JUNE 16, 2012 THESKEPTICARENA.COM

FIRST EMAIL FROM PASTOR EUGENE CURRY

*Okay, I listened to the podcast and now I remember; I never received the earlier email you mentioned in the podcast. Thanks for catching the typo in the article; I’ve since corrected it.*

*In any event, I suppose that I should clarify something: Vox Day did not select me to respond to you, rather his blog post directed readers (of which I am one) to your site. That’s all I meant.*

*As for your claim that I’ve resorted to a No True Scotsman fallacy, you’re simply mistaken.*

Eugene, that's called denial. There is no point in going back and forth with "yes, it is" and "no, it isn't." You have no choice but to deny it because basing an argument on a logical fallacy invalidates your argument. So denial is pretty much what Christian apologists always resort to when they are proven wrong - it's their position of last resort.

Besides, I think it would be more appropriate to call it what it really is ... The No True Christian logical fallacy.

*I recognize that genuine Christians have and sometimes still do commit horrible crimes.*

Eugene, had you simply admitted that fact in the beginning you wouldn't have ended up embarrassing yourself as badly as you did.

*My point was that Brevik specifically isn’t among their number since, by virtue of identifying himself as a “Cultural Christian” as opposed to a “religious Christian” (as he defines those words),*

Eugene, you ignored everything in my podcast - which you must do; otherwise you admit defeat and that is something no Christian apologist has ever done. Like every Christian apologist before you, you don't address a single point I made - and that is because you can't. You simply repeat your original position and dig in your heels.

As long as you are being threatened with eternal torture by an evil, invisible ghost, and believe those threats are true, there is nothing anyone can do for you. You will spend the rest of your life, talking to yourself and pretending that your invisible ghost is listening. That is why all Christian apologists will never admit when their arguments have been defeated: they cannot - to do so would be to risk eternal punishment.

Eugene, a worm has a better life.

*he’s not any more a Christian than Richard Dawkins is.*

Eugene, you do know that Dawkins is an Atheist ... right?

*Thanks for the interaction though.*

Eugene, for me the satisfaction I receive from shredding the lies of Christian apologists is almost ... sexual.

*And it’s nice to see that my predictions of the skeptical response were largely accurate.*

Glad to hear that Eugene, because if the Christians have finally found someone like you who can predict the future, then that might make up for the fact that their prophet's predictions have all failed.

Examples: Jesus shall return.

The Earth will be destroyed by fire.

The lion will lie with the lamb.

etc.

I know Eugene, you just have to give it time. 1,000 years. 2,000 years. 10,000 years.

Eugene, in a million years - you people will still be waiting.

Hey, I may have prophetic abilities myself.

*Sincerely, Eugene*

Likewise, neo

*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\**

SECOND EMAIL FROM PASTOR EUGENE CURRY

*Hi Neo, It seems that you don’t understand what the No True Scotsman Fallacy actually is.*

Eugene, we don't need to argue over that because the answer is readily available:

http://www.theskepticsguide.org/

click on resources; then logical fallacies: it's in there.

*Back in the 70s, when Antony Flew loosely defined the fallacy in the book Thinking about Thinking, he did so using the following story...*

Eugene, you're wasting your time. It doesn't matter how Antony Flew defined it. The definition can be found in numerous reference sources.

*(Given your familiarity with Vox Day, you may have read his book The Irrational Atheist.*

Eugene, I resent that I had to waste as much of my life as I did, reading that collection of gruesome, bloody stories called the Bible. But I am certainly not going to torture myself further by reading the rantings of an egomaniacal, pseudointellectual Ghost Worshipper (I think I could have saved myself a lot of time if I had just referred to him as that commenter at Pharyngula did: "A toxic wart").

*Anyway, as this is the classic “No True Scotsman Fallacy” (NTSF), clearly my article did not commit it.*

Eugene, tell yourself whatever you need to. You are only deluding yourself. However, as a pastor, that pretty much describes your entire existence, doesn't it?

*To make things more obvious lets simplify the form of the NTSF into a set of numerated steps:*

Eugene, watching you mentally masturbate yourself makes me feel strangely ... aroused.

*1. The assertion that “No Xs are Ys”*

*2. The discovery that some X is, in fact, a Y*

*3. The reformulated assertion that “No true Xs are Ys”—likely with the desire to avoid facing up to the fact that the assertion in step #1 was wrong.*

Eugene, don't stop now - I'm almost there.

*So, if I were to have committed the NTSF in connection with Breivik, I would have had to reason along these lines...*

*1. I would first have asserted (or at least believed) that “No Christians are mass murderers.”*

Eugene, to catch a Christian apologist, the trick is to look at their opening premise - it's almost guaranteed to be where the deceit lies.

In this case, you started right off with a false premise. The issue isn't about your belief as to whether or not Christians can be mass murderers - history has already answered that question ... many times.

The fallacy was committed when you tried to claim that Breivik wasn't a true Christian by cherry picking certain statements and then interpreting them in such a way that you could state that he wasn't a true Christian.

In my podcast I pointed out all the statements made by Breivik, that proved he was a Christian. Statements which you completely ignored because they prove you wrong. You have no answer for them except to ignore them and pretend they don't exist. Which, once again, is pretty much a description of your entire life.

*As I’ve already pointed out to you, though, I’ve never affirmed the statement “No Christians are mass murderers” (Step 1)*

Eugene, that's why you made that step 1. Unfortunately for you, your red herring has failed to distract.

*I readily grant that many Christians (or “true Christians” if you prefer) have committed mass murder: conquistadors, inquisitors, crusaders—each of these groups doubtlessly contained mass murders and Christians, and the Venn diagrams very likely overlapped in a number of instances. The killers in question were perhaps bad Christians (in that they were bad at living a consistently Christian life) but they were still Christians.*

Nice try Eugene, but they were following the Bible. They justified burning poor innocent women at the stake based on the word of your God; they justified slavery based on your scripture; and today they justify eternal torture based on the words of Jesus Christ.

*But things get even worse for you, Neo,*

Eugene, please don't tell me you're coming over to my house.

Well okay, as long as you leave Vox under his rock.

*because, as I’ve said, even step 2 is pretty sketchy.*

Eugene, your argument died at step 1. That makes the rest ... irrelevant.

*As you yourself pointed out, “Dawkins is an Atheist.” Yes! That’s precisely my point.*

Well congratulations Eugene, pretty much everyone in America already had that one figured out.

*Dawkins is an atheist—despite the fact that he has called himself a “Christian”, specifically a “cultural Christian.”*

Eugene, for the thousandth time, get out the dictionary. There is where you'll find the definition of Atheist - and Dawkins picture is right next to it.

Mine is next to "Rationalist."

*Now you seem willing to grant, regardless of Dawkins’s willingness to call himself a Christian, that his lack of belief in certain fundamental tenets of Christianity renders that self-identification little more than posturing. In other words, while Dawkins may call himself a “Christian”, his actual beliefs reveal that that simply isn’t accurate.*

Eugene, remember that time Dawkins was asked about his belief in God and he answered that on a scale of 1 to 7 he was a 6.9?

How you get any kind of Christian out of that shows how desperate you are to try to salvage a losing argument. You are latching on to the phrase "Cultural Christian" in an attempt to redefine people to make them come out the way you need them to, rather than as they really are. What a dishonest little clam you are.

*Now, in the same way, yes, Breivik calls himself a “Christian”—but he calls himself the very same thing that Dawkins calls his respective self: a cultural Christian—explicitly distinguishing his identity from “religious Christians” in his manifesto.*

Yeah Eugene, it's real easy to get those two confused.

I brought up several things in his manifesto that you refuse to address because they prove you are wrong. I notice you are still tip-toeing around those issues as you do your best to distract everyone with your "Cultural Christian" defense.

*Further Breivik is quite comfortable using the phrases “Christian atheist” and “Christian agnostic” in his writing. And he flatly states “I’m not going to pretend I’m a very religious person as that would be a lie. I’ve always been very pragmatic and influenced by my secular surroundings and environment.” Finally, when discussing his possible death, he opines that “If there is a God I will be allowed to enter heaven.”*

Eugene, you are rehashing all your old arguments because you cannot confront the facts I presented in my podcast.

*So, with all this before us, it seems doubtful that Breivik is any more intellectually committed to the metaphysical belief system we call Christianity than is Dawkins.*

Eugene, it's not the Christian belief system that is metaphysical - on the contrary, that is quite real. For example, Bibles, burning people at the stake, and stoning people to death. It's the beliefs themselves that are metaphysical: the existence of God, unicorns, and talking donkeys.

*That’s the point of my article: I suppose one could still call Breivik a “Christian”, but then one should be consistent and call Dawkins a Christian too—they both claim the title in the same highly dubious sense.*

Eugene, you are one very desperate Ghost Worshipper to try to link Dawkins to Christianity. Do you even realize that 99% of the Christian world is laughing its ass off, at even the suggestion that the world's most famous Atheist is, according to Eugene, a Christian?

No you don't realize it. But try this. Stand in front of any congregation in America or Britain and tell them that, and see how long it takes before your spandex hiphuggers catch fire in the parking lot where they've tied you to a stake.

I don't have to call you crazy - any Christian in America would gladly do that for me.

*Or, one could say that Dawkins really isn’t a Christian, but then one should be consistent and say Breivik isn’t really a Christian either*

Eugene, that's pretty much what you're really after, isn't it?

*again, they both claim the title in the same highly dubious sense. Their claims to the Christian label stand or fall together. I’m inclined not to call Dawkins a Christian, and I’m therefore inclined not to call Breivik a Christian either.*

Gee Eugene, what a surprise. How did I know you were going to reach that conclusion?

*Perhaps you feel differently though, Neo. If you do, I look forward to seeing you refer to Dawkins as a Christian on your site.*

Actually Eugene, just go to any Christian site and see how they refer to Dawkins. That's why you are so desperate to tie Breivik to Dawkins - so he can ride the coattails of Atheism. Unfortunately, all those parts of Breivik's manifesto that you refuse to acknowledge ... prove you wrong.

*p.s.- You said, “the satisfaction I receive from shredding the lies of Christian apologists is almost ... sexual.”*

Eugene, I'll admit that sometimes I get a little carried away with my metaphors.

*Well, whatever does it for you, I suppose. But you should probably keep that information to yourself; it makes you seem like some weird incel creep.*

Eugene, I'm not sure what an "incel" is. Perhaps it is in that dictionary that defines "Christian" the way you need it to. But I do understand the words "weird" and "creep." It's interesting that the words you chose for me, more accurately describe that irritating, little toxic wart you follow ... to a tea.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

THE SCIENCE SEGMENT

Expanding the Genetic Alphabet May Be Easier Than Previously Thought

A new study suggests that the replication process for DNA -- the genetic instructions for living organisms that is composed of four bases (C, G, A and T) -- is more open to unnatural letters than had previously been thought. An expanded "DNA alphabet" could carry more information than natural DNA, potentially coding for a much wider range of molecules and enabling a variety of powerful applications, from precise molecular probes and nanomachines to useful new life forms.

The new study solves the mystery of how a previously identified pair of artificial DNA bases can go through the DNA replication process almost as efficiently as the four natural bases.

In 2008, researchers developed the efficiently replicating bases NaM and 5SICS, which come together as a complementary base pair within the DNA helix, much as, in normal DNA, in which the base adenine (A) pairs with thymine (T), and cytosine (C) pairs with guanine (G).

The following year, researchers showed that NaM and 5SICS could be efficiently transcribed into RNA in the lab dish. But these bases' success in mimicking the functionality of natural bases was a bit mysterious. They had been found simply by screening thousands of synthetic nucleotide-like molecules for the ones that were replicated most efficiently. And it had been clear immediately that their chemical structures lack the ability to form the hydrogen bonds that join natural base pairs in DNA. Such bonds had been thought to be an absolute requirement for successful DNA replication‑ a process in which a large enzyme, DNA polymerase, moves along a single, unwrapped DNA strand and stitches together the opposing strand, one complementary base at a time.

The data strongly suggested that NaM and 5SICS do not even approximate the edge-to-edge geometry of natural base pairs -- termed the Watson-Crick geometry, after the co-discoverers of the DNA double-helix. Instead, they join in a looser, overlapping, "intercalated" fashion. "Their pairing resembles a 'mispair,' such as two identical bases together, which normally wouldn't be recognized as a valid base pair by the DNA polymerase. Yet in test after test, the NaM-5SICS pair was efficiently replicable.

Researchers' structural data showed plainly that the NaM-5SICS pair maintain an abnormal, intercalated structure within double-helix DNA, but remarkably adopt the normal, edge-to-edge, "Watson-Crick" positioning when gripped by the polymerase during the crucial moments of DNA replication.

The DNA polymerase apparently induces this unnatural base pair to form a structure that's virtually indistinguishable from that of a natural base pair.

NaM and 5SICS, lacking hydrogen bonds, are held together in the DNA double-helix by "hydrophobic" forces, which cause certain molecular structures (like those found in oil) to be repelled by water molecules, and thus to cling together in a watery medium. It's very possible that these hydrophobic forces have characteristics that enable the flexibility and thus the replicability of the NaM-5SICS base pair. Certainly if their aberrant structure in the double helix were held together by more rigid covalent bonds, they wouldn't have been able to pop into the correct structure during DNA replication.

The finding suggests that NaM-5SICS and potentially other, hydrophobically bound base pairs could some day be used to extend the DNA alphabet. It also hints that Evolution's choice of the existing four-letter DNA alphabet may have been somewhat arbitrary. In other words, it seems that life could have been based on many other genetic systems.

Researchers are now trying to optimize the basic functionality of NaM and 5SICS, and to show that these new bases can work alongside natural bases in the DNA of a living cell.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

FAMOUS QUOTES

Ferdinand August Bebel (1840 – 1913) 73 years.

He was a German Marxist politician, writer, and orator. He is best remembered as one of the founders of the Social Democratic Party of Germany.

"Christianity is the enemy of liberty and civilization.

It has kept mankind in slavery and oppression.

The Church and the State have always fraternally united

to exploit the people."