

Sunday, May 22, 2005

## Cooking with Gene's Arbitrary Presuppositions

In [his discussion with atheist Zachary Moore](#), Christian pastor Gene Cook of [Unchained Radio](#) announced that "the fact that the Bible is the Word of God is the presupposition that drives my worldview." This statement suggests that he takes the alleged truth of the bible as his most fundamental starting point. And yet, how could this be? The statement "the Bible is true" is no more irreducible than the statement "the Bible is the Word of God" or "the Bible is not true." Indeed, as mentioned in [my previous blog](#), the claim that "the Bible is true" is simply a shorthand way of claiming that all the pronouncements and teachings found in the Christian bible, from the very first verse of Genesis to the last verse of Revelation, are true, factual and historically accurate. To affirm the truth of all these things in one gulp is quite a land grab to say the least, so voluminous and complex that to affirm it at the level of one's starting point is beyond absurd. Indeed, by saying that "the Bible is true," or some statement akin to this, is one's most fundamental starting point, presuppositionalists are essentially admitting that attempts to prove that the bible is true are completely hopeless.

In other words, instead of trying to prove that there is a god, that it created the universe in six days and rested on the seventh, that Adam was the first man and that Eve was made from his rib, that there was a pristine garden in which they lived along with a talking snake, that the first murder was of a man by his brother who went out and married a woman from who knows where, that the diversity of languages is due to the rash anger of a god threatened by men who constructed a tower (apparently that same god is not threatened by modern skyscrapers), that there was a worldwide flood that was survived by a man named Noah and his family in a wooden ark, and that on that ark he had gathered samples of all the species of fauna on the earth (apparently the flora had to survive on its own), that this god made some sort of agreement with a man named Abraham, etc. (and we're not even out of Genesis yet!), the presuppositionalist wants to just wave his hand and say "It's all true!" and everyone's supposed to believe it on his say so.

In response to my characterization of this apologetic tactic, the presuppositionalist would likely say "No, not on my say so, on God's say so." And yet that would simply beg the question. Apparently we're supposed to believe it's "God's say so" on the apologist's say so. The only thing that the presuppositionalist demonstrates is the fact that the defense of the arbitrary cannot proceed without recourse to logical fallacy. And yet, if an atheist made the sweeping claim that everything Michael Martin said and wrote was incontestably true, the presuppositionalist would demand that we go through everything he said and wrote piecemeal to prove it. So expect circular reasoning to be followed up by a rash of double standards and special pleading.

When Moore asked Cook "did you make that conclusion based on any evidence, or did you just decide...[?]" Cook starts to answer by saying "Based on evidence...", but then shifts to an appeal to Romans 8:16 which "says that the Spirit of God bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." Thus he's essentially saying "the Bible is true" because he accepts a statement in the bible to be true, which is utterly circular; one does not prove the bible to be true by reciting any of its content. Moreover, Cook doesn't offer any objective evidence to accept the statement in question as truth. All that he has is a claim to something internal, a feeling or sensation which he attributes to a "Spirit" which "indwells" within him some place, somehow. He does not even indicate how he could have concluded that the feelings he feels were caused by what he attributes them to, namely his god. It's as baseless as the claim that a stain on a wall or a burn mark on a tortilla that kinda-sorta looks like a human figure, is "the Virgin Mary." How does one prove that it's an image of Mary, and not an image of, say, Socrates' mother or Jack the Ripper's first victim? How did Abraham know that the voice he heard in his head commanding him to sacrifice his son Isaac, was that of a deity? John Frame's only answer to this question is "We know without knowing how we know" ([Presuppositional Apologetics: An Introduction - Part I](#)), which isn't helpful at all.

Cook admits that his position boils down to nothing more than a faith commitment; and he must do this, given the inconvenient preponderance of appeals to faith throughout the bible. But he then rushes to give his religious appeal to faith a glossy coating by saying "Faith is not fideism, it's not a blind leap into a dark chasm. Faith is... based on reasonable... reasons."

Webster's defines 'fideism' as "reliance on faith rather than reason in pursuit of religious truth," thus confirming that there is an antithesis between faith and reason (as I mentioned in [my previous blog](#), Christians tend to view things in terms of pro-Jesus vs. anti-Jesus, while rational individuals view things in terms of reason vs. anti-reason). So Cook needs to make a choice here: does he go with faith (the route endorsed throughout the bible), or with reason (which is incompatible with the religious worldview)? His statements make it sound like he wants to have it both ways, but reason and faith are as incompatible with one another as are oil and water. Why not just go with reason, and cut loose all this unworkable religious mess? Indeed, why not simply be honest and just admit that the universe is not a cartoon?

But notice his statement, that his "faith is... based on reasonable reasons." One would think, with all the talk about "presuppositions"

and "ultimate presuppositions," that Cook would be willing to clearly identify his starting point, his most basic affirmation, what he takes to be irreducible and primary. On the one hand he says that "the fact that the Bible is the Word of God is the presupposition that drives my worldview," thus suggesting that he takes the statement "the Bible is the Word of God" (or "the Bible is true") as his irreducible primary. Notwithstanding the gaping problems I mentioned in [my previous blog](#) with affirming such statements as one's starting point, Cook does not seem to have a problem with Moore's characterization of this position as a *conclusion*. If it's a conclusion to an argument that supports it, then it's *not* his most fundamental premise, simple as that. Something else must come before it. But what? He confirms this suspicion by saying that his "faith is... based on reasonable reasons." But what are those "reasonable reasons"? And on what are those based? Where does he start? Like with virtually all apologists, the answer to such questions remains stubbornly unclear, and presuppositionalists give no indication that clear answers to any such questions will ever be forthcoming.

by Dawson Bethrick

posted by Bahnsen Burner at [10:00 PM](#)

### 3 Comments:

[Francois Tremblay](#) said...

Dawson : did you get my email ? I sent you my section on the Cartoon Universe for my upcoming book, and I'd be interested in knowing what you think about it. Nice to see a new post, by the way, I'll read it in a minute.

[May 22, 2005 11:13 PM](#)

[Zachary Moore](#) said...

Excellent analysis. At the time, I couldn't make out anything more from Gene's argument than that he seemed to be advancing two at the same time.

[May 23, 2005 7:17 PM](#)

[Aaron Kinney](#) said...

Wow Dawson. Excellent critique. I cant believe the wilfull ignorance of some people; how their deep seated need to believe in something causes them to deny such things.

I met Gene Cook briefly during the Sansone v. Manata debate, and said something funny. He was talking about his faith and he mentioned how he "realized that humans arent animals..." and I didnt get a chance to talk to him about his statement, but I wanted to bring it up so badly!

How the hell does Cook define "animal"?? Because the way I define it (and the eeeevil secular dictionary defines it) certainly includes homo sapiens in that definition.

Ugh. These people just fall for these stupid superstitions in such an embarrassing-for-humanity way.

[May 24, 2005 4:02 PM](#)