

Sunday, May 20, 2007

#### Answering Ecualegacy, Pt. 4

Below I offer some more thoughts in response to statements made by Ecualegacy in the comment section of Aaron Kinney's blog [Pat Tillman and Christian Bigotry](#).

Readers should also note that Ecualegacy has erected a new blog. It can be found here:

<http://ecualegacy.blogspot.com/>

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Ecualegacy:

What kind of proof do you want?

It's not about what *I* want. It's about what the Christian says his *god* wants. What does it want, and what is it willing to do to get what it wants? If it wants my allegiance, it knows what to do, since according to the Christian's worldview it created me and is omniscient. So what does it do? It sends internet apologists like Ecualegacy (not to mention others). What is he? Ecualegacy is just a man. And what does he offer? More evasions, just as I would expect if his god were not real.

If the apologist wants to pursue the question - "what kind of proof do you want?" - I would say that a *demonstration* of the power Christians claim their god possesses would be a good place to start. Something concrete is needed to elevate the content of what they want others to believe from the level of a mere claim - such as "God created the earth and the heaven" - to a demonstration which we can witness firsthand and which unequivocally points to their god as opposed to a rival deity, an as-of-yet unexplained scientific phenomenon, or simply a misidentification of reality. This is essentially what I pointed out to Matt Slick of the [Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry](#) when I interacted with his essay [I don't see any convincing evidence for the existence of God](#). In [my response to Slick](#), I wrote:

What the theist will then want to say is that this being which he calls god, possesses a consciousness powerful enough to create planets, enable men to walk on unfrozen water, turn water into wine, and make A into non-A (i.e., make contradictions exist) at will. In other words, the theist is claiming that there exists a being with the power to make reality conform to its will. "Then what kind of evidence would be acceptable?" Well, obviously, given the nature of such a claim, the only evidence for such a claim which could at all be acceptable would be a *demonstration* of such power.

My position has not changed, and the fact that I have never witnessed a demonstration of what Christian believers claim on behalf of their god has also not changed. Immutability seems to be one of the characteristics they attribute to their god, and indeed, a non-existent being does not change. Consistent with this, I have already pointed to the precedent of biblical example in the book of Acts and the conversion of Saul. According to the story, Saul was an active persecutor of the early Christian church; he initiated the use of force against individuals who peaceably sought to worship their god. And the Jesus of the gospels saw fit to come down and show himself to Saul firsthand. Certainly the Christian god is no respecter of persons (cf. Acts 10:34), is it? And if this procedure worked for Saul, why wouldn't it work for anyone else? Does the Christian god truly think that sending evangelizing internet apologists like Ecualegacy will be more effective than what it allegedly did for Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus? Or, is this just a legend blown out of proportion by people who want the Christian story to be true?

Ecualegacy then listed some options and gave a reason for shooting them down:

Pillars of fire? Parting seas? Manna from heaven? Booming voices? The Israelites had all that and more AND THEY STILL DIDN'T BELIEVE!

According to the stories in the storybook, that's right: they (all?) still didn't believe. Apparently pillars of fire, parting seas, manna from heaven and booming voices are not enough for some people. Of course, I have never

witnessed these pillars of fire, parting seas, manna from heaven or booming voices. And so far as I can tell, neither did the ancient Jews. The stories say they did, but what reason does Ecualegacy or any other apologist offer that I should not just dismiss these as fictional accounts? For many people, such as myself, who are more discriminating about what they accept as truth, mere stories such as the ones Ecualegacy cites are certainly not going to be enough. That's not my problem. Is there more that his god can do? If not, then it must not be a very impressive god. If it can, then let's see it. Or, is there going to be some excuse for why it doesn't? It's Ecualegacy's god. He can decide.

Ecualegacy then admitted that evidence and proof have nothing to do with it. He wrote:

Your problem isn't a sufficiency of proof. It's pride!

Whose problem is this? Pride is a moral virtue in my book. Observe:

Pride is the recognition of the fact that you are your own highest value and, like all of man's values, it has to be earned-that of any achievements open to you, the one that makes all others possible is the creation of your own character-that your character, your actions, your desires, your emotions are the products of the premises held by your mind-that as man must produce the physical values he needs to sustain his life, so he must acquire the values of character that make his life worth sustaining-that as man is a being of self-made wealth, so he is a being of self-made soul-that to live requires a sense of self-value, but man, who has no automatic values, has no automatic sense of self-esteem and must earn it by shaping his soul in the image of his moral ideal, in the image of Man, the rational being he is born able to create, but must create by choice-that the first precondition of self-esteem is that radiant selfishness of soul which desires the best in all things, in values of matter and spirit, a soul that seeks above all else to achieve its own moral perfection, valuing nothing higher than itself-and that the proof of an achieved self-esteem is your soul's shudder of contempt and rebellion against the role of a sacrificial animal, against the vile impertinence of any creed that proposes to immolate the irreplaceable value which is your consciousness and the incomparable glory which is your existence to the blind evasions and the stagnant decay of others. (Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*)

Since pride is a virtue in my book, this is not a point of deficiency on my behalf. But the fact that the apologist finds a man's pride to be a barrier to god-belief is telling in itself. It means he secretly realizes that acceptance of god-belief claims is not likely so long as one values himself, and that one must surrender the moral character he has already earned in order prostrate himself before those who seek to hold him captive. To be a Christian, one must enshrine his vices as his moral norm and sacrifice the virtues he has earned which make him a moral human being. This is why Ecualegacy refers to my pride as a "problem." It keeps me from swimming into the fisher's nets, and this frustrates him.

Ecualegacy asks:

How hard is it to get down on one knee, say to God, "Okay, I've got your book and I'm going to commit my life to following it?"

The question is not "how hard is it to get down on one knee" and pledge allegiance to an invisible magic being which refuses to show itself to me in a manner which I can perceive, but *Why would I do this?* In order to do this, I would have to be dishonest to myself. Ecualegacy offers no reason why I should choose to be dishonest to myself. If he decides to present a reason why I should be dishonest to myself, would it be for a selfish, or selfless reason? We'll have to wait and see until he does provide a reason.

Consider: if I were to do what Ecualegacy suggests, who would benefit? He has already pointed out that, to commit my life to his god, I would have to surrender my pride, the virtue which makes benefit possible for me in the first place. Does he think his god would somehow benefit? His god is already perfect and lacks nothing; it is an indestructible, immortal and eternal being according to what Christianity teaches. Nothing could harm it, and nothing could improve it. It needs nothing to exist, certainly not my worship. I on the other hand am neither indestructible, immortal nor eternal, and my existence depends on my choices and actions. I do need things to exist - namely values. And virtues like my pride - virtues which Ecualegacy's god requires us to surrender - are what I need in order to be capable of achieving and protecting those values which my life requires, for they make my life worth the effort required to live. It is my life, mind and morality which Christianity seeks to undermine. Most believers do not recognize this because they compartmentalize their beliefs, living a double mental life, with one foot in their religion, and the other foot in the real world. Also, they typically do not have a very intellectual understanding of moral values in the first place. They get their morality from a storybook. Indeed, where does Jesus speak of values anyway? They are taken completely for granted in the speeches which the bible attributes to him.

Ecualegacy asks:

Exactly what has God gotten wrong in his moral guidance I'd like to know?

First, Ecualegacy should identify what he thinks his god has gotten *right* when it comes to moral guidance. Most likely he rests on the presupposition that every statement attributed to his god in regard to morality is perfectly right because, [as he claims](#), his god is “an all-knowing, all-powerful being in authority telling you what to do.” Ecualegacy is certainly free to believe such things. And I am free to point out that they are delusional premises informed by an imagination which rejects the fundamental principles which are necessary to keep a mind grounded in reality.

But let's explore this a little more clinically. Here are a few questions for Ecualegacy and other believers to consider before we can work our way towards an informed understanding about morality. Since Ecualegacy advocates the Christian bible as the authoritative source for his views on morality, I would expect him to cite the bible to support his responses to these questions:

- a) What is your working definition of 'morality'?
- b) What is the purpose of morality?
- c) Does man need morality? Yes or no?
- d) If you think man does need morality, why do you think he needs it?
- e) By what means does man come into awareness of moral knowledge?
- f) Who or what should be the primary beneficiary of moral action? The one who takes the moral action, or someone else?

These questions will get the conversation started by clarifying from the beginning some basics of each side's position. I have answers to these questions, but I would like to find any Christian who will be willing to answer these questions in a straightforward manner and stick to his answers. So far I have found none who are willing to do this.

Ecualegacy asks:

Where is he asking something impossible or even harmful from Christians?

For one, the Christian religion demands - as Ecualegacy's own statements indicate - that I as a human being surrender my pride, one of my cardinal virtues. Another cardinal virtue which it demands that I sacrifice on the altar of god-belief is my honesty. But as I have explained elsewhere, I am too honest to be a Christian.

by Dawson Bethrick

Labels: [Christian god](#), [Conversion of Saul](#), [Ecualegacy](#), [Morality](#)

posted by [Bahnsen Burner](#) at [9:00 AM](#)

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