

Sunday, December 04, 2011

Christianity's Psychological Price Tag

Alex Botten [recently commented on my blog](#). He wrote:

I find it slightly disturbing that the Christians are complaining that they can't deal with anything other than bite sized points.

At a guess, their religion's absolute failure to account for knowledge causes them to run from any situation where they might learn something.

No doubt Alex is reacting here to statements by Christian *apologists* - individuals who style themselves as "ordained" by the Christian god to go out into the world to defend the Christian faith and preach their god's "word" to everyone - wherein they complain about the *length* (of all things!) of writings critical of Christianity, such as those which can be found on my blog.

Such complaints may indeed seem puzzling given the vast amounts of writing found in, say, Bahnsen's *Van Til's Apologetic: Readings & Analysis* (at over 700 pages), N.T. Wright's *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (also over 700 pages), Craig Keener's *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts* (at over 1200 pages!), or the bible itself (my copy is well over 1000 pages). Such writings would take an individual weeks to read, supposing he has the time available to devote to them. In the case of the bible, a man is essentially expected to accept *all* of its contents as "knowledge," even though statistically few individuals set down to digest it cover to cover, and the human mind does not have the ability to integrate all its contents into a cohesive whole, even if one accepts all the conflicts and contradictions one would have to navigate through in trying to *understand* it.

In [the blog in which Alex posted his comment](#), a Christian apologist who has essentially set up camp in my blogspot's comments files and posts under the moniker "Hezekiah Ahaz," made the following statement:

I don't have my snow gear with me right now so I'm afraid I won't survive the avalanche of words(your writings).

Hezekiah Ahaz had challenged me to a debate and asked me to provide an "opening statement," to which I directed him to several blog entries which I have already written and would be happy for him to consider as my opening statement. The above statement was his reaction to this proposal in response to his invitation. He's clearly not up to a debate if he cannot read more than two sentences. But if he reads Christian writings, his inability to read more than a few sentences seems to be rather selective.

Perhaps Alex is write: folks like "Hezekiah" really don't want to learn. In fact, I wish I knew of any evidence which suggests otherwise, but sadly I must confess: I don't.

Elsewhere, and similarly, Christian apologist Sye Ten Bruggencate has proudly denounced my writings as "verbal diarrhea" and "argumentum ad verbosium," without of course actually interacting with my arguments. Apparently he thinks a "debate" can be won by issuing epithets and aspersions. No counter-argument or thoughtful interaction need be presented in dealing with criticisms of Christianity.

If a non-Christian used this "method" of "rebuttal," apologists would no doubt have a field day in pointing out the myriad fallacies it commits.

But Alex's comment provides even broader insight here. Consider:

While some Christian apologists - primarily the "theorists" who travel in packs and limit their direct interaction with outsiders to cordial one-on-ones which remain ever-detached from the kind of heat that is often generated by newbies valiantly trying to defend the faith - emphasize the importance of at least maintaining an appearance of scholarship, those who are out trying to make a name for themselves in

internet skirmishes with vocal critics of Christianity, seem to have little grasp of the concept of scholarship to begin with.

At least in the case of the drive-by apologists who like to post their tried-but-bogus charge of “begging the question,” and those who continually seek to redirect the focus of conversation on the *personalities* of their opponents, it's as though they *resented* persons who really do understand things, as though understanding itself constituted some kind of *threat*.

For instance, Hezekiah Ahaz's running commentary continues to remind me of Proverbs 3:7, which states:

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding."

Driven by faith in the imaginary, the believer seeks to embody this teaching in himself throughout his life, and in so doing he must pay a hefty price tag. And what he gets out of it is surely not worth what he's invested in it. This is, ironically, why he continues to invest more of himself in it: he's hoping for a big pay-off that will never come.

The result is a psychologically painful emotional investment which leaves a man in spiritual ruin.

When the gung-ho apologist encounters other individuals who are not making the same sacrifice as he is, he naturally wants to validate his choice to make such an investment himself. Since he's caught in a rotten deal to begin with, he cannot validate his choice by pointing to results that those who haven't made the same investment would find positive or attractive. Instead, he finds that, in order to validate his gamble on the imaginary, he needs somehow to denigrate those who have not made the same sacrifices as he has. They need to be cut down, overcome, vanquished, by any means necessary.

This is why it's so imperative in the believer's mind to make encounters with non-believers a *personal* matter, for intellectually he has no ammunition whatsoever. He's been suckered, and this is what he's trying to hide himself. So he does what he can to put the spotlight on his adversaries personally, and his goal is to discredit them as individuals rather than interacting with their position in a mature and intellectual manner.

The apologist thus fulfills the teaching which the New Testament puts into Jesus' mouth, namely:

Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, *and become as little children*, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. (Mt. 18:3; *emphasis added*)

Observe how often internet apologists for Christianity display a most childish attitude, asking the question “How do you know?” in response to everything one says on behalf of his own position, if not simply making the empty charge of “you're begging the question.” These apologists would have us all believe we're simply too stupid to be Christian in the first place.

Are they really doing their interest in defending their faith any good?

by Dawson Bethrick

Labels: [Christian Psychopathy](#), [Presuppositional Gimmickry](#)

posted by Bahnsen Burner at [6:00 AM](#)