

Friday, April 01, 2005

Thus Saith the Lord and His Spokesmen: "Shut Down Thy Mind!"

I have a co-worker who is Christian. Although she's not stated this to me, I have the impression that she's been a Christian virtually all of her life. Generally she is sweet and kind, and for the most part she sticks to herself. She certainly doesn't try to proselytize at the workplace, but on occasion her god talk comes out in casual conversation. Those few instances have confirmed to me that she's deep into the Christian scene, that her Christian worship is an integral part of her life.

Not long ago there was an incident involving this woman which served to illustrate a striking contrast with the Christian apologists I tend to encounter on the internet. A day or two after the earthquake and tsunami in the Andaman Sea back in December 2004, she and I had somehow gotten into a conversation about earthquake prediction. I mentioned to her that seismologists were making great strides in understanding and even predicting seismic activity through their study of plate tectonics and geologic stresses. It was clear that she had never studied geology nor heard about plate tectonics before. Educationally, she seems not to have progressed beyond the high school level, even though she now has three teenage children to take care of. But she does seem up on her gospel music.

What was striking about our conversation was how her attitude sharply changed when I mentioned the work of scientists. She seemed almost offended when I mentioned that people actually study these natural phenomena in the effort to understand them better.

"Oh no! You can't know the mind of God!" she emphasized repeatedly.

I gently tried to clarify to her that these scientists were not trying to discover anything about her god. Rather, they were trying to understand how the earth's plates work.

"No!" she protested. " We can't do that! No one can figure out God! He's got a plan, and that's all there is to it. We can't figure it out!"

She was adamant about this. It seemed that the very fact that some men strive to come to a scientific understanding of plate tectonics and the tensions which lead to the kind of calamities that the world witnessed on Dec. 26, 2004, offended her in some way. And the things she said could only be taken to mean that she thought those scientists were engaged in a futile pursuit, that no natural cause could be found for the movement of the earth's tectonic plates, that no understanding of the nature of earthquakes could come as a result of such investigations.

This woman, kindly and amicable as she generally is, is clearly operating on the level of a primitive brute. She is of the same mentality that believes lightning from sky indicates angry and mischievous deities, throwing thunderbolts down from their perches high atop big black clouds that hover above the earth.

And though it must be a miserable experience for her, the point is that this person gets it: She's the real thing when it comes to the ideal Christian believer. With her, the indoctrination is complete: she draws a sharp line of no return when it comes to matters of knowledge and science. In other words, she senses quite precisely just where Christianity takes over and stops all knowledge in its tracks. She dutifully shuts down her mind when it comes to areas of study which inspire normal persons to wonder.

This is not to say that this kind of mental self-immolation does not express itself in more tutored Christians. On the contrary, it's evident in them as well. Take for instance the attitude expressed by Jay Adams in his reaction to John Frame's comments on Adams' book *The Grand Demonstration* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: EastGate Publishers, 1991), which is Adams' response to [the problem of evil](#). On page 152 of his own book *Apologetics to the Glory of God*, John Frame expresses dissatisfaction with Adams' proposed solution, which basically consists of pointing to Romans 9:17 ("For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: 'I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might

display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth"), complaining that Adams comes across as too "cocksure" of his proposed solution. Frame was generous enough to include Adams' brief reaction to Frame's criticism in the appendix to *Apologetics to the Glory of God*, and in that reaction Adams makes the following statement (pp. 246-247):

Of course, Frame can play the child's game of asking why, if he wishes. You know how that goes, don't you? The child asks his mommy why in response to every answer she gives. If Frame does not think that the answer revealed in Romans 9 is sufficient, he can go on asking why. "Why did God want to demonstrate his nature?" is the next in line, I suppose. But God has not revealed that to us... Yet, God has told us why evil men exist. And that should be enough.

Adams' position couldn't be more clear: Accept what you read in the bible as God's final say so, don't question beyond this point, for here you must shut your mind down. Thus saith the Lord and His spokesmen.

Also, it seems that Adams' belittlement of the manner of inquiry he cites (referring to asking a thinker to go down the chain of causality to get at some root assumption as a "child's game"), is inappropriate, coming from a Christian apologist. For one, apologists routinely use this as a debating tactic in their skirmishes with non-believers. Presuppositionalists, for instance, heavily favor the tactic of demanding their non-believing interlocutors to "account for" virtually everything under the sun, if not the sun itself, as if non-believers styled themselves as the omniscient know-it-alls, a position already occupied by the apologists themselves. Once a non-believer provides the explanation that the apologist has requested, the apologist then demands that he "accounts for" some element in that explanation, and so on. This of course keeps the attention focused away from the nonsense that the apologist says he's defending.

But another point, internal to Christianity, is missed by Adams' ridicule for incessant inquiry. Aren't Christians supposed to condescend themselves to the level of children? Matthew 18:3 clearly stipulates such self-lowering as part and parcel of the salvation experience: "And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." So given the bible's own recommendation, it seems Frame would be wrong to cease his childish antics, even if it annoys fellow believers like Jay Adams. But then again understanding this would require one to know why putting two and two together makes four, and that's not possible for someone who has shut down his mind.

by Dawson Bethrick

posted by Bahnsen Burner at [7:30 AM](#)

2 Comments:

[The Vulgar Mediocre Guy](#) said...

It's a sick, sad thing, when someone can write off horrible things as "GAWD'S PLAN" because they don't want to think of their magical slavemaster in the sky as being a despicable blight.

[April 01, 2005 8:39 AM](#)

[Francois Tremblay](#) said...

This is pretty much what presuppositionalism is all about... although they do their best to rationalize their belief, Christianity logically leads to a completely subjective, cartoon universe as you put it, where God's mind decides when to draw an earthquake and where God's mind draws where the tectonic plates go.

[April 01, 2005 8:53 AM](#)