

## Chronic Manatism: Boy Wonder and His Invisible Magic Being

Readers will recall how offended Paul Manata has become whenever I use the word 'magic' in reference to his god-beliefs. He repeated over and over that my expression "invisible magic being" is "pejorative" [while referring to me](#) as a "monkey," "bafoon," "baboon," "hack," "joker," "fool," "goof ball," etc., which Paul apparently does not consider to be pejorative expressions. Beyond that, Paul did make some meager efforts to challenge the appropriateness of the expression "invisible magic being" when used to refer to his god, but these have proved to be, well, rather meager.

I had written:

This source [a dictionary] also acknowledges the association of magic with "the supernatural." Christians want us to believe in "the supernatural," so it seems they should welcome the use of the adjective 'magic' when speaking of their god and other invisible beings.

Paul responded:

There's plenty of ways to understand "supernatural" and only one of them is "magical."

Paul's statement here is sufficient to concede the whole point to me, for he acknowledges that there is a kinship between "the supernatural" and magic, which is what I have been maintaining all along. As I [had showed](#), "magic is associated with that which is alleged to be supernatural." Since Paul acknowledges here that this is valid at least some of the time, then he's basically handed the issue to me in full, whether he likes it or not.

Regardless, I am only speaking for what I personally mean by 'magic' when I use the expression "invisible magic being" to refer to religious fixtures, like the Christian god, demons, devils, angels, etc. Magic essentially means *of, relating to or possessing supernatural power*. So in my view it is applicable to anything that is said to be "supernatural" or exemplified by what is said to be "supernatural" power.

Now the Christian god is certainly thought, by Christians anyway, to possess supernatural powers. So by my definition, 'magic' suitably applies to the Christian god, given how its own self-appointed spokesmen have described it. According to Christianity, it's clear that demons, devils and angels are also thought to have supernatural powers, though in lesser degree or capacity. Demons, for instance, can strike otherwise healthy people with disease by inhabiting their bodies or causing some other kind of mischief (which is never explained) which can in turn affect the human body adversely. Angels, too, have supernatural powers. According to the bible, they can visit men in their dreams (and yet they're not themselves supposed to be dreams). It all certainly seems very magical to me.

Paul also writes:

Bethrick totally fails to make any apology for equating "magic" with the "supernatural" in the sense that Christians and philosophers around the globe mean it.

If by 'apology' here we mean a defense of my usage of the word 'magic' to apply to the Christian god, then I have more than met the challenge that has been brought against me. Magic is associated with the supernatural (indeed, I use it specifically to refer to supernatural power), and the Christian god is said to be supernatural. So the shoe fits. But Paul prefers to go around barefoot.

Besides, I was not attempting to speak on behalf of "Christians and philosophers around the globe" and what they might mean by 'magic' (as if they were monolithic in viewpoint or necessary to appease). I was asked to explain *my* use of the word 'magic', and I did just that. And it fits. I don't need to run to "Christians and philosophers" for their approval for my use and meaning of the word 'magic'.

Again, it is important to remember why I use the term that Paul finds so discomfoting. As [I had written](#):

I use the term 'invisible magic being' because it is open-ended. That is my primary purpose in using it: it is intended to cover any postulated mystical entity which is said to exist beyond the reach of our senses...

In response to this, Paul wrote:

No, you use it to make fun of theists.

No, I use it because it is open-ended, just as the concept 'man' includes all men who exist now, have existed in the past and will exist in the future. The fundamental difference is that the concept 'man' denotes actual things, and its basis is objective fact rather than projected imagination. But the open-ended range in reference is a trait that both share due to their conceptual nature. The expression "invisible magic being" can be used to refer to *any* allegedly supernatural being, whether Christian or otherwise.

But I take Paul's statement here as evidence that his feelings *are* hurt when I use the expression 'invisible magic being'. That's why he's so sore at me. Christians can't stand it when non-believers do not take his god-beliefs as seriously as they do. At any rate, what would be wrong with making fun of people who believe in invisible magic beings? Does Paul think that I should respect them for their folly? It's funny to me that grown adults carry on with their imaginations the way they do. It's certainly sad, but it's funny, too.

Besides, if my primary objective were "to make fun of theists," I'd just call them names, like Paul does to me.

Paul wrote:

Bethrick can't debate, so he resorts to making fun.

What exactly am I supposed to debate about?

Then Paul shows that he really does want me to stop using the expression "invisible magic being" when referring to his god:

You can stop now Dawson;

Yes, I do have that option. I also have the option of continuing to use it. And since it performs the task that I want it to, I see no reason not to continue using it. Paul's tender feelings are not sufficient to persuade me to change my mind on these things. I'm confident that, with effort, Paul can get over it if he wants to. Of course, it would help if he dissolved his emotional investment in Christianity. But then who would provide such entertainment?

Paul shows that he puts a lot of stock in the herd mentality when he writes:

we are definitely all laughing at you.

Again Paul speaks about himself and what he values when he makes statements like this, and projects them onto unidentified nobodies whom we're supposed to imagine standing behind him in unanimous agreement. He assumes that others put as much stock in the approval of others that he does. But Paul needs to understand something about me on this point: if a group of people who believe in invisible magic beings are laughing at me because I do not believe in invisible magic beings, I'm happy to consider the source. The group-giggle that Paul alludes to here is something he values, because he's so desperate for the approval of others.

Now recall that Paul had also denied that there are any natural laws. Indeed, a person seeking to defend belief that reality is dominated by magic would need to find a way to discount the fact-based principles that scientific minds have formed to identify certain regularities and constants observed in reality. The reason for this is two-fold: for one, the affirmation of regularities and constants in nature makes it harder to defend the doctrine of miracles (i.e., magical incursions which defy and overturn those regularities and constants), and two, the affirmation of regularities and constants implies an autonomous universe, i.e., one which is not under the control of an invisible magic being. In order to justify his rejection of natural law, Paul quoted Bahnsen on the matter. (Paul did not identify where exactly he got the quote, but I'm very glad he quoted it!) In that quote, Bahnsen affirms the following:

God personally created and now personally directs all the affairs of the world.

This is the [cartoon universe premise](#) in a nutshell. As I had suspected, Paul rejects natural laws because he conceives of the world in a manner analogous to a cartoon whose every detail and action is controlled by a master cartoonist which exists independent of the cartoon world in which Paul exists. Paul is simply a cartoon character - Boy Wonder - doing what his cartoonist wants him to do.

by Dawson Bethrick

Labels: [cartoon universe of theism](#), [Invisible Magic Being](#), [Paul Manata](#)

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

#### 4 Comments:

[J](#) said...

Dear Dawson,

You seem to have a grasp of what the issues are in this debate. Would you mind coming over here and dialoguing in the apologetics section sometime? Some of these are presup's and I would enjoy watching the interaction.

<http://board.barnzilla.ca/index.php>

[December 12, 2006 10:07 AM](#)

[steven](#) said...

As Christians say Elymas of Acts was a sorcerer, they acknowledge that the driving force behind miracles is magic.

[December 12, 2006 1:00 PM](#)

[Bahnsen Burner](#) said...

Hi J, I quickly scanned the forum you linked, but did not see much of an argument presented by any of the apologists. Just a lot of assertions like "affirming the existence of proof, proves God," "the ability to prove anything depends on the existence of the Christian God," "only the Christian worldview can account for the laws of logic," etc. These are not arguments, and as assertions, they can be endorsed by any mystic just by replacing Christianity's "God" with one's own preferred deity. E.g., "affirming the existence of proof, proves the existence of Wod." Since Wod did not have a son named Jesus, we have a deity distinct from the Christian god, and here we have just as much of a claim to deal with as the Christian presuppositionalist provides.

There was one statement that Westmin pasted from Bahnsen. Perhaps I'll post some thoughts in response to it sometime, since it's so ripe for criticism.

But in the meanwhile, if something more substantial gets posted, you're welcome to paste it in the combox of one of my blogs.

Steve,

That's a good point that you raise, and confirms the point I had made in my post [Those Delicate Christian Sensibilities](#):

**"...for the religionist, 'magic' is what *other* religions practice. So naturally, when the term is applied to their own religion, they take offense. But where does this offense originate? Well, it originates in the pejorative intentions that prompted religionists in using it to refer to rival religious groups. They invested it with pejorative connotations in order to claim a moral high ground that simply does not exist."**

Religious stories are full of magical tales. To deny this is simply to deny the essence of their religious stories.

Regards,  
Dawson

[December 12, 2006 7:59 PM](#)

[J](#) said...

Hi Dawson,

Thanks for your reply. I would like to start a thread in which you could dialogue with one or two of the posters in that forum titled

"Can the law of noncontradiction be established in an atheistic worldview?". If you feel up to the debate, email me at [jvann@atsu.edu](mailto:jvann@atsu.edu) and I will start the thread and lay down two or three guidelines in order to make it profitable. I think the exchange could be helpful.

Mason

[December 14, 2006 6:38 AM](#)