

Tuesday, June 07, 2005

Can Reformed Christians Count?

First they tell us that their *one* god is actually *three* in number. Then they say we're wrong when we point out that this belief of theirs amounts to a species of *polytheism*. So we ask: Do you worship *one*, or do you worship *three*? Typically, instead of clear answers, we get bad attitude, as if we were supposed to accept their tangled convolutions on their say so.

But the question of how many gods they worship is not the only issue where Christians show a poor ability for basic math. Another area where simple counting ability seems lacking is in the number of times Jesus has allegedly visited the earth. According to the traditional account, Jesus has so far come only once, but is apparently planning another visit at some unspecified future point in time. "Behold, I come quickly," the author of the Apocalypse puts into his Jesus' mouth (Rev. 3:11). And yet, who would think that 2000 or more years constitutes "quickly"?

But no. We are now told that Jesus has *already* paid a second visit! That's right, at least according to [Paul Manata](#), Jesus already came a second time!! This second visit allegedly took place back in 70 AD, at which time Jesus is said to have "fulfilled" the "prophecy" to the effect that the Jerusalem temple would be destroyed. It seems that this visit in 70 AD by Jesus would have constituted his second "coming" [sic], as Mr. Manata puts it, since according to the gospels Jesus came once before during the reign of Pontius Pilate some 35-40 years before the razing of the Jerusalem temple. But Paul vehemently denies this reckoning, for [in an exchange](#) with Aaron Kinney of [Killing the Afterlife](#), Manata snarled the following point:

You see, all you're doing is taking a preconceived understanding of Christianity, trying to fit me into that mold, and then acting like a child when I don't fit into it. You keep using the term "second coming." I DENY this term.

I thought this was rather novel, since historically Christians have taught that Jesus paid one visit already (in the first decades of the first century AD), and that they expect yet another "second coming" of Jesus to occur at some unspecified point in the future at which time the "end times" would be initiated (the authors of many of the New Testament writings apparently thought Jesus' next visit was "at hand").

Then I flip over to [Craig Sowder's blog](#), and read his blog [Dead in Christ](#) where he writes:

I guess there is one good thing about being the dead in Christ. At Christ's *second coming* we get to rise first. (1 Thess. 4:16) (*Emphasis added*)

Now, Sowder is apparently a cut from the same theological cloth as Manata, for in the very same blog Craig writes, "I love the Reformed tradition." Paul makes a similar confession in [his blog profile](#), where he says of himself, "I am reformed in my theological, philosophical, and apologetical distinctives." But here one affirms the notion of a verbatim "second coming," while the other vehemently protests "I DENY this term."

So which is it? Is the term "second coming" a valid Reformed Christian notion, or not? According to one self-identified Reformed Christian, it apparently is. But according to another one, it isn't.

Obvious questions remain unanswered: How many times has Jesus come to the earth? Has Jesus already paid his second visit to earth, or is Jesus' "second coming" yet to come? Etc.

With internal controversies like this, which would be so easy to resolve by acknowledging that Christianity is just a myth, I dare say they make Christians look as though they cannot do simple arithmetic!

by Dawson Bethrick

posted by Bahnsen Burner at [6:45 PM](#)

11 Comments:

[Not Reformed](#) said...

Nice work Dawson...

Seriously, its incredible that people actually hold on to their faith when confronted with even a few of these inconsistencies. Personally, I think they hold on because *they want to* . To me, that isn't a good enough reason for the world at large to believe it though.

However...reformed Christians do have an answer for this. God doesn't want everyone to believe, so they don't. Nice and tidy.

[June 08, 2005 8:22 AM](#)

[Aaron Kinney](#) said...

Another funny thing about the Temple destruction in 70 ad being prophecy, is that the prophecy in Luke 21:20-24 was written AFTER the temple was destroyed in 70 ad.

WTF?

[June 08, 2005 10:19 AM](#)

[Bahnsen Burner](#) said...

It's quite easy to "prophecy" an event when one reads about it. As for "prophecies" that were written before the events said to be their fulfillment, they were written so vaguely and indefinitely that virtually any event or series of events could be pointed to as their "fulfillment."

[June 08, 2005 10:34 AM](#)

[Zachary Moore](#) said...

Dawson-

Paul is a Preterist in his eschatology. Most Christians are Futurists. Just one more argument from within the faith based on how literal one should take the Scriptures.

Apparently, one can be too much of a Preterist for Paul's taste, as we can see by his leveling of transcendental argumentation against "Hyper-Preterism".

http://www.preteristarchive.com/CriticalArticles/manata-paul_ca_03_01.html

[June 08, 2005 11:57 AM](#)

[Aaron Kinney](#) said...

Yo Dawson,

Not trying to pick nits. But I just noticed that you spelled my last name "Kinny". It is actually "Kinney" with an E before the Y.

I dont know how I missed it the first time around. But at any rate thanx for mentioning me in your blog :)

[June 08, 2005 4:37 PM](#)

[Bahnsen Burner](#) said...

Hi Aaron,

My apologies for misspelling your surname! And thank you for pointing that out. I have made the necessary correction. I must have been in a hurry when I added the link. I recently got a big promotion at the company I work for and I'm in that transition period where I'm trying to train my replacements as well as get everything in order for my upcoming gig, while trying to get my fun in at the same time.

Geusha must be really pleased with me because this promotion came out of nowhere (I wasn't even looking for it - someone in my company had heard about my experience and asked the HR department to contact me to see if I'd be interested in climbing up).

And Zach, thanks also for your input about preterism vs. futurism. As I think I mentioned in a comment somewhere in the last week or so, the whole eschatology thing bores me probably more than any other area of Christianity since it is the most removed from anything important and tends to be the hangout of the most unsalvageably irrational members of any Christian sect that seeks to take it seriously. But I'm always looking to learn more, so I appreciate the input.

[June 08, 2005 6:01 PM](#)

[Zachary Moore](#) said...

Dawson-

"the whole eschatology thing bores me probably more than any other area of Christianity since it is the most removed from anything important and tends to be the hangout of the most unsalvageably irrational members of any Christian sect that seeks to take it seriously."

This is very true. In America, however, Christian eschatology drives foreign policy. This, I think, gives atheist outreach a more immediate motivation.

[June 09, 2005 5:30 AM](#)

[Bahnsen Burner](#) said...

That's a very good point that you raise, Zach. Perhaps you could develop it in a future blog? Supporting examples from historical and current events which can be shown to have resulted from the injection of eschatological superstitions into foreign relations practices would, I believe, help solidify your case.

At any rate, I'm doubtful that attacking various eschatological (I'm always thinking of the word 'scatological' when people use the doomsday term) views directly would make for very productive counter-apologetics. I say this because "end times" views are themselves a product of a whole host of prior premises and doctrines which themselves make better targets for our efforts. But what is noteworthy, in my view at least, is the wide variety of eschatological views, many of which are in great conflict with each other, all coming from people who claim to have "the mind of Christ" (Christ supposedly has an infallible mind, right?) and whose early beginnings traditions emphasized the "virtue" of being "on one accord" with fellow believers, or something to the effect of universal agreement among the faithful, at least on matters of doctrine. The evidence from believers themselves tells us that exactly the opposite is the case. And presuppositionalists challenge us to "perform internal critiques"? They really aren't very self-conscious about the state of their "worldview."

[June 09, 2005 6:36 AM](#)

[Aaron Kinney](#) said...

Congrats on the promotion BB!! :)

[June 09, 2005 8:58 AM](#)

[Francois Tremblay](#) said...

"Most Christians are Futurists"

Now that is a sentence I never expected to see.

[June 12, 2005 9:14 AM](#)

[Aaron Kinney](#) said...

Dawson, where is a new post? Im dying for more Incineration of the Presup :)

[June 18, 2005 12:49 PM](#)

