

Saturday, May 19, 2012

Answering Dustin Segers' Presuppositionalism, Part IVb: Collectivism, Evil and Slavery

This will be the final installment of my extended reply to [Dustin Segers' questions for atheists](#). My previous responses to Segers can be found here:

[Answering Dustin Segers' Presuppositionalism, Part I: Intro and the Nature of Truth](#)

[Answering Dustin Segers' Presuppositionalism, Part II: The Nature of Logic](#)

[Answering Dustin Segers' Presuppositionalism, Part IIIa: The Uniformity of Nature](#)

[Answering Dustin Segers' Presuppositionalism, Part IIIb: The Problem of Induction](#)

[Answering Dustin Segers' Presuppositionalism, Part IVa: Objective Morality](#)

In the present entry, I continue my exploration of Segers' final question, namely:

"How do you account for objective morality without God?"

I have already provided a direct response to this question in [my previous blog entry](#). In this entry, I explore some of the political implications of the moral system found in Christianity, focusing on Christianity's proclivity towards collectivism, its affinity with Nazism and communism, the problem of evil, and the issue of slavery.

Christianity: Providing the Roots of Collectivism

We saw [earlier](#) that Christian "morality" ignores the moral needs of an individual and leaves him without a guide teaching him what he should do in the context of his own life. This void cannot be filled by prayer, worship, fear, faith, or any other staple of religious devotion. There is no substitute for values, just as there's no substitute for life.

Christian "morality" does not speak of *values*, but instead focuses on *duties*, and the bulk of these duties have to do with conduct one performs in the context of interpersonal relationships. These duties are presented in the form of "commandments" which are alleged to have been "revealed" from a divine source, which can only mean that they are not principles based on facts which we discover in nature by rational means.

The fundamental pretext of a morality based on duties commanded from a supernatural source, is the requirement of a person to sacrifice himself. Christians give this away not only in their defenses of their worldview's moral code, but also in the frustration they express as a result of the persistence of non-belief. Apologists very often tell non-believers that the reason why they are not persuaded by their miserably poor arguments is because they don't want to "submit" to the Christian god and bow their knees before it. In other words, apologists scold non-believers for their unwillingness to sacrifice themselves to the Christian god as they have done.

A morality informed by the command to sacrifice oneself always results in collectivistic politics when it is applied to interpersonal relationships. "Collectivism holds that the individual has no rights, that his life and work belong to the group" (Ayn Rand, "Racism," *The Virtue of Selfishness*, p. 128). Collectivism appears to have been the explicit ideal of the post-Easter Christian community. For instance, we read in the book of Acts:

All that believed were together, and had all things in common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. (Acts 2:44-45)

The Christian community described in Acts strongly resembles a miniature communistic state. Another passage confirms this:

There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and

brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. There was a Levite, a native of Cyprus, Joseph, to whom the apostles gave the name Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"). He sold a field that belonged to him, then brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet. (Acts 4:34-37)

In fact, *failing* to lay at the "apostles' feet" *all* the money one receives for the sale of land, apparently resulted in the death penalty. In Acts 5:1-5, we read the following account:

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.

From what is given in this passage, it is unclear what specifically Ananias did wrong. He "sold a possession," kept a portion of the proceeds for himself, took the rest "and laid it at the apostles' feet," and then he was accused of lying, when in fact there does not seem to be anything objectionable given in the account against this. Christians likely interpret this passage to mean that Ananias told the apostles that he was giving all of the proceeds from his sale to them, when in fact the account leaves out this detail. But even if that were the case, why does this warrant immediate death? Why was there no trial? Why was there no due process? Why is death the penalty for lying? These questions are not considered, and the outcome of the story implies that one has no right to ask such questions, or at least no right to expect such considerations. Mere accusation is sufficient to bring a person the death penalty, and by supernatural means.

If this passage is intended to indicate that lying or misleading one of "the elect" will result in instantaneous death, then it seems that today's apologists are not among "the elect." For apologists are routinely telling us that we non-believers are lying through our teeth, and thus guilty of the same crime as Ananias, on their interpretation of the story, was. But yet Ananias' fate does not befall those of us who are supposedly lying to those who posture themselves as "God's elect." Assuming the truth of the story (which is what Christians want us to do), these apologists who badger non-believers must not be among "God's elect" after all.

With all the talk of "God's mercy" and the importance of "forgiveness," it seems that stories like this suggest that our leg is being pulled.

And yet, the overt evidence of collectivism in the early Christian community is impossible to miss once it's been pointed out. Indeed, who needs to have it pointed out if he has read these passages? Individual liberty is certainly no ideal in either the Old or New Testament.

The individual is continually being overlooked on behalf of some vague something or other which is supposed to be "higher" than the individual and somehow more important. We are commanded not only to love a deity which is utterly indifferent to human values (according to Christianity's own premises, it destroys human lives all the time), but also to love our "neighbor" as ourselves (Mk. 12:31). Indeed, believers are commanded to love their enemies as well (Mt. 5:44). In each case, one's own values are not to be factors determine what or whom one loves. Love is supposed to be subject to commands, and yet anyone who has been in any kind of relationship will know that love cannot be commanded. All this recognition takes is some honesty. And yet the bible proceeds to pretend that love is subject to commands. Your neighbor might be a lying cheat who beats his kids, but the Christian god commands you to love him anyway. Your enemy is someone who wants to destroy your values - he may want to rob your belongings, kidnap your children, rape your wife, defraud your parents of their life's savings. But the Christian god commands you to love him anyway. In other words, you are expected to become as indifferent to your own values as the Christian god is.

By downplaying the importance of values to the point that they are as insignificant as dust, subjective morality always ends up destroying the individual by lumping him into some kind of *collective*. In the case of Christianity, all human beings are divided into two opposing collectives: the chosen vs. the damned, and *what an individual does* makes no difference and has no impact on which collective he belongs in.

Consider Segers' own statement when [Reynold hall questions him](#) on the doctrine of divine election (12:13 - 12:39):

Hall: So in other words [the Christian god] picks and chooses who goes to hell or not, correct?

Segers: That's, well no, he picks and chooses who goes to heaven, and all those who are in Adam by default get what Adam earned for his people. And all those who are in Christ get what Christ earned for his people. Either way, you get imputed, you get reckoned based upon something that you didn't do, personally, you weren't personally involved in. It just depends on who your federal head is.

That "you get reckoned based upon something that you didn't do" can only mean that your fate is not something you *earn*. According to Christianity, one can do whatever he thinks it takes to earn him a wonderful eternity, but just as Clint Eastwood's character at the end of *Unforgiven* says, "Deserved's got nothin' to do with it." According to Christianity, we do not get the end that we deserve, since our own choices and efforts account for nothing in the scheme Christians call "God's plan." Segers says that "it just depends on who your federal head is," and of course no one gets to choose this for himself or alter it by his own effort - this is all *fated* for each individual according to some "plan" which the Christian god supposedly authored long before any of us were even born. It's all been pre-determined before our existence, decided for us on the basis of who knows what, irrespective of our individual characters, irrespective of our chosen actions, in spite of our devotion to our values. An individual's values and choices have nothing to do with Christian morality. Indeed, on some interpretations of Christianity (including that preferred by presuppositionalism), the very concept of 'choice' becomes a stolen concept.

The upshot is that Christianity enshrines the notion of the *unearned*. Not only is the acceptance of the unearned a systematic necessity of the Christian paradigm (since salvation cannot be earned), the *desire* for the unearned is philosophically and psychologically encouraged by Christianity. According to the worldview endorsed by presuppositionalists like Segers, one does *not* earn his rewards or punishments; they are distributed without any justice whatsoever. And yet this whole anti-just mess is called "God's justice," mixed with its "mercy," which is supposedly a character trait that can kick in without any predictable causality to "rescue" a person from the "justice" of otherwise fating him to eternal damnation.

To compound the injustices of Christianity, keep in mind that someone had to be *killed* in order for the believer to enjoy his salvation. Indeed, with the sacrament of the Eucharist, Christians believe that they are actually consuming the *flesh* and *blood* of the person who died for them. The overt parasitism of Christian morality finds its culmination in the soteriological remedy it offers on behalf of "cleansing" and "redeeming" an individual from the depravity into which, by design of the Christian god, he was born. The murder of the righteous, according to the Christian paradigm, is what makes the good possible in man's life. And it is the Christian worldview which attracts individuals with a mindset that can call such a state of affairs "good" and "just."

Rand's analysis of the Christian doctrine of salvation has no equal:

Christ, in terms of the Christian philosophy, is the human ideal. He personifies that which men should strive to emulate. Yet, according to the Christian mythology, he died on the cross not for his own sins but for the sins of the nonideal people. In other words, a man of perfect virtue was sacrificed for men who are vicious and who are expected or supposed to accept that sacrifice. If I were a Christian, nothing could make me more indignant than that: the notion of sacrificing the ideal to the nonideal, or virtue to vice. And it is in the name of that symbol that men are asked to sacrifice themselves for their inferiors. That is precisely how the symbolism is used. (*Playboy* interviews Ayn Rand, March 1964)

So not only does Christian "morality" endorse the acceptance of the unearned, both in terms of values as well as spirit (in fact, to the point of enjoying benefit as a result of someone's murder), it essentially dispenses with a vital precondition of morality, namely an individual's *choices*. Remember that on a *rational* worldview morality is a code of values which guides an individual's *choices and actions*. When Segers says "you get reckoned based upon something that you didn't do," he's telling us that a person's choices are irrelevant to his moral standing; he's not allowed to have a choice, the crucial choices have already been made for him by a supernatural being with whom no one can reason or negotiate. This is worse than the case of a teenage girl in Morocco who was ordered by a court to marry her rapist (she later committed suicide - details can be found [here](#)). It's worse because in the case of the girl in Morocco, this was an isolated incident and people have the ability and choice

to oppose such injustices and make sure they never happen again. In the case of Christianity, it is not an isolated case, since it applies universally to everyone, and no one has the ability to do anything about it. There's no room for justice whatsoever when the Christian god is in the room, and he's always in the room according to Christianity.

Clearly, then, an ethic which grants moral validity to selfishness is going to be condemned by Christians. Along with *self* comes the self's *choices*, the self's *values*, the self's *mind*, including his moral judgment, and all of these are intolerable phenomena given Christianity's anti-selfish policies. An individual's mind is prohibited by Christianity, because having a mind means evaluating what it is expected to accept as knowledge, and that's a no-no. Acting to protect and preserve one's own values means he expects a universe where justice is possible; but on Christianity's premises, no justice is possible. One could act in the interest of his values, including his loved ones - e.g., his spouse, his children, his family members and friends - and such efforts are as "filthy rags" according to the Christian god (cf. Isaiah 64:6). The Christian god is utterly indifferent to human values, and the teachings of the bible make clear that human beings are also expected to be utterly indifferent to their own values.

When asked what he meant by 'selfishness', one Christian replied:

Selfishness is being consumed with one's own welfare without any concern for the well-being of others. For instance, eating to satisfy hunger would not be considered as something selfish unless you have no regard for those who have nothing to eat. A selfish person would have no concern for others even though he may have the ability to alleviate his neighbor's needs.

This last statement ("A selfish person would have no concern for others even though he may have the ability to alleviate his neighbor's needs") reminded me of the Christian god. We are told that it is all-powerful and all-loving, and we're also told that it is wrong to show no concern for others even though one may have the ability to alleviate the needs of others, in effect to allowing willingly all their needs to go unmet. Since the Christian god is supposed to be all-powerful, it would follow that it has the ability to alleviate the needs of others. Oft-cited examples of children starving in Africa and Asia come to mind. Certainly Christian believers believe that their god could fill their stomachs, and doing so would not cost it anything. It could simply wish that these starving parties had an abundance of food, plenty to meet their needs, and doing so would not result in any deprivation on the part of the Christian god itself. But like the selfish person which the anti-self Christian condemns, the Christian god shows no "concern for the well-being of others" in such cases.

Now, consider what has been stated by this Christian. It is not selfish for me to eat to satisfy my hunger, *unless* I do so and "have no regard for those who have nothing to eat." So if I eat, but "have regard for those who have nothing to eat," somehow this is okay, it's not selfish, it's morally acceptable. It's unclear why, for merely "hav[ing] regard for people who have nothing to eat" results in no material difference and has only a psychological effect on the person performing the act in question (in this case, eating). The situation for those who have nothing to eat remains unaffected either way: if I eat without having regard for people who have nothing to eat, they do not as a result of my eating consequently have something to eat. If I eat while regarding such people, I still fill my own belly and theirs remain empty. So why is this an essential difference? Perhaps we're supposed to feel guilt for having food while knowing that others do not. But I have no such guilt. My feeling guilty won't change any facts, just as "having regard" for those who have nothing to eat will do nothing to put food on their plates. Moreover, since I have earned my values, I have full right to them, regardless of who might disapprove, and I do not accept unearned guilt. Let the Christian, who desires the unearned, accept his unearned guilt.

Also, why isn't it selfish for me to eat? Who benefits from the action I perform when I feed myself? Does my neighbor who lives across the street from me benefit from this? Does someone in Swaziland benefit from this? Does someone in Paraguay benefit from this? It seems not in all three cases. Indeed, *I* benefit from this action, and I benefit *directly* from it. In other words, my *self* benefits from my own action, and no one else seems to. So why isn't the mere act of eating selfish in nature? Christians who condemn selfishness will of course not allow such actions to be categorized as selfish actions, since they themselves perform this action all the time, and they don't want to think of themselves as behaving selfishly, even though they are the ones peddling unearned guilt. The performative inconsistencies exhibited by the Christian walk seem to have no limit.

Selfishness is often characterized as acting to gain at someone else's expense. But in fact, such behavior is a type of *selflessness*, since it is the mark of a secondhand and in fact it requires that others sacrifice their values. Rationally selfish individuals interact with each other on the basis of the trader principle. The dictum "my best effort in exchange for yours" accurately encapsulates this principle. By contrast, the ethics of self-sacrifice is the ethics of the secondhand, the parasite, the schmoo, someone who refuses to earn his values by his own effort and seeks to leach off others, often by shaming them into sacrifice. Anyone who insists that you refrain from being selfish very well may be out to collect from your self-sacrifices. Self-sacrifice and acting to gain at someone else's expense, then, are two sides of the same coin: neither can obtain without the other, unless of course one resorts to the initiation of force. And of course, we find no commandment in the bible against initiating the use of force against others. (For further reading on this point, see my blog [Hitler vs. Mother Theresa: Antithesis or Symbiosis?](#))

Nazism

Christian apologists frequently cite Nazi Germany as the kind of society one can expect if atheism becomes the popular norm. Of course, such claims ignore the fact that atheism per se is not a worldview or philosophical system; that one is an atheist tells us nothing about the worldview that he has adopted, other than that it is not theistic in nature. Atheism is nothing more than the absence of theism in a human being and as such implies no particular moral system or social theory. Atheism is not a conceptual structure in and of itself; that one is an atheist does not excuse him from the need for a philosophy or worldview. Given this it would be completely wrongheaded to blame atheism for the injustices of a political system. In order to identify the causes of a political system's injustices, one must look at the philosophical content of that political system, including not only the moral framework on which it depends, but also its view of reality (metaphysics) and its understanding of knowledge and the methods by which knowledge is acquired and validated (epistemology). We should not be surprised to discover significant if not fundamental similarities between the worldview of the Nazis and that of Christianity.

For example, like Christianity, the social theory of Nazism denies the individual's right to exist for his own sake. Just as Abraham was expected to be willing to sacrifice his own son when commanded, the individual living under the Nazis was to be willing to sacrifice himself and all his values at the command of der Führer. Religious thinkers have ignored such parallels, hoping they won't be discovered, since they represent a movement which is actually competing for the same hegemony for which they excoriate the Nazis. The Nazis simply replaced religion's "God" with "der Führer," and jealous religionists want it back. The tendency of religionists to react against Nazism as though atheistic influences (such as that represented by Nietzsche) were the root cause of their unjust system, causes them to miss the true nature of the evil inherent in any form of collectivism and consequently misidentify its philosophical causes.

Peikoff offers the following case in point:

Religious writers often claim that the cause of Nazism is the secularism or the scientific spirit of the modern world. This evades the facts that the Germans at the time, especially in Prussia, were one of the most religious peoples in Western Europe; that the Weimar Republic was a hotbed of mystic cults, of which Nazism was one; and that Germany's largest and most devout religious group, the Lutherans, counted themselves among Hitler's staunchest followers. (*The Ominous Parallels*, p. 20)

Christians who are confronted with the facts noted here often try to downplay the religiosity of the German people as a contributing factor to the rise of Nazism and focus on ready scapegoats outside the flock. Christian apologist Dinesh D'Souza offers himself as an example of this. When giving his explanation of the rise of Nazism in Germany, he writes:

During the period of his ascent to power, he needed the support of the German people — mostly Christian, mostly Lutheran — and he occasionally used boilerplate rhetoric such as "I am doing the Lord's work" to try and secure this. ([Answering Atheist's Arguments](#))

Immediately after saying this D'Souza goes on to link Hitler to Nietzsche, which is a common apologetic tactic. In order to get the heat off his religion, D'Souza needs to imply that the massive Lutheran population of Germany were ignoramuses and dolts for falling for Hitler's opportunistic rhetoric. Somehow millions of

Germans who supported Hitler believed him when he claimed to be “doing the Lord’s work” in inciting the ire of the German populace against their Jewish neighbors. Instead of considering whether or not Hitler’s anti-semitism and statist views resonated with the German Lutherans, D’Souza prefers to focus blame on a single individual who had died decades earlier. But is that really accurate? Was infatuation with Nietzsche’s ideas the fundamental culprit in the rise of Nazism? Peikoff provides some well-needed balance on this matter:

There was Friedrich Nietzsche, the prophet of the superman and of the will to power, who was acclaimed by Hitler as one of his precursors. The extent of Nietzsche’s actual influence in regard to the rise of Nazism is debatable. He is antistatist, antiracist, and in many respects a defender of the individual. Nevertheless, he is a fervid romanticist, who revels in the post-Kantian anti-reason orgy, and there is much in his disjointed, aphoristic writings that the Nazis were able to quote with relish. A view of the universe as a realm of clashing wills, ceaseless strife, and violent conflict; a glorification of cruelty and conquest, of “the magnificent *blond brute*, avidly rampant for spoil and victory; the view that a few superbeings, “beyond good and evil,” have the right to enslave the inferior masses for their own higher purposes - this is part of the Nietzschean legacy, as interpreted (with some justification) by the Nazis. (*The Ominous Parallels*, pp. 42-43)

So to the extent that Nietzsche was influential, it was not his atheism per se which inspired the Nazis, but certain elements in his views which can only be characterized as analogous to several of Christianity’s staple doctrines. The very idea of a “will to power” already conjures the imagery of theism, with its all-powerful will creating the universe *ex nihilo* and directing human history according to some master “plan.” At minimum the Nietzschean idea shares with Christianity the premise of the primacy of consciousness. Also, the idea of a “universe a realm of clashing wills” echoes the New Testament view that the world is a battleground in a constant war between supernatural consciousnesses. The motif of “violent conflict” is present throughout the Old and New Testaments. War and weapons of war, if not cruelty itself, are glorified in the Christian bible. According to Matthew 10:34, Jesus told his followers “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.” Paul wrote to his church followers with the imagery of war, indicating that believers are to think of themselves as constantly engaged in a battle to the death. In II Corinthians 10:4, Paul writes “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.” A great final conflict is forecasted throughout the New Testament, most notably in the final book Revelation, which speaks of a horseman “called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.” Indeed, Revelation tells us that there was a war in heaven of all places (cf. Rev. 12:7). And of course, throughout all these references to war, the war which believers are expected to imagine is between the Christian god and its angels on the one hand, and Satan and all his devils, demons and unclean spirits on the other, and this war is supposed to culminate in one final conflict with victory going to the Christian god. So it seems that it was Nietzsche’s *borrowings* from Christianity which positively influenced the Nazis, to the extent that he influenced them.

Apologists might react to this, pointing out that Nietzsche’s *Übermensch* is someone who seeks to gain at his victims’ expense. But while the Nazi notion of “*untermenschen*” did not originate with Nietzsche, Christianity itself enshrines the idea of gaining at someone else’s expense in the believer’s worshipful devotion to Jesus, who had to die for the believer to gain salvation. If the Christian did not believe that Jesus died in order to make his salvation possible, would he still worship Jesus? The Christian is not worshipping the billions of other men who have lived throughout history but did not die for his sake.

At any rate, there is much in Nazism that cannot be accounted for by pointing to Nietzsche, regardless of the insurmountable philosophical problems which riddle his worldview. The Nazis are distinguished from other forms of totalitarianism by their anti-Semitism. Nietzsche is well-known for his unflinching stance against anti-Semitism, [writing that he would prefer](#) to have “all anti-Semites shot.” Needless to say, this is hard to square with Nazism. But if we go back to the Lutherans for a moment, we can find a source native to this faction of Christianity which is notorious for its hatred of Jewry. Lutheranism takes its name after Martin Luther (1483-1546), a seminal figure in the Protestant Reformation. While many inconsistencies in Luther’s views of the Jews can be cited, his more impassioned statements about the Jews tend decisively toward bitterness and resentment. True to the collectivist mindset which the Christian worldview fosters in its adherents, Luther seemed to take delight in painting with a very broad brush indeed. In fact, [Wikipedia](#) has a separate article on [Martin Luther and antisemitism](#). Luther titled one of his books *On the Jews and Their Lies*. The article describes the book, with quotes, as follows:

In 1543 Luther published *On the Jews and Their Lies* in which he says that the Jews are a "base, whoring people, that is, no people of God, and their boast of lineage, circumcision, and law must be accounted as filth." They are full of the "devil's feces ... which they wallow in like swine." The synagogue was a "defiled bride, yes, an incorrigible whore and an evil slut ..." He argues that their synagogues and schools be set on fire, their prayer books destroyed, rabbis forbidden to preach, homes razed, and property and money confiscated. They should be shown no mercy or kindness, afforded no legal protection, and these "poisonous envenomed worms" should be drafted into forced labor or expelled for all time. He also seems to advocate their murder, writing "[w]e are at fault in not slaying them".

This was some four hundred years before Nazism in Germany, and in those four hundred years Luther's followers amassed a huge population in Germany. Someone growing up in the Lutheran church of Germany, being indoctrinated as religion does to believe what he is told by the authorities he is taught to respect, would likely have a most negative impression of individuals who happen to be Jewish if he were taught what Luther had to say in his book. Given the anti-Semitic undercurrent native to Lutheranism, it seems unlikely that the huge population of Lutherans in Germany were swayed by superficial rhetorical devices of a frothing politician who also happened to be viciously anti-Semitic.

But anti-Semitism was not the sole factor in priming the German culture for the rise of Nazism. Indeed, factors which are far more fundamental to the Christian worldview were necessary for Nazism to establish itself, as Peikoff explains:

Christianity prepared the ground. It paved the way for modern totalitarianism by entrenching three fundamentals in the Western mind: in metaphysics, the worship of the supernatural; in epistemology, the reliance on faith; as a consequence, in ethics: the reverence for self-sacrifice. (*The Ominous Parallels*, pp. 71-72)

While Christianity alone may not have been the sole factor in giving rise to Nazism (indeed, the cultures of many other nations have been heavily influenced by Christianity, and they did not turn to Nazism), the philosophical fundamentals found in Christianity are certainly a vital precondition for an anti-human movement such as Nazism.

If Hitler was not legitimately a Christian, he was doing precisely what presuppositionalists accuse non-Christians of doing, namely *borrowing from the Christian worldview*.

Communism

But what about the Soviet Union? Wasn't the Soviet Union atheistic? Didn't the communism of the Soviet Union reject Christianity outright, and if so, couldn't it be said that the Soviets' pogroms which resulted in the murder of millions of human beings result because of a rejection of Christianity?

Christians in the west, particularly during the Cold War, essentially assumed precisely this, that the totalitarianism of Soviet communism was a result of the anti-Christian godlessness enacted throughout the Soviet Union as a state policy. In fact, however, this kind of thinking is extremely shallow and superficial, and results from an unwillingness to look at the history of Russia and identify the true causes of the rise of communism under the Soviets. Christian reactionaries seem to be unaware of the fact that Russia was "Christianized" in the year 988 under Prince Vladimir I, who, according to chronicles of the period, preferred Christianity over Islam, partly because the latter disallowed alcohol and the former did not. As a result, Orthodox Christianity was established as the state religion by dictatorial fiat and remained so until the early 20th century. The influence of Christianity on the soil of Russian culture cannot be underestimated, especially in preparing the people of the land for what was to come. Christianity had already entrenched within the average Russian psyche the acceptance of dictatorship, anti-reason, anti-selfishness, sacrifice to "something higher," and fatalism, without all of which communism could never take root.

When Christians in the 1980s called the Soviet Union "the evil empire," they lacked the philosophical foundations necessary to make such a pronouncement with rational conviction. What they proposed as an alternative to communism is simply a religious version of the same thing: totalitarianism by a different name.

Let's not forget that Christianity involves worship of a "king," a figure of leadership who by his mere say so being and end wars, create laws, make wrongs right and rights wrong, and steer the course of a culture into a proverbial ditch. Christianity's enshrinement of a king means that Christianity has no consistent basis from which one can oppose and repudiate dictatorship. It also means that having a dictator is in fact the desired ideal, which is precisely why Roman Catholicism, the largest and most influential Christian church throughout history, has a pope, who is supposed to be Christ's living representative on earth. Two mutually opposed warring factions competing for souls to serve either a dictator in heaven or a dictator on earth, both assume the moral validity of the notion of dictatorship. So on this fundamental communism and Christianity are joined at the hip.

The Problem of Evil

I have already discussed the presuppositionalist attempt to quell the problem of evil in my blog [Christianity's Sanction of Evil](#). In that entry I examined Greg Bahnsen's "solution" to the problem of evil, which takes shape in the claim that "God has a morally sufficient reason for the evil which exists" (*Always Ready*, p. 172). Bahnsen never identifies what this allegedly "morally sufficient reason for the evil which exists" might be, and he never explains how he could possibly know that whatever "reason" the Christian god has for evil, could be "morally sufficient." Bahnsen seems to offer us an evaluation that lacks the benefit of knowing what he's talking about. Had Bahnsen known what this allegedly "morally sufficient reason for the evil which exists" is, it's doubtful that he would have failed to present it. If he knew what it was but nonetheless withheld it from his readers anyway, one might get the suspicion that he was hiding it for fear that his evaluation that it is "morally sufficient" might be full of holes. Indeed, if Bahnsen knew what this reason for evil which he calls "morally sufficient" is, it's hard to explain why he proceeds to say "We can find it very hard to have faith in God and trust His goodness and power *when we are not given the reason why bad things happen to us and others*" (Ibid., p. 173; italics original).

Even more fundamental is the profoundly problematic fact that Bahnsen never makes any attempt to establish the validity of the notion of a "morally sufficient reason for the evil which exists." There may be reasons why a person commits evil; evil-doers throughout history have left many evidences indicating the motives for their evil deeds. But the evaluation that these motives are "morally sufficient" is a different matter altogether. Of course, what is good? What is evil?

All that which is proper to the life of a rational being is the good; all that which destroys it is the evil.
(Ayn Rand, "Galt's Speech," *For the New Intellectual*, p. 122)

What can possibly justify any action which destroys the life of a rational being? What can possibly justify evil? Bahnsen wants to say that wrestling with these questions is a psychological problem, not a philosophical issue. For Bahnsen, there is no conflict here, not because there is on the basis of an *objective* morality a "morally sufficient reason" for allowing, committing or "ordaining" evil, but because on Bahnsen's view evil is not something which the good will always oppose. Evil is allowable, if the end justifies it. Bahnsen's view essentially reduces to the view that the ends justify the means. That is precisely what is meant by the notion of a "morally sufficient reason for the evil which exists."

In a sense (but not in the sense he intends), Bahnsen is partly right: there is a deep psychological problem here. Psychological conflict results when a mind attempts to integrate a contradiction. And the problem of evil uncovers a grave moral contradiction within Christianity. But the problem is not so much the fact that Christianity cannot overcome the problem of evil (it can't; but we know that Christianity is false anyway), but that Christian believers are essentially persons who have no problem *with* evil, for they must ultimately believe that evil is, in the final analysis, morally justifiable. For those who love life and are devoted to their values, that would be a huge if not debilitating problem.

Christian apologist Sye Ten Bruggencate has stated (as I point out in [this blog entry](#)) that the "commission" of evil is *not* morally justifiable, but the "ordination" of evil *is* morally justifiable. Of course, it's unclear why "ordaining" evil is not itself an evil act and thus a species of "commission" of evil; Bruggencate never explained this (which is not surprising). Also, since by "ordaining" evil Bruggencate has in mind an activity which he imagines his god has performed in setting up the course of human history, it's clear that no non-divine

individual could “commit” evil without first being “ordained” to do so. In Christianity, the “ordaining” must come first, since this action informs the substance of “God’s plan.” So when “God” has “planned” abortions to happen in human history, it “ordained” this evil to happen, and only because this evil has been “ordained” by “God,” can human agents proceed to “commit” this evil action. Given that human beings on Christianity are essentially reduced to puppets performing actions that their puppeteer has them perform, it’s perplexing to contemplate why those who are doing what they’ve been “ordained” to do are guilty of “committing” evil, when in fact they could do only what they’ve been “ordained” to do in the first place.

What’s ironic is that, even though presuppositionalists are likely to raise these questions, we should not expect clear answers to them from presuppositionalists since their worldview - while pretending to be for the good and against the evil - is systematically confused on their meanings and its stance in regard to both. According to Objectivism, evil is never morally justifiable. But according to Christianity, it’s hard to see how the Christian could consistently hold that evil is never morally justifiable.

Slavery

How about slavery? Segers has gone on the record affirming the view that the practice of slavery is in fact *biblical*.

Yes, that’s right.

Indeed, it’s good to see a Christian come out into the light and openly acknowledge that slavery is neither anti-biblical nor anti-Christian.

In a [discussion which I had with Segers back in 2006](#), he explicitly affirmed biblical Christianity’s endorsement of the practice of slavery. In that discussion I quoted another Christian who, participating under the moniker “TreyFrog,” wrote:

slavery is perfectly biblical--always has been, always will be until Christ comes again and sets up a society that is free of all work, hardship, suffering, and servitude of any kind.

Did you get that? “Slavery is perfectly biblical - always has been, always will be.” When I asked Segers to weigh in on this, Segers responded:

Yes, slavery is biblical and I’d agree with my BLACK friend TreyFrog. OT/NT believers owned slaves and were slaves, the Mosaic law legislated slavery and the NT gives principles of ownership re: slaves, slaves were instructed to submit to their masters in the OT & NT, both freedom and slavery could be considered a blessing, and some form of slavery will continue till the end of time. Slavery is considered to be neither “here nor there” by the Apostle Paul and is a recognized social institution in the NT. What is condemned as sin in the OT, and especially in the NT is the mistreatment of slaves. I’ve written a fairly detailed paper on biblical slavery demonstrating that it was not considered sin in either the OT or NT eras yet I also demonstrate that it would be sin to practice it in the modern USA. More later if you’re interested.

Segers says that “slavery could be considered a blessing,” but does not indicate who might do this. Perhaps Segers thinks that slaves might consider their enslavement a blessing, but I’m guessing that many slaves have never considered the injustice of their situation “a blessing.” Of course, even if someone does think of slavery as “a blessing,” this would not justify the institution of slavery. But the apologist is not concerned with this.

Moreover, while Segers says “slavery could be considered a blessing,” he then tells us that “slavery is considered to be neither ‘here nor there’ by the Apostle Paul.” So apparently blessings for the apostle are “neither ‘here nor there’.”

Segers is quick to tell us that although the bible does not condemn the institution of slavery, it condemns “as sin... the mistreatment of slaves.” But clearly this condemnation could not be borne on the premise that the individual has a right to exist for his own sake (or any rights, for that matter), for if the bible’s condemnation of the mistreatment of slaves were a matter of individual rights, how would one reconcile this with the glaringly

rights-denying approval of slavery as an institution? Essentially the biblical worldview's position is: "You can deny individuals the right to exist for their own sake (since they don't have rights to begin with), but just don't 'mistreat' them." With all its "thou shalt nots" which Christianity throws in the believer's face, prohibition of slavery is curiously not among them. But this is no accident. The bible's endorsement of slavery, whether implicit or overt, is a logical consequence of the failure of the bible and the worldview it promotes to affirm and defend the doctrine of individual rights.

Some apologists have openly acknowledged this fact. For instance, in a paper responding to Anton Thorn which is no longer available on the internet (so far as I can tell), Christian apologist Robert Turkel (aka "J.P. Holding") wrote:

.The idea of *individual* rights is a byproduct of modern *individualism*, a way of thinking that has only emerged in the last hundred or so years (with the Industrian Revolution) and only in Western nations. The ancients, and most of the world today, does [sic] not speak of "individual rights" but of group obligations. Thus there is no "right" to do anything. This is not in the Bible itself since it is a given in their cultural background... ([In There be Thorns](#))

The concept of man's individual rights developed in the west thanks in part to the Renaissance and especially to the Age of Reason, which gave rise to the Industrial Revolution and culminated in the Declaration of Independence and the founding of the United States of America. But this concept developed slowly and imperfectly, primarily due to the fact that there was no consistent philosophical defense of the idea. The west had to go through a period of emancipation from the church in order for the idea to see the light of day in the first place, for, as Turkel acknowledges, the idea of individual rights is not something we learn about in the Christian bible. Indeed, that an individual has "no 'right' to do anything" is such a "given" in the "cultural background" of the bible, that it need not be stated explicitly.

It's alarming how easy Christians living in the west find this to dismiss. Segers states over and over in his discussion with [Reynold Hall on a Fundamentally Flawed podcast](#), that somehow "slavery becomes a moot point" as a result of "the Christian ethic." Hall asked Segers (29:46):

Where exactly in the bible does God, does Christ outlaw sl..., does Christ basically forbid or outlaw slavery then?

Segers answered Hall, saying (29:52 - 30:10):

He doesn't. That's my point. My point is not that Christ didn't come to be a social revolutionary. He came to change the people's hearts by the grace of God, and when that happens and people realize we're all created in the image of God, slavery becomes a moot point. And that's exactly what happened amongst Christian slaves according to church history.

Notice that Segers does not specify what exactly "happened amongst Christian slaves according to church history." He says that "slavery becomes a moot point," and that's what "happened amongst Christian slaves." He does not say that slaves were liberated from their shackles as a result of Christian teaching. If this were the historical record, no doubt Segers would hasten to emphasize this. Rather, what he seems to be saying is that Christian slaves continued in their servitude, but their worldview taught them to just accept their station in life, since this is something that's been decided for them by a divine mind, and to desire freedom is to ignore the "blessing" which some people consider slavery to be.

If Segers is trying to imply that the institution of slavery has been rejected at certain points in history as a result of one-by-one heart-changing by Christian doctrine, which teaches that "slavery becomes a moot point," as opposed to social revolution, he's wrong. As Segers has made clear, Christianity condones and endorses slavery rather than condemning and prohibiting it, so believers living in a society in which slavery was an legal institution had no religious reason to abstain from slavery. Moreover, imagining oneself to have been "created in the image of God" is hardly a basis for abandoning slavery. On this elusive, contentless premise, one could just as easily give up slavery as he could say, "Hey, if I'm created in the image of God, then why shouldn't I be god-like, and deny other individuals' their freedoms and choices?" Anything can be justified by appealing to the imaginary.

Beyond this, it's stubbornly unclear what exactly Segers intends "slavery becomes a moot point" to mean, nor does Segers really attempt to explain what it means. It seems to be nothing more than mollifying phrase used to downplay the seriousness of the issue in question, namely the *practice* of slavery, without saying anything substantive on the morality of the issue. Segers' explanation for why the bible neither condemns nor prohibits slavery, is most pragmatic and conventional in nature, which is not what we'd expect from a source which supposedly provides us with an absolutistic guide on objective morality. And though while I've never been a slave myself, I'm guessing that for those who are slaves, their enslavement is no "moot point." I'm pretty confident that Segers himself is not a slave. Perhaps he finds it easy to dismiss the compulsory servitude of others as a "moot point" since his own freedoms are not being forcibly withheld from him by others.

Segers claims over and over that the aim of "the Christian ethic" is to "change one heart at a time," not incite a "social revolution." It's unclear why these are the only two alternatives Segers is willing to consider as the purpose of his worldview's ethic, but I have the sneaking suspicion that it's because his defense at this point was more in damage control mode than actually presenting "the Christian ethic" as a useful (or *rational*) guide to an individual's choices and actions. Indeed, "change one heart at a time" *from* what *into* what? Questions like this are left unanticipated and unaddressed. At any rate, it should be clear that "Christian morality" does not serve as a rational guide for one's choices and actions, but in fact seems tailor-made for providing rationalizations and excusing unjust behavior.

If Segers himself represents what results from the Christian ethic "chang[ing] one heart at a time," this change seems to result in an overall *indifference* to the injustice of situations in which others may find themselves. This hardly speaks well for Christianity's claim to having an objective morality.

So there we have it. Dustin Segers' presuppositionalism has been comprehensively answered.

Perhaps the most delicate way of putting to Mr. Segers that his presuppositionalism is finished, is to characterize it as semelfactive in nature. Like a blink, it's over pretty much as soon as it started.

by Dawson Bethrick