

God the Father: A God of Love?

The following description of the Christian god was sent to me by a faithful believer, but what is stated here is by no means unique to this individual believer. It tells us all we need to know about the Christian worldview in a nutshell:

He allowed His own Son to be tortured, mocked, spit upon and beaten beyond recognition, then crucified on the cross to die for your sin, my sin and the sins of all mankind.

What father allows "his own son to be tortured, mocked, spit upon and beaten beyond recognition, then crucified on the cross to die" for someone else's misdeeds? Answer: the first member of the Christian trinity allows this. And it is apparently proud of doing so.

Christians refer to the god described above as a "Father," and rejoice in counting themselves among its "children." They claim that their god is a "God of love," and its greatest act of love is said to be the sacrifice of its own son. Its son was the ideal man, they say, flawless in every possible way, morally, spiritually, intellectually, etc. And this innocent son's father deliberately sacrificed it for the sake of totally depraved beneficiaries. This god's greatest act of love, then, was the sacrifice of the ideal for the sake of the non-ideal.

Christian witnesses clearly take delight in telling non-believers about how their god sacrificed its own son, as if we would find this attractive in some way. Believers find it attractive because ultimately they seek the unearned and do not understand the relationship between love and values, and between values and human life. They think love finds its greatest expression not only in sacrifice, but also in death. For in Christianity, the two are wedded in a marriage arranged in heaven. "Greater love hath no man than this," it is written in John 15:13, "that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Who desires that his friend lay down his life for him? Who would want to gain from the sacrifice of someone he calls "friend"? Who in good conscience could live with the knowledge that his friend gave up his life so that he could... do what? And who would want to be the friend of someone who expects such sacrifice as a term of friendship?

As a parent myself, I would never allow what the Christian describes above to happen to my child. In fact, on my understanding of love, it would be an utter contradiction to say that a parent who did allow this to happen to his child, *loves* his child. To call the destruction of something you value "love" is to destroy the concept of love by obliterating its genetic roots. For values are the genetic root of the concept of love. But clearly Christianity divorces the concept of love from one's values, for the sacrifice of values - i.e., their surrender to something beneath them - is the ideal according to the Christian scheme of things.

Even more, it would be anathema to good parenting to look to someone who willingly allows such things to happen to his own child as a model of good parenting. Good parenting requires one's *devotion* to values, not the willingness (or, as we find in the Christian gospel formula, the *eagerness*) to sacrifice values. Indeed, love is devotion to one's values, not indifference, not animosity, not what the Christian gospel formula models.

So the question now comes to, who would want to become a child of a father whose love is expressed by sacrificing his own son? Who would want a "father" who allows such carnage to happen to his own child to become his adopted parent? A Christian would. So who would want to become a Christian? Someone who sees the sacrifice of one's only son as an act of love.

Carnage is obviously very important to this god, in spite of the religion's emphasis on "the spirit." For without carnage, its "plan" could never be fulfilled. Carnage is integral to the plan. Without carnage, there is no salvation. Believers typically try to justify this by saying that carnage is what gave rise to the need for salvation in the first place. But this only shows how hard they've fallen for the scam. For if you posit a perfect creator, how can you have any imperfection in its creation? If there is any imperfection in the creation, its creator could not, by definition, be perfect. With an omnipotent creator, any flaw is traceable back to the creator. The Christian notion of "perfect" is just another stolen concept.

And notice the implications this has for the Christian view of justice. Justice in Christianity involves sacrificing

the ideal for the sake of the non-ideal; and its model of justice enshrines the punishment of the just for the crimes of the unjust. Meanwhile, opportunity (i.e., "grace") is extended to the unjust to escape their rightful penalty, which means those perpetrators of crime who sanction this twisted view of justice, need not pay for their crimes. On the Christian model of justice, the good must be sacrifice for the sake of the evil.

How is any of this just? What father would consider it "just" to turn his own child over to a squad of vicious thugs for the express purpose of being "tortured, mocked, spit upon and beaten beyond recognition, then crucified on the cross to die"? Christianity calls such a father "a God of Love." It calls its god "merciful,"

Now someone who admits to choosing to believe that such a being exists, to choosing to worship a father whose greatest act of love is the sacrifice of his innocent son for the sake of guilty criminals, acknowledges in his admission that it is simply a matter of choice, that his belief is ultimately arbitrary. This "love" that the Christian has for his god who sends its own son to die a convict's excruciating death, is the ultimate presupposition, the "heart commitment," of the Christian worldview.

And people wonder why we're concerned about the state of the world...

by Dawson Bethrick

Labels: [Christian Psychopathy](#)

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

13 Comments:

[Robert_B](#) said...

Many Thanks for your excellent insights and cogent writing. Please keep up the good work.

The issue I discern with your most recent essay is that the religious primitive "feels" that the "Love" of their fantasy God is a Platonic Universal. This constitutes a problem because objectivism rejects nominalism as seen in the following quote from Ayn Rand's ITOE.

"The nominalist of modern philosophy, particularly the logical positivists and linguistic analysts, claim that the alternative of true or false is not applicable to definitions, only to factual propositions. Since words, they claim, represent arbitrary human (social) conventions, and concepts have not objective referents in reality, a definition can be neither true nor false." p.47 ITOE

Nominalism is defined at Answers.com as "The view that things denominated by the same term share nothing except that fact: what all chairs have in common is that they are called 'chairs'. The doctrine is usually associated with the thought that everything that exists is a particular individual, and therefore there are no such things as universals. Our common classifications are merely the flatus vocis or breath of the voice. Nominalism was suggested by Boethius, and is one of the most important elements in the philosophy of Ockham. It is not, however, easy to state the doctrine in a stable way, since if chairs can share the feature of being called 'chairs', then they ought to be able to share other features as well; the issue ought to be not how many cases of shared features there are, but what it is to share a feature, and whether language plays some fundamental role in creating the phenomenon. Nominalism is an extreme version of the permanently attractive idea that the common features of things are some kind of creation of human responses and ideas."

My question then is how does objectivism, especially objectivist atheology, account for the commonality of traits in similar objects, such as chairs, when it rejects the idea that each individual object exemplifies its own particulars?

If objectivism accepts universals as asserted by the Platonists and Realists, then isn't objectivism vulnerable to a religionist argument that objectivism is stealing the concept of God while denying the genetic roots of God? This question bears on your essay in that the religious primitive asserts their fantasy God's love is the ultimate Universal.

Dawson, I love your writings and have great respect for you, so I offer the foregoing in the sense of playing the

Angel's advocate.

[May 24, 2008 5:49 AM](#)

[Vytautas](#) said...

Bahnsen Burner: Its son was the ideal man, they say, flawless in every possible way, morally, spiritually, intellectually, etc.

Vytautas: We say rather that the Son is sinless, and not that he is flawless in every possible way.

[May 28, 2008 6:31 PM](#)

[Bahnsen Burner](#) said...

Hi Robert,

Thanks for your thoughts. I'm not sure if my response will answer your questions.

Robert: "The issue I discern with your most recent essay is that the religious primitive "feels" that the "Love" of their fantasy God is a Platonic Universal."

That's not quite what I had in mind when I wrote my blog. The issue as I see it is that Christianity demands that the believer adopt an Orwellian (for lack of better term) view of love. It's such a distortion of what love really is (namely devotion to one's own values) that it effectively severs love from values as such. I doubt most believers think that the love they have for their god is specifically a Platonic Universal. Rather, I think they just haven't given it very much thought to begin with, and are caught up on the emotionalism that feeds their desire for the unearned. How could one call a father who allows his own child to be maimed and tortured "loving," especially if that father has the ability to stop it? The absurdity of doing so is in the same camp as calling the creator of an imperfect being a "perfect creator." A perfect creator would not create imperfection, nor would a loving father willingly stand by while torturers mutilate his only child.

Robert: "This constitutes a problem because objectivism rejects nominalism as seen in the following quote from Ayn Rand's ITOE."

Objectivism does reject nominalism. It also rejects realism, which is the camp where we find Platonic view of universals. Objectivism recognizes that both realism and nominalism are wrong precisely where they agree: that the activity of the mind in the pursuit of knowledge invalidates knowledge. This results in a false dichotomy, and realism and nominalism represent the opposing horns in that dichotomy in answer to the question of the nature of knowledge. Porter puts it rather concisely:

"Realists think concepts *are* in accordance with the facts of reality, because they're *not* produced by man's consciousness. Nominalists think they're *not* in accordance because they *are* produced. Realists think conceptual consciousness is passive, because it obviously has knowledge; nominalists think it doesn't really have knowledge, because it's obviously active... Both sides agree: active production disqualifies. To each, 'objective' looks like having your cake and eating it too." (*Ayn Rand's Theory of Knowledge*, p. 201)

"Realists and nominalists agree: consciousness couldn't *produce* concepts in accordance with reality. Because it doesn't know enough: the denotation of the simplest concept goes beyond known concretes. Both sides agree first on a false alternative: accordance with all the facts or none. An Objectivist concept is produced in accordance with known facts, as needed, and updated as knowledge grows." (p. 202)

Robert: "My question then is how does objectivism, especially objectivist atheology, account for the commonality of traits in similar objects, such as chairs, when it rejects the idea that each individual object exemplifies its own particulars?"

I'm not sure what exactly is being asked in this question when it asks how Objectivism "accounts for the commonality of traits in similar objects." Just by classing these objects as "similar," it seems the question has answered itself, but this depends on what is meant by 'account for'. This has often been a puzzling term for me. Awareness of similarities begins at the perceptual level; it is not incumbent upon a perceiver to explain why the things he perceives are similar in some way, rather he simply recognizes that they are similar in some way, i.e.,

they possess characteristics which are commensurable and contextually selected. This is sufficient for his cognitive purposes, for that is what his cognitive purposes require: commensurable characteristics which can be contextually selected. Consciousness, it should be noted, is essentially a difference detector. And by virtue of consciousness' ability to detect differences, it can isolate some units as possessing commensurable characteristics (different in measurement) against the backdrop of objects which are dissimilar.

What's curious about your statement is the part where you say that Objectivism "rejects the idea that each individual object exemplifies its own particulars." Objectivism does not use this kind of language, but Objectivism does affirm that individual objects are concrete and particular. Universality is a property of concepts.

Robert: "If objectivism accepts universals as asserted by the Platonists and Realists, then isn't objectivism vulnerable to a religionist argument that objectivism is stealing the concept of God while denying the genetic roots of God?"

This question is puzzling for several reasons. For one, Objectivism does not accept the Platonic or Realist view of universals. Also, it does not affirm the existence of "God," so it could not be accused of concept-stealing here. Besides, "God" is supposed to be sui generis - which means 'God' could only be a proper name, not a concept. Lastly, what could possibly be "the genetic roots of God"?

Robert: "This question bears on your essay in that the religious primitive asserts their fantasy God's love is the ultimate Universal."

Perhaps, but I wouldn't draw that conclusion unhesitantly. Most religious believers are not so sophisticated as to frame their theistic fantasies in such terms. And it would be unclear exactly what that's supposed to mean anyway.

If I've missed something that you were trying to ask, try asking again. Maybe two times will be a charm. ;)

Regards,
Dawson

[May 28, 2008 7:25 PM](#)

[Bahnsen Burner](#) said...

Hi Vytautas,

It is good that come back to me.

You wrote: "We say rather that the Son is sinless, and not that he is flawless in every possible way."

Are you suggesting that there is some way in which Christianity considers Jesus flawed? I'd be curious to know your answer and any reasons you have for it.

Regards,
Dawson

[May 28, 2008 8:05 PM](#)

[Vytautas](#) said...

Bahnsen Burner: Are you suggesting that there is some way in which Christianity considers Jesus flawed? I'd be curious to know your answer and any reasons you have for it.

Vytautas: If you mean that Jesus is flawed such that he has sinned, then I deny that. If you say Jesus is flawed such that in his human nature he is not as smart as Solomon or as strong as Samson, then I would concede.

[May 29, 2008 4:32 PM](#)

[Bahnsen Burner](#) said...

Hi again Vytautas,

This is quite a trivial matter, and it's telling that this is the only thing you thought to seize on in my blog. The very fact that you have to qualify your reference to Jesus "in his human nature" is noteworthy.

Can one speak of Jesus in his entirety, or can we only speak of Jesus "in his divine nature" or of Jesus "in his human nature"? Is Jesus a whole person, two persons, or two half-persons? If Jesus is a whole person, does Christianity consider him (as a whole person) to be flawed in any way? Yes or no? If not, then what's the fuss?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Regards,
Dawson

[May 29, 2008 6:08 PM](#)

[Vytautas](#) said...

Bahnsen Burner: Can one speak of Jesus in his entirety, or can we only speak of Jesus "in his divine nature" or of Jesus "in his human nature"? Is Jesus a whole person, two persons, or two half-persons? If Jesus is a whole person, does Christianity consider him (as a whole person) to be flawed in any way? Yes or no? If not, then what's the fuss?

Vytautas: We can can speak of the person of Jesus, his human nature, and his divine nature. Jesus is one person with two natures: a human nature and a divine nature. If by flawed you mean sinful, then Christianity does not consider Jesus to be flawed. What do you mean by flawed?

[May 29, 2008 6:31 PM](#)

[Bahnsen Burner](#) said...

Vytautas: "What do you mean by flawed?"

I think I was pretty clear in my article: "flawless in every possible way, morally, spiritually, intellectually, etc."

So do you think there is some way that Jesus was flawed? Yes or no. If not, then what's the fuss?

Regards,
Dawson

[May 29, 2008 6:51 PM](#)

[Vytautas](#) said...

Bahnsen Burner:I think I was pretty clear in my article: "flawless in every possible way, morally, spiritually, intellectually, etc."

So do you think there is some way that Jesus was flawed? Yes or no. If not, then what's the fuss?

Vytautas: You are saying that Jesus is flawless in every possible way, but what does it mean to be flawless? It is not clear to me what flawless means.

[May 29, 2008 7:10 PM](#)

[Bahnsen Burner](#) said...

Vytautas: "You are saying that Jesus is flawless in every possible way,"

It's not my position actually; it's what Christians have told me. If you disagree with them, it wouldn't be the first time Christians disagreed amongst themselves.

Vytautas: "but what does it mean to be flawless?"

Flawless: *adj.* - without flaw

Vytautas: "It is not clear to me what flawless means."

It should be clear now.

Regards,
Dawson

[May 29, 2008 7:17 PM](#)

[Vytautas](#) said...

Bahnsen Burner: Flawless: adj. - without flaw

Vytautas: What is a flaw?

[May 30, 2008 2:05 PM](#)

[david](#) said...

I posted a comment here:

<http://debunkingchristianity.blogspot.com/2008/07/dawson-betrhick-of-incinerating.html>

I have not read Geisler's book which was cited, but I would like to quickly outline what Habermas commonly presents in his debates and also address some of Dawson's comments.

Habermas is interested in trends underlying the various branches of NT scholarship. He prefers to use source material which conservatives and liberals agree on. His approach has been termed the minimal facts apologetic.

www.garyhabermas.com/audio/habermas_minimal_facts_approach.mp3 for his short description of what this is.

The majority of his resurrection apologetic uses criteria and argumentation developed by skeptics.

This is Habermas' timeline for the events leading up to the Gospels:

Jesus crucified: 30 AD

Paul's conversion +2 (years after 30 AD)

Early creedal statement +3

Paul's visit to the apostles +5

1 Corinthians +25

Mark +40

Matthew +50

Luke +55

John +65

Let's consider some of the statements made here in regard to this highly contested passage.

Right off the bat he's out of sync with scholarship. With regards to authorship, 1 Corinthians is almost universally acknowledged to be authentic Pauline material. Even Bart Ehrman affirms it as one of the "undisputed Pauline epistles" (in addition to Romans, Galatians, Philemon, 2 Corinthians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philippians).

Michael Martin in his Case Against Christianity concludes that Paul is the only eyewitness testimony we have to Christ's post-resurrection appearances. Of course he doesn't believe it but he and a majority of historians/philosophers can agree that Paul was sincere in his belief about the Damascus experience. Doesn't make it true just because Paul believed he saw Jesus.

The authors tell us that the First Epistle to the Corinthian church "contains the earliest and most authenticated testimony of the Resurrection itself...I can only ask at this point, "authenticated" by what? And what specifically do the authors think is "authenticated" in this passage?

Likely if Habermas is the one who said "authenticated" then he's implying that this material is written by Paul, can be dated pretty accurately and a vast majority of NT scholars agree on the data.

. In fact, if the gist of 1 Cor. 15:3-8 is a creedal formula passed down to him from other believers, it is at best hearsay that he inserts into his letter.

The deal with these early creeds is pretty interesting. There are certain places where Paul's syntax and word choice go completely out of character (scribe wrote his dictations down in some letters) and become pithy, rhythmic cadences. Scholars claim these to be echoes of what the earliest Christian preaching sounded like. The gospels weren't written down right away. There was a period of oral proclamation during which these creedal statements developed to proclaim Jesus' resurrection. (Philippians 2 contains another one of these pertaining to the early belief in Christ's deity by the way).

So what we have in 1 Cor 15:

3For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received :

After the colon we get the creedal statement.... , 4that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures...

The language here is the exact same as the Pharisees used when passing on their traditions to one another...so we have even more reason to think Paul's about to tell us something from oral tradition. So when did Paul hear this material?

The consensus among critics is that Paul received this material around 35 AD. His conversion is dated at roughly 32 AD, with 3 years passing before he visits the apostles (Galatians 1:18), from Peter and James. Scholars on both sides have no quarrels with that. Before giving it to Paul, where did Peter and James get it from?

Gerd Ludeman, atheist NT scholar from Germany says the latest this material became a creed is 33 AD. The Jesus Seminar also dates this creed to be at latest +2 years after Jesus' death. Some more conservative scholars like James Dunn argue for earlier dates back even to the fall of 30 AD. There was never a time when Jesus was preached as anything less than raised from the dead. All arguments that a resurrection legend popped up later are squashed if scholarship is correct here. What this argument doesn't do (when presented in isolation) is show the resurrection to be historically true.

There is an important difference between making these two arguments:

1. Jesus was resurrected from the dead
2. The early Christians believed Jesus rose from the dead

Since Habermas' argument concludes #2, the next step is to ask what theory best explains (explanatory power and scope, I think Craig pushes this side more) the early belief in resurrection....so anyways just wanted to make it clear that this isn't some slam dunk apologetic (there is no such thing).

Normally I chide my non-Christian friends for not reading Christian scholarship and vice versa, but in Dawson's case I wish he would check out ANY scholars on the matter. He apparently thinks he is capable of overturning the work of men who have been developing their approaches for decades...and how many sources did he cite? I counted 1 but maybe I missed a few.

I would listen to a few of his debates (particularly Antony Flew and Kenneth Humphreys) for a real depiction of his arguments. Sounds like Geisler and Turek have made use of this in their book which is nice but the primary source is always better.

A great collection of materials on the resurrection is the Greer-Heard Forum from a few years ago. NT Wright and Dom Crossan go at it a bit and there are several papers presented (Craig is there in full force of course). As much as I disagree with Crossan on some issues, the man is so polite and well-mannered you can't help but respect him.

[July 29, 2008 11:37 AM](#)

[david](#) said...

(there are some links that didn't post with this because I copied text only sorry)

[July 29, 2008 11:39 AM](#)

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