

Wednesday, July 12, 2006

Slam Dunk!

[John Loftus](#) wrote:

According to Calvinists I don't believe because God has determined from the beginning of time that I should not believe.

In response to this, [Paul Manata](#) stated:

John, you confuse causes and reasons for unbelief. At least get our position correct. The cause of your unbelief is God's determining that you'd be blinded. The \*reasons\* for your unbelief are, well, nill.

To which [John then replied](#):

Paul, according to you then, the cause of your belief is God's determining that you'd believe. And according to me, the \*reasons\* for your belief are, well, nill.

Touché, John!

If "God controls whatsoever comes to pass," as Calvinists maintain, then even the believer's own "beliefs" are out of his own control. On the basis of their "worldview presuppositions," there would be no "reasons" underlying their own beliefs, because their beliefs were determined by an invisible magic being, not by logic and reason. They are not held on the basis of a supporting, rational context, for there is no autonomy in the cartoon universe of theism. Their own teaching denies them the rational basis of their beliefs that they so often claim to have. So they may "believe," but they do not *know*.

Let the theists talk, for therein is the entertainment.

by Dawson Bethrick

posted by Bahnsen Burner at [5:45 PM](#)

9 Comments:

[John W. Loftus](#) said...

This post has been removed by the author.

[July 12, 2006 6:14 PM](#)

[John W. Loftus](#) said...

I used Paul's words against him but failed to change his word "unbelief" to "belief."

Here's how it should read:

*Paul, according to you then, the cause of your belief is God's determining that you'd believe. And according to me, the \*reasons\* for your **belief** are, well, nill.*

If you'd like to just change this in your original post and delete this comment.

Thanks!

[July 12, 2006 6:16 PM](#)

[Bahnsen Burner](#) said...

Hi John,

Thanks for the correction! I updated my blog accordingly.

Regards,  
Dawson

[July 12, 2006 6:16 PM](#)

[Jim](#) said...

*... believer's own "beliefs" are out of his own control... [therefore there are] no "reasons" underlying their own beliefs, because their beliefs were determined by an invisible magic being, not by logic and reason*

Yow! Didn't Paul JUST SAY that "you confuse causes and reasons" to John? You did it this time.

In any case, please bridge the following propositions with a cogent argument (rather than equivocation):

- 1) P's beliefs are out of his control
- 2) There are no "reasons" for P's beliefs

[July 12, 2006 7:35 PM](#)

[Bahnsen Burner](#) said...

Jim, you apparently stopped reading where you stopped quoting me. On the Calvinist view, the believer's belief is inserted into the believer's mind by another agent. This is fundamentally different from a set of beliefs derived volitionally from a supporting context of premises by an autonomous agent. When a cartoon character is made to affirm a specific view, is it because the character reached this view as a result of rational processes? Or, is this something determined by the all-controlling cartoonist?

In any case, are you affirming the view that the believer's beliefs are in his control? Or, do you think they are determined by your god?

Regards,  
Dawson

[July 12, 2006 8:17 PM](#)

[Jim](#) said...

Thanks for the response. I thought Paul's original point was that John was confusing "reason" and "cause" (though the quotes in your post were all that I had to go on). I am under the impression you have done the same thing (and I did read the end of your post). Let me grant you for the sake of argument:

- 1) My beliefs are predetermined by some external entity

(like, say, God - or maybe brain chemistry). In any case you seem to move from this to that there are no "reasons" (in the sense that there is no 'cause?') on to a conclusion that these beliefs would not be reasonable/rational/logical. I didn't see the argument that joins (1) to this conclusion.

Now it's somewhat more clear. It seems that a 'belief,' (and correct me if I'm mistaken) according to your thinking, is 'rational' or 'logical' or, shall we say in more epistemic terms 'justified' or 'warranted' only if it is the 'result of a rational process?' Meaning the end point of a long chain of reasoning?

Is that it?

To answer your question put to me, 'no,' I do not think anyone controls their own beliefs.

Jim

[July 12, 2006 8:39 PM J](#)

[ohn W. Loftus](#) said...

Jim, if what a Calvinist considers reasonable is put into his head by the Calvinistic God, then there is no way for such a person to know whether or not his beliefs are in fact reasonable, because there is no way for him to get outside his head to judge his beliefs.

[July 13, 2006 5:07 AM](#)

[Jim](#) said...

John,

Thanks for the response.

- > if what a Calvinist considers reasonable is put into his
- > head by the Calvinistic God, then there is no way for such
- > a person to know whether or not his beliefs are in fact
- > reasonable,

I believe (perhaps it was pre-determined :- ) that this confuses 'cause' and 'reason.' Just because the instrumental 'cause' of my belief may be (a) God, or (b) deterministic brain chemistry exposed to some environmental stimuli, it does not mean that there can be no rational basis or rational defense ALSO for those beliefs.

I'm still curious; Is it true that beliefs are only justified if they are the end point of a long chain of reasoning (or as Dawson said the 'result of a rational process?') This would seem to be indicated by the requirement to 'get outside of [your] head to judge [your] beliefs.'

One additional quick note. You and Dawson seem to hold the rather cartoonish ( ;-) ) perspective of Calvinism that paints God as a puppetmaster and humanity as automata. While I have no intention of correcting this strawman in this forum, I will refer to you the vast literature on the subject from Augustine to Luther to the more recent arguments on Compatibalist vs Libertarian models of free will.

Jim

[July 13, 2006 5:49 AM](#)

[Aaron Kinney](#) said...

Sweetness. Loftus did well I think.

[July 21, 2006 4:31 PM](#)