ancient major writings I've listed (or are in existence so far as I can tell...unless it was scratched on a slab of marble or dug straight from the ground).

It's never been very clear to me why believers are so anxious to put stock in the amount of “copies of the New Testament” there are throughout history, or in how much closer they are in time to the purported “autograph date” than other ancient writings. A copy of a fiction is still a fiction, even if it were penned a month after the original, and Ecualegacy has already admitted that he cannot rule out the possibility that the bible is fictitious.

Ecualegacy wrote:

If, however, you allow for the possibility that the NT was written when traditional NT scholars think, then you have some uncomfortable questions to answer (uncomfortable for the unbeliever that is).

The documents which have been assembled into the New Testament had to be written sometime. The dates that various scholars have attributed to the elements comprising the New Testament have never impressed me very much. And scholars are far from unanimous on when anything in the NT was first written down. Naturally those who want the content of the New Testament's writings to be true, will push for early dates on all or most of the documents, to allow less time for legendary material to creep into the narratives. Some apologists even seem to think that legends or simple invention could not wind up in documents purporting to record events which happened some 10 years earlier, for instance. In fact, however, it only takes a few sessions of writing to pack a narrative with

invented details.

But even this common apologetic move is premised on circular reasoning, for it is clearly assumed in such efforts that what the stories relate actually happened, and that they actually happened when the stories purport to have taken place, which is at best loosely figured according, for instance, to known reigns of rulers mentioned in some of these documents. To claim that the gospel of Mark, for instance, was written only 35 or 40 years after the events it records, is to assume that the events it records actually happened in the first place. But that's precisely what the believer is called to prove. So he begs the question by playing the dating game. Had he something more secure than appeals to human scholars and their estimations about when such-and-such document was written, we would have most likely seen it by now.

Ecualegacy continued:

How in the world would the early church community accept any of the NT Scriptures as true when they PRESUPPOSED that the very people they were addressed to could heal, prophecy, and speak in tongues. Not that glossolalia trick, but genuine, "Hola, yo puedo hablar espanol perfecto sin un dia de escuela" kind of tongues. Too bad I can't speak spanish without studying it. I've been married to a lovely latin wife for 5 1/2 years and still am not yet fluent.

Is this supposed to be one of the "uncomfortable questions"? I can already see a couple problematic assumptions which Ecualegacy has apparently accepted without much critical reflection. For instance, the way he phrases his question suggests that he believes that there was only one "early church community," when in fact it is most likely the case that there were many different communities constituting the budding church. Different communities no doubt had different teachers, and different teachings as well. The various gospels are thought by many critical scholars to reflect competing views of Jesus among different communities which were at best only loosely connected. Keep in mind that there were no Zondervan bibles in circulation at this time, so not everyone in church was in possession of the rarefied canon we have today. They were lucky to even have a copy of one or two letters in the beginning, assuming there were any in existence to begin with.

Another problematic assumption lies in a similar vein. Ecualegacy seems to think that groups of people presuppose things in unison, as if they truly were of one mind. We are not in a position today to know the intimate details of what each member of the various ancient Christian communities that existed back then may have been presupposing. Some may have presupposed, as Ecualegacy suggests, that "the very people [the books of the New Testament] were addressed to could heal, prophecy, and speak in tongues." But to affirm this of the members of the early church is anachronistic. Are we to suppose that every community had a copy of I Corinthians, the letter in which St. Paul itemizes the various "spiritual gifts" they can expect to be distributed among those who believe? Even the members of today's churches, with the benefit of mass-produced bibles, complete with center references, concordances and commentaries, do not all presuppose that all believers (the ones to whom the bible is addressed) are running around possessing one or more of the spiritual gifts that we find listed in I Cor. 12. I remember when I was a Christian, how I was taught to suppose that the reason we did not see these gifts manifested among the church membership was because of the presence of sin, or lack of faith, or simply because "the Spirit" didn't want to show off. The believing mind can invent all kinds of "reasons" why one should not be surprised when "the fruits of the spirit" manifest themselves in ways that are indistinct from what would be the case if there were no "Spirit" to begin with.

But in spite of these corrections, Ecualegacy might still wonder why anyone in the early church community would accept the New Testament texts as truth if he "presupposed" that the people to whom they were addressed "could heal, prophecy, and speak in tongues." The implication behind Ecualegacy's question is that he acknowledges that these things weren't really taking place. So why believe they were taking place?

And though it's most likely the case that the average believer did not "presuppose" that the gifts we read about in I Cor. 12, for instance, were being manifested in the lives of fellow members (the average believer most likely learned about these "gifts" well after conversion anyway, after making the initial downpayment of a life-altering confessional investment), anyone who did could have still believed that the NT texts with which he may have been familiar were true for any number of reasons. For instance, he may have listened to embellished testimony from fellow believers in which they claimed to have performed healings, or prophesied, or spoke in tongues (even "that glossolalia trick" that Ecualegacy mentions can be convincing enough to someone who wants to believe). I myself have heard many Christians claim that they had performed healings or other miraculous stunts. Unfortunately no one was looking at the time, but that doesn't mean it didn't happen, right? The desire to believe religious teachings quite often fosters an underlying context of fantasy and denial. The believer is taught to accept claims from fellow believers uncritically

and to fear doubts, so he actively seeks to squelch them.

I think a rather candid statement from John Frame answers much of Ecualegacy's question here. Frame writes that

a person with a wish to be fulfilled is often on the road to belief. (*Apologetics to the Glory of God*, p. 37)

Look around. Even today people believe all kinds of things that they're told to believe. We see people today and in the recent past believing the most bizarre claims, and in fact acting on those claims as if their eternal souls' livelihood depended on them. Look at the Jim Jones cult-massacre. Look at the Heaven's Gate drop-outs. Look at the Branch Davidians and their spectacular cookout. We have people today going on mainstream Christian television broadcasts claiming to be able to heal and prophesy and do all these other neat tricks. Even though they never produce the real McCoy, there are still people out there who put their faith in such claims, even after they've been exposed as charlatans. The NT promises that believers will display these abilities, and many have claimed to have possessed them. But even Ecualegacy cannot speak Spanish without torturous effort. He's just as mundane as the rest of us.

As Ecualegacy points out, the New Testament makes a number of very tall claims about various abilities which believers can expect to acquire as a result of becoming "new creatures in Christ." One of those abilities is referred to as the gift of tongues. Ecualegacy says it's "too bad" that he cannot speak Spanish "without studying it," which suggests to me that he did not receive "the gift of tongues." If it were all a fiction, I would expect that he would have to acquire skills in a foreign language just as anyone else does: by firsthand effort.

Ecualegacy writes:

Add to that the incredible claims of the scriptures which people could go and investigate for themselves.

Oh, the claims are there alright. But how could they be investigated? And how do we know that they weren't investigated and the results of those investigations ignored or even repressed? Are we to expect that committed believers would record and broadcast the findings of investigators who determined that St. Paul, for instance, was telling a few tall ones in order to solidify the churches he founded? I have already written about this topic in my blog [Five Hundred Anonymous Witnesses](#). To date, no Christian has addressed the points I raise in that piece.

Ecualegacy:

Add to that the perfect moral teachings of the apostles and the profound testimony of their selfless lives.

Far from perfect in my book of morals, that's for sure. That they called for selflessness is itself an indication that what they were peddling was a foul-smelling fiction. I have already written about morality in the following blogs:

[Christianity vs. Objective Morality](#)

[Do I Borrow My Morality from the Christian Worldview?](#)

[Rational Morality vs. Presuppositional Apologetics](#)

[Calvindude's Defense of Christian Moral Bankruptcy](#)

[Hitler vs. Mother Theresa: Antithesis or Symbiosis?](#)

[Common Ground Part 5: Ethics](#)

I've not seen any Christians offer much in way of response to these posts, either.

Ecualegacy writes:

You simply can't pay charlatans enough to do what the Apostles did.

Ecualegacy has already ejected his points from the broader context he earlier admitted as a real possibility. If the stories in the bible are fictional (above he admitted that he was "never going to be able to prove" that they are not fictional), such as legends which grew with each retelling until they were finally written down (there is ample evidence for this throughout the New Testament itself), then there's no need to take the stories of "what the Apostles did" as anything other than fiction, or at best as embellished storytelling. So Ecualegacy is simply begging

the question here.

But let's grant Ecualegacy's point and consider how much the apostles should have charged for their "selfless lives." On the same token, how much do you suppose Marshall Applewhite of the [Heaven's Gate cult](#) was paid for his beamed-out antics? How much was Jim Jones paid for his [suicidal crusade](#)? How much was David Koresh paid for his [Texan compound cookout](#) in 1993? These people were sold on the idea that their rewards would be coming in "the next life," not in the form of financial reimbursements that they could take to the bank in this life.

Ecualegacy writes:

If it were one guy, you might dismiss him as a freak. But 12 and more? That's stretching the odds. Nor can we hope they were simply deluded. That's too many people making too many mistakes.

Again Ecualegacy is begging the question by assuming the truth of what he has been called to defend. The story does indeed mention 12 immediate disciples of Jesus (one of which betrayed him, so it's now down to 11; even St. Paul forgot this at one point in his letters). But if it's just a story, then there's no need to take these numbers seriously. And even if we did, is "12 and more" really so impressive? Over 900 individuals died at Jonestown in 1978 for a religious cause; most of these deaths were suicides - for what they believed. "You simply can't pay charlatans enough to do what the [People's Temple members] did." By Ecualegacy's measuring stick, Jim Jones' message must have had some truth to it. If a mere 12 is "stretching the odds," how much more is 900 plus "stretching the odds"?

Ecualegacy writes:

Besides, suppose I had "better" or "irrefutable" evidence that the Bible is true. Something like the OT describing the evolutionary process like a modern text book or predicting the exact date a spectacular comet would swing by? What would you really do with that knowledge?

The facts of the evolutionary process was available to thinkers 2000 years ago just as they are to us today. Granted, the technology we have today makes the relevant data much more readily available. And our understanding of how to integrate the facts we gather from the world is also far superior. But in fact, some ancient thinkers did suspect a common descent to the variety of flora and fauna they observed in the world. See for instance the 6th century Greek philosopher [Anaximander](#), considered by many today as "evolution's most ancient proponent." So if a mere human being with no connection to the Christian deity could recognize at least on a primitive level the commonality in the origin of species, then would the presence of such a recognition in the bible suggest divine authorship or inspiration? I don't think so.

As for comets, their itineraries are not impossible for men who study the nighttime sky to project. So this would not be very impressive either. Nope, the omnipotent, omniscient, infallible and perfect creator of the universe would have to do something that men could not by any measure come close to matching.

Ecualegacy writes:

Would you "like" God any more than you do now?

It's not about me liking Ecualegacy's god or about his god doing something for me. After all, it is his god that is the one desiring worship and sacrifice, not I. I'm simply pointing out that, if this god were real and it truly wanted to make its existence known to me, it would know what it needs to do. Sending apologists whose arms are loaded with the cheapest forms of argument is certainly not going to impress me. I already know too much to be taken in by it all. But there was a time when I did not know so much, and at that point in my life I was a Christian. Now the cat is out of the bag. I've grown up.

Would it help if I invent my own god in my imagination and confess that I worship it? By calling it "God," would Ecualegacy approve of my worldview, choices and actions any more than he does now, even though I openly admit that I'm just imagining? Or, would that not be enough? Would he need to make sure the god I invent in my imagination is commensurable in some way to the one he has imagined in his mind? Well?

Ecualegacy writes:

Would you be any more inclined to do what he has told you to do? You'd still be coming at him with the same prideful arguments you are now I suspect. But only you can answer that question for yourself.

Since Ecualegacy's god is merely imaginary and does not actually exist, it will never be able to answer my arguments.

Nor will Ecualegacy himself. He can deflect, evade and spin the issues, but he will not be able to meet my arguments on their own ground. He can chalk this up to pride, but citing my pride is not an argument. He does this so that he can settle in his mind that he is right and I am wrong, given his aversion to pride. But it does nothing to affect my position. At that point he's simply trying to quell his own nagging doubts.

I wrote:

You can cite Holding and Miller and any other apologist all you want, but at the end of the day these are just other human beings, and they too fail to provide a method by which we can distinguish between what they call "God" and what they may merely be imagining. What they do provide is an example of how one can settle confusions and contradictions which arise as a result of their desire to protect a delusion in their minds.

Ecualegacy responded:

"Delusion in their minds" is a conclusion I think you've reached prematurely.

The conclusion is sound, as this argument demonstrates:

Premise: Any worldview which affirms, depends on or reduces to the primacy of consciousness metaphysics is delusional.

Premise: Christianity is a worldview which affirms, depends on or reduces to the primacy of consciousness metaphysics.

Conclusion: Therefore, Christianity is delusional.

For support of this argument's premises, see my blog.

Ecualegacy writes:

And if this post weren't already 2500+ words long, I'd spend another 500 or 1000 more taking you through the steps.

Steps to what? Please, don't hold back on my account. If you've got something, it's no use telling us you have it and then withhold it. Bring it on.

Ecualegacy writes:

But you really ought to do some homework for yourself and go look up the experts.

But I am an expert.

Ecualegacy writes:

Besides, your objection sounds suspiciously like Carl Sagan's famous line about wanting something like a flaming cross orbiting the earth to prove God's existence.

This, too, is not an argument. Nor does it answer the question on the table: How can I distinguish between what Ecualegacy as a Christian believer calls "God" from what he may merely be imagining? Is Ecualegacy saying, in roundabout manner, that it is wrong for me to ask this question? Or, can he recognize that this is a legitimate concern (since there is a difference between the real and the unreal, the actual and the imaginary) and address this problem in the case of his god-belief?

Ecualegacy writes:

For crying out loud, people landed on the moon and the average man on the street is starting to believe the conspiracy theorists who say man didn't!

Again, this is not an argument. Perhaps Ecualegacy doesn't have any to begin with? Let's wait for my next installment in this series, and see what more he has to say.

by Dawson Bethrick

Labels: [Christian god](#), [Christian Psychopathy](#), [Conversion of Saul](#), [Ecualegacy](#), [imagination](#), [problem of evil](#), [the bible](#)

posted by Bahnsen Burner at [5:00 AM](#)

4 Comments:

[Robert](#) said...

Dear Dawson,

Hello, my name is Robert Murphy and I am very interested in having a fair discussion with you. Your blog posts are so long, and I have read as many of them as I have time for, but I can not seem to find succinct statement of what you hold to be true and how you measure truth. You have no reason to parry with an unknown, self-espousing VanTillian such as myself, so I would hope that you might at least direct me to a repository of compact statement or arguments you would identify with. Yours briefly, Robert Murphy
mrandmrsmurphy at gmail d0t c0m

[May 20, 2007 9:30 AM](#)

[Bahnsen Burner](#) said...

Hello Robert,

Thank you for stopping by my blog and posting your comment. In answer to your question, I don't think a single statement would ever be sufficient to encapsulate what I hold to be true. But here are some basic pointers in terms of the four basic branches of philosophy:

1) Metaphysics: Objective reality. Three axioms establish this: existence exists, consciousness is consciousness of something, A is A. These are the axioms of existence, consciousness and identity. The initial guiding principle of philosophy is the primacy of existence principle. It is the recognition that reality exists independent of consciousness. Reality is not the product of conscious intentions, nor does it conform to consciousness. Hence I reject the religious view of the world, which essentially holds that a form of consciousness created the universe - i.e., all existence extraneous to itself - and/or directs the events which take place within it. This is a form of metaphysical subjectivism - the view that the subject holds metaphysical primacy over its objects.

2) Epistemology: Reason. Reason is the faculty which identifies and integrates the material provided by his senses. Rationality is the commitment to reason as one's only means of knowledge of reality and his guide to action. The form in which he initially identifies and integrates the objects of his awareness is conceptual in nature, which is a volitional process, and the method by which he integrates what he perceives and identifies into affirmations is logic, which is the art of non-contradictory identification. Reason functions in accordance with the primacy of existence principle, enabling man to distinguish between fact and fiction, the real and the unreal, the actual and the imaginary. Reason is the faculty by which man discovers and validates truths about reality, and is thus the standard of measurement of truth.

3) Morality: Rational self-interest. This is the morality of values, the application of reason to the task of living and man's need to act in order to live. Value is that which one acts to gain and/or keep in the interest of living and enjoying life. The morality of rational self-interest is developed on the recognition that man faces a fundamental alternative - to live or die, and on the basis of a fundamental choice: to live. It requires that one recognize that the needs man has for living are not automatically provided for, that he needs to identify those values which he needs to live and those actions which make acquiring and/or preserving those values possible. "The purpose of morality is to teach you, not to suffer and die, but to enjoy yourself and live." (Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*)

4) Politics/social theory: Individual rights. An objective social theory is one which recognizes that each individual human being has the right to exist for his own sake. "A 'right' is a moral principle defining and sanctioning a man's freedom of action in a social context." (Ayn Rand, "Man's Rights," *The Virtue of Selfishness*) Accordingly, since life is an end in itself, no individual has an obligation to sacrifice his values, his mind or his life to another person, whether real or imagined. As a corollary, a religious believer has the right to worship whichever god he chooses, just as a non-believer has the right not to worship any gods.

I'm hoping these points inspire new questions as much as they are intended to address your initial question. If so, please feel free to probe some more. I always enjoy sharing my views.

Regards,
Dawson

[May 20, 2007 11:40 AM](#)

[ecualegacy](#) said...

I promised myself I wouldn't do this....

Rob, as a Christian, I'm hoping you'll get out while you still can from this insane man's blog. Just take 20 minutes to google his name and see what he's been up to. There's no reaching him at this stage in his life. Maybe later, but not likely. There's just no reasoning with this guy.

For example:

The morality of rational self-interest is developed on the recognition that man faces a fundamental alternative - to live or die, and on the basis of a fundamental choice: to live.

And from this principle, how can he possibly condemn someone who hopes for life after death? Yet he insists hope in an afterlife is wrong anyway.

Dawson, I noticed that you didn't post all the argument I made about how you would react to God directly revealing himself.

Here it is: *Fine. Have it your way. Behold there is a flaming cross before you. Everyone around says, "ooh, ahhh, there is the Christ. Holy Toledo, he was real after all." And what do I predict will be your response based on what I've read from you? "Jesus, I hate your guts. You're morally repugnant. You're an absentee brother. Your God is an absentee father. Your Christian slaves are self-righteous bigots." And you wonder why he hasn't bothered to come knocking around your door? He isn't wanted by you. Why would he reveal himself to you if he isn't wanted? That's why I'm fond of the saying (my dad passed this along to me once), "Faith in God isn't a problem of evidence but of pride."*

Dawson, you wouldn't accept God even if he showed up on your doorstep and bequeathed you with a million bucks. You'd complain and demand to know why he hadn't come sooner. Then you'd go back to doing your own thing. Tell me I'm not wrong. Please. I want there to be hope for your soul.

[May 24, 2007 4:52 PM](#)

[Bahnsen Burner](#) said...

Hello Brian,

Again you come back to me.

Ecualegacy: "I promised myself I wouldn't do this...."

That's true, Brian, you [did announce](#) that you would not be coming back here again to "play ball any more." So you go back on your promise, and while doing so you call me an "insane man." This does not bode well for your online credibility. I don't mind if you change your mind, and you're certainly welcome to come back to me any time you like so far as I'm concerned. But just understand that you're the one who is displaying mental and moral instability here.

Ecualegacy: "Rob, as a Christian, I'm hoping you'll get out while you still can from this insane man's blog. Just take 20 minutes to google his name and see what he's been up to."

Brian, what exactly did you find in your google search that disturbed you so much? How long have you been on the internet? You seem to be reacting with your emotions, for your reactions are indeed strong, but you offer no indication of any intellectual backing to those reactions. Earlier you called me "sociopathic," and yet you worship a man-god whose stories indicate that he was nothing if not sociopathic. Now you break your own promise to come back here to call me an "insane man." What happened to the instruction to consider the beam in your own eye

before beholding the mote you see in someone else's? (Cf. Mt. 7:3) And why is it that atheists like me are always having to remind professing Christians of their bible's own teachings?

Ecualegacy: "There's no reaching him at this stage in his life. Maybe later, but not likely. There's just no reasoning with this guy."

So not only do you go back on your promise not to come back here any more, you are also overcome with a profound sense of fatalism when it comes to your purpose in dialoguing with me. You say "there's just no reasoning with [me]," so why do come back and try to reason with me? Is it because you truly think it's impossible to reason with me, or because you secretly realize that I am a sensible human being who has something you privately want?

You gave an example of what you consider an indication of my "insanity":

I wrote: *The morality of rational self-interest is developed on the recognition that man faces a fundamental alternative - to live or die, and on the basis of a fundamental choice: to live.*

First, before going onto the question you posed in response to me, let me ask you what you find so disturbing about my statement. Do you disagree that man faces the fundamental alternative that I say he does? Do you think man does not face the alternative of life vs. death? Have you not made the choice to live? Do you think this choice is irrelevant to morality? Since you do not indicate what your thoughts are in response what I have written, I think it would be of interest to our discussion that you take a moment and tell me what you think about this point.

Now onto your question:

Ecualegacy: "And from this principle, how can he possibly condemn someone who hopes for life after death? Yet he insists hope in an afterlife is wrong anyway."

You ask how I can "possibly condemn someone who hopes for life after death," but what precisely have I stated that generates this question of yours? There are many human beings who "hope for life after death." I know for a fact that Muslim suicide bombers hope for life after death. In my view, I would be wrong if I did not condemn them. You might say that I should condemn them for their destructive actions, not for their merely believing in an afterlife. But don't you see how their belief in an afterlife is a significant pretext to their choice to wage destruction in such a manner?

Aaron Kinney has already presented numerous arguments to the effect that belief in an afterlife can only undermine one's value of the life that he actually lives on his blog [Kill the Afterlife](#). Muslim suicide bombers are a point of evidence. You may say that's an extreme example. But that would miss the point. The point is: look at the kinds of choices and actions a man might make when he take such belief *seriously*.

The unreal is of no value to man's life, Brian. How is pointing this out an indication that I am an "insane man"?

Ecualegacy: "Dawson, I noticed that you didn't post all the argument I made about how you would react to God directly revealing himself.

"Here it is: Fine. Have it your way. Behold there is a flaming cross before you. Everyone around says, "ooh, ahhh, there is the Christ. Holy toledo, he was real after all." And what do I predict will be your response based on what I've read from you? "Jesus, I hate your guts. You're morally repugnant. You're an absentee brother. Your God is an absentee father. Your Christian slaves are self-righteous bigots." And you wonder why he hasn't bothered to come knocking around your door? He isn't wanted by you. Why would he reveal himself to you if he isn't wanted? That's why I'm fond of the saying (my dad passed this along to me once), "Faith in God isn't a problem of evidence but of pride."

Well, for one thing, Brian, this is not an argument. It's merely a scenario you've presented before me, one which has not actually occurred, and your own attempts to "predict" my reaction. There is no "flaming cross" before me. If I saw one, I might wonder if it were erected by the local KKK. They have a thing for setting crosses aflame. Also, it can be easily parodied by other religions. What if Geusha, the supreme being of the universe according to the Lahu, appeared before you and told you that you are wrong to worship Jesus, that Geusha is the actual supreme being of the universe. Should I try to predict your reactions? I won't because I really don't care how you would react. Why is how I might react to what you imagine so important to you?

Ecualegacy: “Dawson, you wouldn't accept God even if he showed up on your doorstep and bequeathed you with a million bucks. You'd complain and demand to know why he hadn't come sooner. Then you'd go back to doing your own thing.”

How do you know what I would or would not do when faced with such a situation? I know one thing, I have not been faced with any situation like what you describe, so it seems you're simply trying to score a rhetorical point which is intellectually worthless. Your questions prove nothing, and your reactions to your own questions are heaped with projections of your own. Human beings are the hardest things in the universe to judge, and yet here you are, omnisciently pre-judging my reaction to things that have not occurred.

Tell me, before Saul of Tarsus met your Jesus on the road to Damascus, how do you think you would suppose he would have reacted to Jesus appearing before him in a “heavenly vision” (Acts 26:19)?

Ecualegacy: “Tell me I'm not wrong. Please. I want there to be hope for your soul.”

If by “hope for [my] soul” you really mean a potential that I will surrender my mind on behalf of Christian irrationality, you can rest assured: there is no such hope whatsoever. If you want an intellectual exchange with me, then please come back and be polite. But if you're looking for fish to trap in your nets, move on.

Regards,
Dawson

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