



“Did Christianity cause the Holocaust?”

Marshall vs. Avalos, with John Loftus, Ed Babinski, Richard Weikart, and Fritz Ward

In the spring of 2010, Prometheus Press published a book called *The Christian Delusion*, an anthology of attacks by mostly radical scholars on many aspects of Christian belief. In one chapter, Hector Avalos, professor of Religious Studies at Iowa State University, argued that Christianity caused the Holocaust. I posted a review of the book on Amazon.com, sharply criticizing Avalos’ argument (among other things). Dr. Avalos responded. Before the debate was over (17 rounds in all), among others, five other scholars had chimed in, John Loftus (the editor of the book) and Ed Babinski, a contributor, on the skeptics’ side, and historians Richard Weikart (by e-mail) and Fritz Ward, agreeing with me. (Atheist philosopher Greg Janzen, of the University of Calgary, also posted comments at the end, but admitted later to evaluating the discussion before reading it; see the original for his comments.)

I found the debate interesting not only for what it says about the evil that Christianity is supposed to have done, or the Holocaust in particular, but also for the light it sheds on what it means for one thing to cause another, historically. It is also interesting to see how the different debaters, some of whom are fairly influential, comport themselves. (Sometimes I even catch myself by surprise, here!)

I have tried to include all the debate related to Avalos’ chapter by the main disputants, though have excluded some other interesting posts. I begin with part

of my review, including the criticism of Avalos, and also on a chapter by the historian Richard Carrier who argues that Christianity did NOT cause modern science. (This is interesting because their arguments are in a sense opposite – Avalos says Christianity did cause one thing, and Carrier says it did not cause another. I am writing on what can be learned about historical reasoning from the conflict between their arguments in a separate article.)

Arguments by the main participants appear unedited (aside from my initial review) and in chronological order.

Round 1 (part of my review of *The Christian Delusion*)

David Marshall: “Nice try, half a cigar”

John Loftus kindly sent me an early draft of this book. I bought a copy from Amazon so I could feel freer in reviewing it frankly – also because I plan to respond to some of Carrier's arguments in a forthcoming book, and wanted to get citations right . . . (edit, partially positive reviews of chapters by Loftus and Carrier on the Resurrection)

Chapter 13, Hector Avalos, "Why Atheism was not the cause of the Holocaust" *

Avalos' goal in this chapter is broader than the title implies: it is to minimize evil creditable to atheism, and maximize that creditable to Christianity. He therefore begins by seeking the Holy Grail of the New Atheism - a way to deflect the attention of young and historically ignorant readers from the undeniable fact that radical atheists killed millions of innocent people in the lifetimes of slightly older readers (like myself), often out of anti-religious bigotry. He suggests therefore

that unless one can read Stalin and Mao in their original languages, one lacks the "competence" to verify the claim that atheism was culpable in communist persecution. I can and have done both, as a matter of fact, but the mind boggles at this principle. Can only those who read Latin claim Medieval Catholic theology had anything to do with the Inquisition? Does one need to learn Aztec before linking human sacrifice and the Aztec worldview?

Avalos then attempts to conflate early Christianity with "communism." Avalos spends some 140 words describing the "killing of a married couple" in the early Christian community, described by Luke in Acts. Someone who didn't know the Bible would never recognize, from what Avalos says, that no one laid a hand on them! It would be as if a televangelist who defrauds his listener were struck by lightning, and Avalos were to compare Christianity to mass-murder because some Christian commentator saw the hand of God in their fate!

Avalos' understanding of the Crusades and pogroms is superficial and tendentious; I recommend Stark on this subject, or Rene Girard. His discussion of witch-hunting is also silly and illogical. Neo-pagan historian Jenny Gibbons offers a far more reasonable discussion. (Or for a realistic "case study" feel of how it worked, see the excellent *Kepler's Witch*.) And by the way, let me add that I have personally stumbled across modern Christian missions that protect people accused of witchcraft on three continents. Would it be too much to ask for a balanced discussion, some time?

The title of the chapter is curious. Who said atheism was responsible for the

Holocaust? Avalos accuses two writers of making this claim: Dinesh D'Souza, and historian Richard Weikart. D'Souza did indeed overreach on this point, as I said in my Amazon review of his book in 2007. Weikart, it seems, did not. At least, Avalos provides no quotes to back up his assertion. I didn't notice him saying that, nor could I find any such quotes.

Avalos does not deal with the evidence for atheist influence on the Nazi movement, or with Weikart's detailed account of the influence Social Darwinism had on Nazism. Instead he spends most the chapter citing Christian racists, and arguing that Martin Luther's program for the Jews was pretty much the same as Hitler's. (In their debate a couple years ago, Weikart rebuts these claims, but Avalos recycles a lot of his earlier argument, rather than respond to rebuttals.)

"Nazism is part of a long history of Christian anti-Judaism. Nazism does not represent a radical departure from traditional Christian attitudes towards Jews."

This, frankly, is nonsense. The "facts" he offers to prove his point are cherry-picked, card-stacked, and often just wrong. And if it were true, there would not have been 12 million Jews in Europe by the time Hitler came along.

Chapter 15, Christianity and Science, Richard Carrier ****

Disclaimer: I posted a largely critical review of Carrier's *Sense and Goodness Without God* -- the first negative review of that book -- and he reacted with vigor. I enjoyed the ensuing exchange, part of which can be found on the Amazon site,

the rest on my web page (search our names), but he seemed to find it painful. :-)

Carrier's chapter on science is mostly pretty solid, though. He makes his essential point effectively: that ancient science was a more impressive thing than Rodney Stark and some Christians represent it as. This is the topic of Carrier's own doctoral studies, and I found his illustrations fascinating.

On own point, I'll suspend judgment. Carrier claims that, pace Stark, ancient science was essential empirical, that early scientists were willing to get their hands dirty. But last week I happened to be reading classical scholar Benjamin Farrington, who cited Xenophon: "What are called the mechanical arts carry a social stigma and are rightly dishonored in our cities." Farrington added, "This contempt for the mechanical arts came in the end to be a serious obstacle to the development of the physical, clerical and mechanical sciences in Greece."

Carrier's juvenile jabs at Stark also become wearying:

"Stark's incompetence (as a historian) is decisively exposed in a single sentence: 'Greek learning stagnated of its own inner logic. After Plato and Aristotle, very little happened beyond some extensions of geometry.' That Princeton University would publish a book with that sentence in it is one of the most appalling things I've ever encountered in my career . . . "

A single sentence? Actually that's two.

Carrier refutes the second. Much more did happen than "extensions of geometry," I admit.

But if Stark is an "incompetent" historian for this error, how about Carrier? He made a far more sweeping historical blunder in *Sense and Goodness without God*, claiming that "on a global scale," Christianity "spread by the sword." As someone keenly aware of the history of Christian missions, I refuted that claim on the Amazon site for his book, in detail (*note: see debate with Carrier on this site*). Does this egregious blunder make Carrier an "incompetent" historian, too? People who live in glass houses should be careful what missiles they toss, especially at scholars who have contributed as much to human understanding as Stark.

Carrier overreaches more deeply at the end of the chapter. He suggests that Christianity "put an end" to scientific progress, even though he had just admitted that it had effectively ended a century before the Christians came to power. His jabs here are ineffective and evidently outside the range of his expertise. (Listen to my interview of the eminent historian of science Alan Chapman for a more balanced and mature view.)

Hector Avalos (professor of Religious Studies, Iowa State University)

I was hoping Mr. David Marshall, who deems himself educated in biblical studies and history, would have posed more of a challenge than he does. As it is, his review is extremely amateurish for the following reasons:

- A. He provides no specifics to support his allegations;
- B. He violates basic principles of historical research
- C. He seems to believe that clever and cute dicta are a substitute for substance.

Let me give a few examples (with Marshall's statements numbered and in quotes, and my responses immediately afterwards):

1. "He suggests therefore that unless one can read Stalin and Mao in their original languages, one lacks the "competence" to verify the claim that atheism was culpable in communist persecution."

A primary rule of historical research is to support claims by the use of primary sources. I don't see Mr. Marshall quoting Mao to tell us what the Bible says. If he wants to know what the Bible says, I presume he quotes the Bible. Scholars usually make their arguments on the basis of the most authentic state possible for their sources. The same applies to anything Mao supposedly thought or said.

And Marshall apparently does not disclose the specific instances I cited where D'Souza's lack of acquaintance with the German sources led the latter to misrepresent *Hitler's Table Talk*. Furthermore, Marshall does not disclose how D'Souza claims Hitler made a statement in *Table Talk* that actually comes from another discredited work called, *Hitler Speaks*. So, yes, checking the primary sources would have made a difference.

What Marshall definitely does not do, even though he claims to know some Chinese, is to provide us with any documentation for the specific motivations of Mao. So where is he deriving his information?

In my book, *Fighting Words*, I have a whole chapter on Stalin based on recently published records and correspondence that became available during and after the Gorbachev era. Examples include: Lars T. Lih, Oleg Naumov, and Oleg V. Khlevniuk, eds., *Stalin's Letters to Molotov* (New Haven: Yale, 1995); R. W. Davies, Oleg V. Khlevniuk, and E. A. Rees, *The Stalin-Kaganovich Correspondence 1931-36* (New Haven: Yale, 2003). Marshall offers us NOTHING to support his claims about Stalin.

2. "Does one need to learn Aztec before linking human sacrifice and the Aztec worldview?"

Marshall must mean Nahuatl, the usual name for the language of the Aztecs. Yes, you should be able to show us that the Aztecs believed in human sacrifice if they did. This is especially the case because Bartolomé de las Casas, himself a Spanish chronicler, pointed out how often other Spanish chroniclers exaggerated or lied about Aztec atrocities in order to justify their conquest.

For example, Las Casas says, of the Spanish chronicler, Oviedo: "Oviedo nonetheless has his judge. Christ lives and holds a whip. For his most violent slanders, this utterly empty trifler has encouraged very wicked plunderers to destroy a nation totally undeserving of such treatment."

Source: Bartolomé de las Casas, *In Defense of the Indians*, trans. Stafford Poole (De Kalb, IL: Northern Illinois University, 1992), 344.

In short, Marshall knows nothing about the Aztecs or historical research in Mesoamerica.

3. "Can only those who read Latin claim Medieval Catholic theology had anything to do with the Inquisition?"

You can claim whatever you wish, but that does not mean that it is a valid claim. Yes, it would help if you could tell us what sources make you think that Medieval Catholic theology sanctioned or promoted the inquisition. Historians that do make these claims are usually basing themselves on such sources. Otherwise, all Marshall is doing is believing whatever books he reads tell him, but Marshall would not be able to say he knows the primary sources say the same thing (as I show with D'Souza; and Stark further below).

4. "Avalos spends some 140 words describing the "killing of a married couple" in the early Christian community, described by Luke in *Acts*. Someone who didn't know the Bible would never recognize, from what Avalos says, that no one laid a hand on them!"

Here, Marshall deflects attention from my point that a couple was killed in Acts 5 because they lied and reneged on their promise to share their possessions. Stalin would have probably done the same thing to such a couple.

Marshall apparently wants us to ignore the killing because it was not done by a human agent, but rather by God. Yet, the biblical author makes clear that it is not a random event, such as lightning, but rather a direct divine consequence of the actions of the couple.

So, how would the principle of killing those who did not give up their possessions as promised change because God killed them rather than human beings? Marshall does not tell us. Whether it was two or one million deaths, the principle is the same: Kill those who do not cooperate with collectivism. Judging by Acts, God and Stalin seem to agree here.

5. "Avalos' understanding of the Crusades and pogroms is superficial and tendentious; I recommend Stark on this subject, or Rene Girard."

Marshall proves himself to be an ill-read amateur here. I have already covered the Crusades at great length in *Fighting Words* (2005), with detailed attention to the primary sources, including *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades* (Paris: L'Académie impériale des inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 1841-1906). I have critiqued Girard specifically in that book, as well.

I am currently preparing a book that includes a detailed response to R. Stark's treatment of slavery in his book, *For the Glory of God*. I will show how poorly acquainted Stark is with primary sources, and how many blatantly false statements Stark makes because of that lack of acquaintance.

Let me give you one example to illustrate Stark's sloppy scholarship. Stark claims (*For the Glory of God*, 329): "As early as the seventh century St. Bathilde (wife of King Clovis II) became famous for her campaign to stop slave-trading and free all the slaves."

Yet, for his documentation, Stark gives us two secondary sources: *The Penguin Dictionary of Saints* and Hugh Thomas' *On the Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1440-1870*. Stark gives us no page numbers for either of his sources.

However, the Latin source often used to document the life of St. Bathilde actually says that she "prohibited the sale of Christian captives" (Captivos homines christianos prohibuit)-Source: Charles Verlinden, *L'esclavage dans l'europe médiévale* (2 volumes; Brugge: Rijksuniversiteit te Gent, 1955), volume 1, 673, n. 113.

So, Bathilde did not campaign to "free all the slaves," but only Christian slaves, which already had a long tradition. She still allowed Muslims and other non-Christians to be enslaved.

6. "Instead he spends most the chapter citing Christian racists, and arguing that Martin Luther's program for the Jews was pretty much the same as Hitler's. (In their debate a couple years ago, Weikart rebuts these claims, but Avalos recycles a lot of his earlier argument, rather than respond to rebuttals.)"

Mashall is misinformed again. I have rebutted Weikart's so-called rebuttal in a Two-Part series on *Debunking Christianity*, and I have not seen anything yet where Weikart answers my rebuttals.

Maybe Marshall can tell us WHICH SPECIFIC points Weikart is supposed to have rebutted because otherwise he is just spouting say-so again.

Luther's plan had 7 specific points, and I explained how each one of them was paralleled by Nazi Germany. Moreover, Marshall seems not to have paid attention to the fact that a Lutheran Luther scholar, not an atheist, admits the fact that Luther's plan is similar to that of Nazi Germany. I repeat the quote I used to support my claim: "It is impossible to publish Luther's treatise today, however, without noting how similar his proposals were to the actions of the Nationalist Socialist regime in Germany in the 1930s and 1940s."

Source: Martin Luther, "On the Jews and Their Lies," trans. Martin H. Bertram in *Luther's Works: The Christian in Society IV*, ed. Franklin Sherman (55 volumes; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1971), pp. 268-72.

In contrast, NONE of these actions recommended by Luther are found in any of Darwin's works, and the whole point of Weikart's thesis is that Darwinism was a

necessary component of the Holocaust.

That is why giving the long history of anti-Judaism in Christianity is important in showing irrefutably that plans to kill or persecute Jews existed BEFORE Darwin was even born, and so Darwinism was not necessary. The same lesson applies to the self-described Pre-Darwinian Christian racist and Anglo-Saxonist supremacists I cite.

Anti-Judaism came in many forms, including exile, which explains why many Jews did survive. Some Jews migrated back into Germany, and Hitler expanded into areas outside of Germany (e.g. Poland). Hitler championed the "final solution" precisely because he thought earlier Christian anti-Judaists did not go far enough.

SUMMARY

I meet people like Marshall every day. They think they have read a few books, and now deem themselves experts. The truth Marshall is not really qualified to evaluate much of anything I, Stark, or any other real scholar says. His comments prove him to be an amateur, and nothing more.

Round 2 (light interlude): David Marshall

Dr. Avalos: I'll bet you were disappointed! I have to run now. But since you ask for more details, I'll provide them shortly.

BTW, I haven't had the chance to read your post as a whole, yet, but let me note that I meet people quite a bit like yourself quite often, too -- though honestly, I found your piece in *Christian Delusion* rather lighter than the usual fare, and expect to enjoy responding to your rejoinder.

Hector Avalos

As I said, without an intimate knowledge of the primary sources, you are really in no position to evaluate any scholar's work, whether I agree with them or not.

Get yourself a good education, and come back when you can actually read the

primary sources for yourself.

If you write a rejoinder, please refer to primary sources, as I don't have much time to spend on explaining to you why the secondary sources you cite might be right or wrong. If you cite secondary sources, tell me WHY you think those are correct in light of the primary sources. Otherwise, save yourself the time.

Round 3: David Marshall (A)

In response to my criticisms, Dr. Avalos first attempts to discredit me as a scholar (a favorite strategy of his, judging by past behavior). I am an “ill-read amateur” who knows “nothing” about the Aztecs, and “not really qualified to evaluate much of anything.” He then attempts to answer my points in substance, largely by misreading them, however.

First a word about the forum. Avalos seems to expect me to give copious citations in one sixth of an Amazon review; if I fail to do so, I “know nothing” about the subject, and am no scholar besides. This is of course malarkey: Amazon is not a professional journal, and in fact I do cite three scholars in 1/6th of a single informal review.

I will list my criticisms and rebut Avalos’ response to each. Then I’ll respond to a number of odd new claims.

(1) I accuse Avalos of trying to “deflect the attention of young and historically ignorant readers from the undeniable fact that radical atheists killed millions of innocent people in the lifetimes of slightly older readers . . . often out of anti-religious bigotry.”

Avalos responds as follows: “Marshall offers us NOTHING to support his claims about Stalin.”

Of course not; I MADE no claims about Stalin.

One of the more common ways by which New Atheists attempt to misdirect the ignorant young readers I mentioned away from the facts, is to focus unduly on

Stalin, as if he were the sum and total of the problem. See my discussion of this fallacy in *The Truth Behind the New Atheism*.

As for my actual claim, does Dr. Avalos really propose to deny it? Which part does he feel I need to prove? That atheists killed millions of innocent people in the 20th Century? That those atheists were “radical?” Or that their motive was often anti-religious bigotry?

I actually know quite a bit about communism – more, I bet, than Avalos – and cannot for the life of me see which of these claims should be even historically controversial.

(2) I criticize Avalos for suggesting that, as I say, “unless one can read Stalin and Mao in their original languages, one lacks the ‘competence’ to verify the claim that atheism was culpable in communist persecution.”

Avalos’ response on this point is strangely contradictory. On the one hand, he gives us a “Scholarship 101” lecture on how “checking primary sources” is standard operating procedure and can prevent errors – as of course it is, and can, which I never deny. But then he notes that he has “a whole chapter” on Stalin in his book, and cites – what, Russian? – no, ENGLISH sources.

Did Stalin write in English? If not, then how did Avalos reach valid conclusions about Stalin by reading these texts? If he DID reach valid conclusions, why did he suggest D’Souza “does not have the competence to evaluate claims of Maoist violence” simply because he does not read Chinese?

Avalos is offering a silly bit of pedantry and misdirection here, similar to the game (William Lane) Craig alleges he played with Rubel Shelley. It is absurd to demand of a general apologetic that the author know every original language before he attempts an argument about so massive and well-documented a phenomena as communist persecution of religious believers. That principle would preclude any attempt to draw a general sketch of human history, whether by Diamond, Eliade, Huntington, Landes, Marx, Boyer, or Pelikan. Furthermore, the “new atheists” D’Souza (and I) were responding to, ALL make general historical claims about cultures whose languages they do not speak. Does Sam Harris or Richard Dawkins read Latin, that they write so much about the Inquisition?

In short, Avalos is just trying to intimidate gullible readers.

(3) I criticize Avalos' description of the account in Acts of the death of Ananias and Saphira as follows: "Someone who didn't know the Bible would never recognize, from what Avalos says, that no one laid a hand on them!"

The issue here is Avalos' attempt to fool ignorant readers into thinking Christians killed the pair. (See page 369.) Avalos also claims that in Acts, the "Christian communist system also results in the killing of a married couple . . . Thus, the principle of killing those who did not conform to the collectivization of property is already a biblical one."

This is a deeply tendentious and dishonest reading. In fact, Peter tells the pair plainly, "This was your money, and you were free to do anything you wanted with it." That's not communism, in the Marxist-Leninist sense; it's not even Nanny State liberalism. Nor was their sin failing to pony up the funds; it was lying to gain social status.

But what I took issue with was Avalos' implication that the first Christians murdered the couple. He moves the shells by using passive verbs ("they were killed") and abstract nouns ("results in the killing of;" "the deaths of") to avoid using a clear subject to designate who did the killing. This is just sleazy. Arguing about whether God was just in judging people for the sin of lying is an entirely different debate, to which I am not surprised that Avalos wants to shift attention.

(4) I comment: "Avalos' understanding of the Crusades and pogroms is superficial and tendentious."

In response, Avalos calls me an "ill-read amateur." Since that is the only comment I make on the subject, how does he know what I have or have not read? He couldn't know I'm "ill read" because I find Girard enlightening: so do many well-informed scholars, which is why Girard is one of forty members elected to *L'Academie Francaise*. Apparently the limits of my literacy are displayed in the fact that I have not read his responses to Girard; that is the only justification for the comment he gives.

(5) I describe Avalos' discussion of witch-hunting "silly and illogical." Avalos does not respond to this charge, but let me explain it further.

Avalos' target here is D'Souza, who discusses this issue on pages 207-208 of *What's So Great About Christianity*. Here are a few key comments by Avalos:

"Consider that even by D'Souza's admission, Christian witch-hunts killed some 100,000 persons in Europe."

In fact, D'Souza does NOT admit this. He is citing Sam Harris' estimate, and makes no comment about whether it is accurate or not. (Harris, presumably, is a great Latin scholar, and thus allowed to make arguments about Medieval Christianity!) From the no doubt negligible bit I've read on the subject, the actual figure was probably more like half of that.

"But if the principle of killing witches did not change, then we might have had 10 million witches killed if witch-hunters had managed to find and kill that many . . . we must judge genocide's morality not just by the absolute numbers of people killed by also by the proportion of the target group slated to be killed. Since the presumed extermination goal for Hitler or for Christian witch-hunters is both 100 percent, the moral responsibility of Hitler and the witch-hunters are morally equal."

This is what I mean by a "silly and illogical" argument.

First of all, in point of fact, most accused witches were NOT killed, nor did the authorities attempt to kill them. Secondly, the reason they were put on trial to begin with, was not because they belonged to some pre-determined group – such as Jews – but because they were thought to have committed crimes. We may think it impossible to cause storms by witchcraft, or murder or afflict neighbors that way. But punishing even a mistaken accusation of a crime is morally different from killing someone for what they are through no fault of their own.

Consider someone imprisoned or executed for murder, whom DNA tests later prove to be innocent. The conviction was intellectually wrong, and there may also be moral culpability involved, too. But if the jurors voted in good faith, their

guilt is obviously quite different from someone who lynches a neighbor because of his race.

More critically, despite his protestations about quality historical research, his description of “Christian witch-hunters” ignores the actual motives of witch-hunting and its complex, international history, which I refer to above.

(6) Avalos claimed Richard Weikart blames atheism for the Holocaust. I point out that this seems to be false. I couldn’t find any such claim, and, as I said, “Avalos provides no quotes to back up his assertion.”

Avalos still provides no such quote, neither does he admit the (apparent) error. *(Note to readers: Weikart repudiates the claim below. – DM)*

(7) My complaint: “Avalos does not deal with evidence for atheist influence on the Nazi movement, or with Weikart’s detailed account of the influence Social Darwinism had on Nazism . . . Avalos recycles a lot of his earlier argument, rather than respond to rebuttals.”

Avalos says he has done so elsewhere, and then adds, “Maybe Marshall can tell us WHICH SPECIFIC points Weikart is supposed to have rebutted because otherwise he is just spouting say-so again.” (Note again the absurd assumption that a review of a single chapter on Amazon is fallacious somehow because it is necessarily cryptic.)

But sure, I’ll answer that challenge. Weikart admitted, in his debate with you, that Nazis shared a hatred of Jews with many European Christians, including Martin Luther. He argued, though, (I paraphrase from memory, not finding the debate at the moment – no doubt you can provide an exact quote) that the general pattern of Nazi persecutions does NOT resemble Christianity not only because they involved attempted genocide, which Christians did not commit against the Jews, but also because they involved murder of disabled people, hatred of Poles and Slavs, eastern expansion, and other hatreds not typical of Christianity. He noted in his closing remarks that you had not responded to this important point, and indeed, I didn’t hear a response, either.

I suspect you also misrepresent Weikart’s thesis here. You say:

“The whole point of Weikart’s thesis is that Darwinism was a necessary component of the Holocaust.”

But this is how Weikart states his central point:

“No matter how crooked the road was from Darwin to Hitler, clearly Darwinism and eugenics smoothed the path for Nazi ideology, especially for Nazi stress on expansion, war, radical struggle, and racial extermination.” (*From Darwin to Hitler*, 6)

Weikart appears to be making a strictly historical argument about what influence Darwinism in fact had; you are interpreting it in terms of counter-factual history or historical necessity. Clearly “Darwin was a necessary component of the Holocaust” was NOT the “whole point” of Weikart’s thesis, since the narrower point I cite above is distinct from it.

(8) Avalos, in *Christian Delusion*: “Nazism is part of a long history of Christian anti-Judaism. Nazism does not represent a radical departure from traditional Christian attitudes towards Jews.”

I respond: “The ‘facts he offers to prove his point are cherry-picked, card-stacked, and often just wrong. And if it were true, there would not have been 12 million Jews in Europe by the time Hitler came along.”

In response, you cherry-pick and card-stack more facts, but do not effectively answer the objection. The reason there were 12 million Jews in Europe by 1933 was because Nazism WOULD represent a very radical departure.

But there’s a logical problem with your argument here, too. Simply put, you undermine your own argument. You say:

“That is why giving the long history of anti-Judaism in Christianity is important in showing irrefutably that plans to kill or persecute Jews existed BEFORE Darwin was even born, and so Darwinism was not necessary.”

One big problem with these remarks is sociological. You simply ignore the sociological and evolutionary basis for scape-goating, which is not limited to religious people, Europeans, or even to human beings.

But there's an even bigger problem here. Before the rise of Christianity, and outside its influence, people have hated, persecuted, and tried to kill Jews. The Jewish holiday of Purim recalls their delivery from attempted genocide in ancient Babylon. Passover recalls delivery from a similar attempt in Egypt. The Romans often persecuted Jews, and Mohammed committed mass-murder of Jews. Even Aum Shinrikyo in Japan was anti-Semitic.

Therefore, by your own reasoning, "Christianity is not necessary" to explain anti-Semitism.

Round 3: David Marshall (B)

Having answered Avalos' response to my points, let me respond to some additional points of his own:

(a) "Marshall apparently does not disclose the specific instances I cited where D'Souza's lack of acquaintance with the German sources led the latter to misrepresent *Hitler's Table Talk*."

Why should I? You cite Richard Carrier as your source; obviously I'll want to verify your and his claims before accepting them. As I explained, I found D'Souza's discussion of the Nazis unsatisfactory, and said so three years ago.

(b) "Marshall . . . does not . . . provide us with any documentation for the specific motivations of Mao."

Nor did I make any claims about those motives; Avalos seems again to have misread me.

(c) "Yes, you should be able to show us that the Aztecs believed in human sacrifice if they did . . . Bartolome de las Casas . . . pointed out how often other Spanish chroniclers exaggerated or lied about Aztec atrocities in order to justify their

conquest . . . In short, Marshall knows nothing about the Aztecs or historical research in Mesoamerica.”

Las Casas was a great humanitarian. But are you claiming that he spoke Aztec? If not, why are you citing him to prove that one needs to understand Aztec (oh, all right, Nahuatl, if you want to be pedantic) to make claims about Aztec sacrifice? Again you contradict yourself.

And are you seriously suggesting that the Aztecs did NOT believe in human sacrifice? “If they did?”

In *The Prehistory of the Americas*, Stuart Fiedel cites archeological studies to describe human sacrifice as it was carried out not only by the Aztecs, but among Incas, Mayans, other Meso-American civilizations, along the Mississippi, and in the American Southwest. But of course none of this counts because he can’t read the languages! Though of course, in most cases, neither can anyone else!

But Las Casas DOES count, even if he didn’t speak the requisite languages, because he criticizes Europeans! And Avalos knows all this, whether or not he reads Aztec, Inca, Mayan, and other relevant languages . . . how?

Not much attempt to be consistent here.

On the Aztecs, though, Las Casas appears to have been wrong. He suggested the Aztecs “only” sacrificed fifty to a hundred victims a year; the true figure appears to have been far higher.

(d) “Let me give you one example to illustrate Stark’s sloppy scholarship. Stark claims (*For the Glory of God*, 329): ‘As early as the 7th Century St. Bathilde (wife of Clovis II) became famous for her campaign to stop slave-trading and free all the slaves . . .’”

“However, the Latin source often used to document the life of St. Bathilde actually says that she ‘prohibited the sale of Christian captives’ . . . So, Bathilde did not campaign to ‘free all the slaves,’ but only Christian slaves, which already had a long tradition. She still allowed Muslims and other non-Christians to be enslaved.”

One has to wonder how many Muslim slaves there were in Burgundy, some four decades before the Moors crossed into Spain. But your criticism here is quibbling for another reason, too: in the very paragraph you cite, Stark notes that centuries later some kings and bishops forbade enslavement of Christians, adding, “since, except for small settlements of Jews, and the Vikings in the north, everyone was at least nominally a Christian, that effectively abolished slavery in medieval Europe, except at . . . interfaces with Islam.” If that’s how you’re going after Stark, lots of luck.

(e) Finally, Avalos closes with a few more shots at me:

“I meet people like Marshall every day. They think they have read a few books, and now deem themselves experts. The truth is Marshall is not really qualified to evaluate much of anything I, Stark, or any other real scholar says. His comments prove him to be an amateur, and nothing more.”

Yeah. Aside from misreading Acts, misreading Weikart, misquoting me, misinterpreting history, and missing almost every target in sight, what can you say about a religion scholar who says you need to know Russian to say Russian communists hated religion, Chinese to say Chinese communists hated religion, and Aztec language to say Aztecs cut out hearts for religious reasons – then cites las Casas as his source on Aztec sacrifice?

Stark endorsed my last book, BTW; I’ll cheerfully take that, and your dismissal, as a double bargain.

Round 4: (Letting off Steam) David Marshall

Hector: Get an education yourself. You seem to try that line, or variations on it, on every Christian scholar; not that unlike your own witch-hunt against Guillermo Gonzalez; which is what made it so much fun to demolish that flimsy house of cards you called an argument in *The Christian Delusion*.

John Loftus

David, quite frankly you telling Hector to get an education is like a 6th grade school student telling her teacher to get one. I am very curious, having read your simplistic book on the New Atheism, what education do you have? What degrees? I know you seem to be very well-traveled in Europe and the East, or at least you lead me to think that. Is that true? But your book doesn't reflect a high level of education, to say the least. So please tell us of your education and why you think you have it and Hector needs to get it. You should also explain to readers here why we should accept anything you've said when you make such an outlandish claim that you are so educated that you can tell a Harvard PhD who is a tenured professor in religious studies with numerous scholarly accolades and publications to his name to "get an education." Such wildly inflated rhetoric coming from you seems, well, emotionally laden, not reason based. And if that's the case, which I think it is, then tell us why we're supposed to think anything else you've written here isn't emotionally based as well?

Round 5: Hector Avalos

Marshall simply keeps confirming the necessity of checking primary sources with his response. As I indicated to him, he should not waste my time by quoting secondary sources unless he has checked the primary sources.

So, what does he do? He keeps pretending that secondary sources are as good as primary sources after I have shown how reliance on secondary sources led D'Souza astray.

He then refers to my chapter on Stalin, and concludes that I ONLY cited Russian sources translated into English. Not only did I not say that I ONLY cited translated Russian sources, but my chapter in *Fighting Words* clearly shows that I checked as many of the sources as were available to me in the original Russian. For example, for English-speaking readers, I quoted the following translated Russian source, but I also provide for scholars reference to the original Russian source, which I checked myself for the quotes I gave:

Tatiana A. Chumachenko, *Church and State in Soviet Russia: Russian Orthodoxy from World War II to The Krushchev Years*, Translated by Edward E. Roslof

(Armonk: New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2002)... Gosudartsvo, pavoslavnaia tserkov, veruiushchie, 1941-1961 (Moscow, 1999).

My appeal to primary sources in the original is not required of average readers, but of the SCHOLARS who produce the scholarship. Thus, even when the scholar has to translate a primary source for readers, my requirement is that the SCHOLAR be able to check the primary sources, not the average reader. Mr. Marshall presents himself as a scholar, not an average reader.

Nor does Marshall address my complaint that D'Souza presents NO PRIMARY SOURCES for his claims about Mao or Stalin IN THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGES OR IN ENGLISH. Marshall also presents no primary sources, whether translated or not, for his claims about Mao or Stalin.

Marshall speaks about Weikart's supposed rebuttal, and apparently has not checked to see that I have already answered that (with a quote to support Weikart's contention about Darwinism being necessary for the Nazi Holocaust), including a point-by-point refutation of Weikart Seven supposed Darwinian Aspects of Nazism. See also the movie, *Expelled*, and you will see David Berlinski understanding Weikart the same way. Here are some links:

<http://debunkingchristianity.blogspot.com/2008/05/avalos-contra-weikart-part-i-general.html>

<http://debunkingchristianity.blogspot.com/2008/06/avalos-contra-weikart-part-ii-weikarts.html>

Then, Marshall goes further afield and refers to the case of Dr. Guillermo Gonzalez, but provides no primary sources for the supposed "witch hunt" I constructed. He just repeats propaganda found on the internet, and which I have repeatedly refuted here:

http://scienceblogs.com/pharyngula/2007/05/avalos_responds.php

<http://www.talkreason.org/articles/DISmokingGun.cfm>

The fact is Marshall knows nothing about Iowa State policies or internal procedures, and so he is clearly speaking out of his expertise.

So, yes, I would love to see Marshall quote any of my specific statements about Dr. Gonzalez that can be characterized as "a witch-hunt" (provide source and date, if possible).

Marshall, of course, claims that he is writing for Amazon, and so he does not provide the scholarly apparatus that we should expect.

The problem is that Marshall does not even provide the proper scholarly documentation in HIS OWN BOOK, which should be exactly the place where you would expect it. Let me give one example from his book, *The Truth Behind the New Atheism: Responding to the Emerging Challenges to God and Christianity* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2007). On pages 144-148, Marshall provides discussion titled "Jesus Frees Slaves." First, he provides no text where Jesus says slavery must be abolished, and so that in itself is a misleading title.

Second, if one looks at his footnotes, he cites ONLY secondary sources for many of his crucial claims, and these include Rodney Stark's *For the Glory of God*, and Hugh Thomas' *the Slave Trade*. It is clear that Marshall did not check to see if those secondary sources are correct at all, and this leads him to make blatantly false statements, including this one on p. 146: "In 1639, Pope Urban VIII `condemned slavery absolutely.'" His footnote 32 cites the source as Hugh Thomas' *The Slave Trade*, p. 451.

To illustrate how important checking the original source against a secondary source is, let's see if Mr. Marshall can:

- A. Tell us which specific primary document of Pope Urban VIII "condemned slavery absolutely." (This should be the easy one!!).
- B. Provide us the relevant quotation where Pope Urban VIII does so (I will accept English, but I would love to check the Latin as well).
- C. Explain how Urban VIII's supposed "absolute" condemnation of slavery is congruent with his policies about the use of galley slaves in the pontifical squadron.
- D. Tell us what Hugh Thomas cited for his source.

I will review Marshall's section (in *The Truth Behind the New Atheism*) on slavery

point-by-point in the near future, but let's see how well he does with these questions.

Ed Babinski (B)

David, I'd also like to say Hi personally. I don't know if we've ever met before in any online capacity, certainly not in person I don't think. I hope that if you recall such a meeting we were both amicable.

I clicked on your name at amazon.com to read some of your past book reviews, and found that you were pretty generous in giving three and four star ratings to books with which you did not agree, including atheistic books. And I thought you expressed yourself well, and see that you've read some interesting works including some I've read as well. I was a huge C. S. Lewis, Inklings, Chesterton, George MacDonald, fan in college and for a while after college. I also discovered and enjoyed reading some of the modern day heirs of Chesterton like the Anglican theologian and wit Robert Farrar Capon (*Hunting the Divine Fox* & he also gave a great interview in the *Wittenberg Door* magazine in their classic "Liberal Issue," which was republished in the first volume of *The Door Interviews*), and the Hugo-winning storyteller R. A. Lafferty. Don't know if any of those authors ring a bell, but you might enjoy them.

I also read Beversluis' book, *C. S. Lewis and the Search for Rational Religion*, and saw that you had not reviewed it at amazon.com, but you had commented pretty positively concerning John's review of the book. I'd be interested in reading what you had to say about it.

I also see that you enjoyed a book by a universalist Christian and fantasy author, named Jason Pratt, a book titled, *Cry of Justice*. I know Jason from the web, nice guy, and quite the serious exponent of Christian universalism as seen by his contributions over at the Evangelical Universalist Forum and elsewhere on the web: <http://www.evangelicaluniversalist.com/forum/index.php> There's a conservative Calvinist blog called Triablogue that calls Jason Pratt a "snake in the grass," but then they despise the Christian philosopher Vic Reppert too, because he's given them Arminian hell over their Calvinist views at Vic's blog, *Dangerous Idea* . . . (edit, on interesting blogs)

Hope all is well and that you found my chapter on "The Cosmology of the Bible" in *The Christian Delusion* interesting. Also, I recently put together a list of "The Five Books" that they think "Every Christian Should Read," or rather every Christian apologist should read, and would be interested in your reviews of them if you ever get the chance. You've already read one of them, perhaps you've also read some of the others, including two by Evangelical Christian OT scholars. Let me know what you think:

<http://edward-t-babinski.blogspot.com/2010/04/five-books-every-christian-should-read.html>

Cheers,

Ed

P.S. You might also enjoy my blog post C. S. LEWIS: PROVOCATIVE, POIGNANT & PROFOUND WORDS

<http://edward-t-babinski.blogspot.com/2010/03/c-s-lewis-provocative-poignant-profound.html>

Round 5: David Marshall

John: This book is your baby, and I can sympathize with you for wanting to defend it, down even its most defective arguments.

But it was Hector who told me to "get an education." It was an absurd suggestion, and the retort was fair play, given the multiple deep flaws I have exposed in his arguments. If he were to argue better on substance, maybe he wouldn't have to resort to *ad hominem* when he debates Christians so much.

Interesting you say my book "doesn't reflect a high level of education." So far as I know, EVERY reviewer who has a doctorate and has reviewed any of my books, whether Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, or atheist, whether historian, scientist, philosopher, theologian, or sociologist, has given it high marks, in many cases very high marks indeed. So your comment says more about your own self-imposed

visual handicaps than about that which you claim to be evaluating.

Why should readers accept what I say? Because it's true. Which of my points is incorrect? Do you claim, for instance, that Hector accurately cited Weikart in claiming he blamed atheism for Nazism? That he cited D'Souza accurately when he claimed D'Souza admitted witch-hunters killed 100,000? That Christians really did commit murder in the Acts story we've been talking about, or that Avalos doesn't make it sound as if they did? That the problems I've pointed to in Dr. Avalos' main argument are unreal? How, exactly?

I figured it wouldn't be long before someone pulled out Hector's resume. Probably a good idea for you to do that, so Dr. Avalos doesn't need to himself. And maybe on other topics, on the history of medicine, say, his work is really good. On this one, he seems too fanatical to think clearly. A bad argument can't be rescued with a mound of paper.

David Marshall (B)

Ed: Thanks for dropping in. I briefly skimmed your chapter -- seemed reasonable enough in tone, though I'm no judge of the subject. My own view of Scripture leans towards that of C. S. Lewis or Nicholas Wolterstorff's "appropriated discourse," but with a rather huge twist, which is the subject of much of my research.

I never got into the *Wittenburg Door*. I've noticed the Lewis book, and have a feeling I would disagree with it, from what little I know of it.

Jason's been a friend for a long time -- we don't talk much, but have enjoyed one another's writings, and check in every so often.

Thanks for the book suggestions. Ever since we debated -- I had a cold that day, would enjoy another crack at it -- I've thought I should read a bit more of Robert's stuff. Mind you, having written my own book rebutting the Jesus Seminar, I tend to think the Jesus Myth people are, well, a bit delusional, though in a way prophesied by J. Gresham Machen long ago.

Ed Babinski (C)

David, John, Hector,

GOD KILLS MARRIED CHRISTIAN HUSBAND AND WIFE

I think Hector should have indeed mentioned that God struck the couple which would have also given Hector the opportunity to draw a connection between the God in his chapter, "Yahweh is a Moral Monster" with God as portrayed in the NT, striking dead a husband and wife for lying about holding back some money from the communitarian church in Acts. Those two chapters and subjects certainly seem connected.

(edited, long "historical crimes of Christians" digression – see original on Amazon.)

Ed Babinski (D)

Thanks for responding, David,

I admit I don't know what your "rather huge twist" is. Haven't read your work, perhaps it's available somewhere? I haven't looked yet.

Though on C. S. Lewis didn't he hypothesize that there was a singular Adam who was also a sort of psychic Dr. Doolittle when it came to "ruling over the animals?" Sounds more like one of his fantasies rather than an anthropologist's reality. But I do understand the attraction that mythopoetic fantasy held for Chesterton and Lewis, who both also appear to have pined for the Medieval ages. And once you start seeing the world as enchanted, I daresay it's quite a bit of a downer to come down off that kind of high. But I brought out several points in my chapter and in my post here earlier as to why the cosmos does not seem that enchanted.

The book, *C. S. Lewis and the Search for Rational Religion* is praised by Lewis scholar and Christian philosopher Victor Reppert, and its authors tone is pretty mellow as well. He exchanged some interesting letters with Lewis that appear in the book. It is worth a read by anyone who is interested in Lewis.

On your enjoyment of Jason's writings, are you a universalist as he is, or a wide inclusivist or even indeterminist on that subject?

On the Jesus Myth question I prefer simply to compare NT documents and ask questions about the general trajectory of certain legendary embellishments that can be seen quite clearly when you study the NT documents in chronological order. So, just studying the Bible itself raises interesting questions. Years ago I exchanged letters with Habermas on the subject of the resurrection and he sought to have our letters published by an Evangelical publishing house, to no avail. But he tried, and we've remained correspondents and friends. Habermas is a good guy, though not a universalist like Jason. My last summation letter sent to Habermas is located here:

HABERMAS-BABINSKI RESURRECTION

<http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~slocks/asym/babinski-jordan/2.html>

THE WORD ABOUT THE GROWING WORDS OF THE RESURRECTED JESUS

<http://edward-t-babinski.blogspot.com/2010/03/word-about-growing-words-of-resurrected.html>

THE LOWDOWN ON GOD'S SHOWDOWN

<http://secweb.infidels.org/article86.html>

Please send me a link to your own work that's available online.

Round 5: John Loftus:

David, you didn't answer my question. What degrees do you have? Usually people who criticize scholars like Dr. Avalos and respond as you have will present their credentials. No where have I seen your credentials. It's of interest, you see. My guess is that you don't have any--that you are self-taught. Your arguments should be weighed independently, of course, it's just that I had asked you about them. What are they? Where did you study? Who did you study under? What's your specialty?

You refused to recommend this book when I sent you the galleys, but

credentialed Christian scholars like Drs. Dale Allison, James McGrath, Rich Knopp and Matt Flanagan chose to recommend it. Allison did so with some high praise. Could you explain why so many credentialed scholars on both sides recommend this book but you give it three stars, a half a cigar? The scholars who recommend it and write chapters in it could be your professors. Why do you alone stand against them all? Surely you should have some credentials to do so. It's like taking a class with one of them and disagreeing that the textbook chosen is worthy of being required for the class. Who is better able to choose the textbook? You, or them?

Round 6: David Marshall

Dr. Avalos: The quality of sources are important, as I acknowledged earlier. But the issue here is whether, as I put it, "unless one can read Stalin and Mao in their original languages, one lacks the 'competence' to verify the claim that atheism was culpable in communist persecution."

The issue is NOT whether it is possible to make mistakes based on translated or poorly transcribed texts -- of course it is. You've made plenty of them already in this discussion, and we're both writing in English.

Nor is the issue whether D'Souza or Stark made mistakes in their work too – of course they have, some of which I've noted in my own reviews. Odd that you keep on referring to errors by other scholars, not in the review you're objecting to. (I sent Stark some comments from this discussion; he said he'd "never heard" of you and declined to say much more. I'm hoping he'll respond to criticisms, though it's understandable at his age if he chooses to concentrate on his own projects. But that's his business, not mine.)

As to my original assertions, of course D'Souza had every epistemic right, in a general response to Harris, Dawkins, Dennett, and Hitchens, to rebut their claims about communism. Again, aren't you being hypocritical? Dawkins and Harris blame Christianity for the Inquisition, and try to deflect blame from atheism for communist atrocities. Do they speak Latin and Russian?

Or here, from *The Christian Delusion*, David Eller, 49:

"Eastern religions do not share Christianity's concern with belief."

What does that mean, "eastern religions?" Does Eller read and speak all the thousands of languages of Asia, that he can generalize like this? Or even the hundreds of languages of India, which in context might be his original intent?

But if Eller's purpose is to generalize about religion -- a legitimate exercise -- he can't help but rely on secondary sources to some extent. I think he should have been more careful about this statement, but often it is legitimate to cite secondary sources. I'm sure if I look through CD from this perspective, I can find dozens, maybe hundreds, of examples - this one took about 30 seconds. And if the phenomena is well-known enough -- communist ideology, for example -- and you read a variety of sources, you should be able to get the basics right, as D'Souza did on Communism, though less so on Nazism.

D'Souza wrote:

"Dawkins seems to have deluded himself into thinking that these horrors were not produced on atheism's behalf. But can anyone seriously deny that Communism was an atheist ideology? . . . Not only was Marx an atheist, but atheism was also a central part of the Marxist doctrine. Atheism became a central component of the Soviet Union's official ideology, it is still the official doctrine of China, and Stalin and Mao enforced atheist policies by systematically closing churches and murdering priests and religious believers. All Communist regimes have been strongly anti-religious, suggesting that their atheism is intrinsic rather than incidental to their ideology."

You seem to think that D'Souza can't make these points because he doesn't read Russian or Chinese. But I DO read both languages, have lived in both societies, and can tell you he is entirely correct. (One might say some communist regimes have been less overtly anti-religious than others, depending on how you define communist, but that is a quibble.)

If you really need detailed footnoting on the personal lives and atheistic fanaticism of individual communist thinkers, from the original languages, beginning with Marx, Engels, and Lenin, do an inter-library loan for David

Aikman's *Atheism in the Marxist Tradition*. But D'Souza seems to know much more about atheism and communism than Dawkins does, which is the more relevant point here.

I don't know Latin, and have not read much ecclesiastical literature. It may, indeed, be that Hugh Thomas was wrong, and therefore my citation of him was incorrect. If so, thanks for the correction.

Again, it is impossible to respond to so wide-ranging a set of books as those by Dawkins, Harris, Dennett, and Hitchens, without referring to languages no one author can have read. In a long, detailed book, errors on minor points are therefore likely to occur. (I found hundreds in *The God Delusion*.) Avalos makes many such errors, both in his chapter of *The Christian Delusion*, and in our debate here.

What is more egregious is the sort of citation you make of the *Book of Acts*, which looks more like deliberate misrepresentation. But I may add some more examples below, also Weikart's response, if he allows me to give it.

Avalos, Round 6

Actually, Marshall is not representing a single one of my arguments he cites correctly. These are his allegations about my supposed misrepresentations:

1. Do you claim, for instance, that Hector accurately cited Weikart in claiming he blamed atheism for Nazism?
2. That he cited D'Souza accurately when he claimed D'Souza admitted witch-hunters killed 100,000?
3. That Christians really did commit murder in the Acts story we've been talking about, or that Avalos doesn't make it sound as if they did?

I will answer each one, but let me start with #2: "That he cited D'Souza accurately when he claimed D'Souza admitted witch-hunters killed 100,000?"

Marshall is misreading both D'Souza and me. My exact words are: "Consider that even by D'Souza's admission, Christian witch-hunts killed some 100,000 persons in Europe." (TCD, p. 317).

First, I am giving an estimate of what D'Souza himself seems to be accepting from Harris in *What's So Great About Christianity* (= WSGAC). D'Souza says this about Harris' estimates, which are lower than the ones offered by Carl Sagan:

WSGAC, pp. 207-208: "His fellow atheist Sam Harris, who has actually done some reading on the subject, cites contemporary historical sources that put the number of witches burned much lower, at 100,000."

D'Souza DOES NOT dispute this number at all in that passage, but rather says that Harris:

- A. "has actually done some reading on the subject."
- B. "cites contemporary historical sources."

Thus, why am I wrong to say that D'Souza does admit that witch-hunts killed some 100,000 people? If I am wrong, then let Marshall tell me where D'Souza says Harris' numbers are wrong or where he disputes them specifically.

Additional support for my estimate is on p. 215 of WSGAC, where D'Souza says: "Taken together, the Crusades, the Inquisition, and the witch burnings, killed approximately 200,000 people."

D'Souza does not dispute this number in that passage either. D'Souza, for example, does not say "SUPPOSEDLY killed approximately 200,000 people." He uses a straight declaratory sentence, which I reasonably can assume represents his own acceptance. I ALSO said "SOME 100,000 persons" because I was using his own figures for the three events he was aggregating:

- A. The Crusades (?)
- B. The Inquisition (ca. 1,500 to 4,000 per p. 207 of WSGAC).
- C. The Witch Hunts (100,000 per p. 208 of WSGAC)

Concerning, the Inquisition, he seems to accept numbers between 1,500 and

4,000 in the following sentence on p. 207 of WSGAC:

"How many people were executed for heresy by the Inquisition? Kamen estimates that it was around 2,000. Other contemporary historians make estimates between 1,500 and 4,000. These deaths are all tragic but we must remember that they occurred over a period of 350 years."

If some 1,500 to 4,000 people may have been killed in the Inquisition, that leaves, 196,000 to 198,500 that D'Souza must think were killed in the Crusades and Witch-Hunts combined. It's simple mathematics.

D'Souza does not give clear numbers on p. 206 of WSGAC, for the amount of people killed in the Crusades, but the number of people he thinks were killed by the Inquisition IS FULLY consistent with the 100,000 he seems to accept for witch-hunt deaths.

Round 7, David Marshall

Avalos writes, "So an ethical sleight-of-hand is being deployed by D'Souza in his numbers game insofar as he supposes that Christianity is somehow morally superior because it simply had lesser numbers of people available for killing in some target groups. Consider that even by D'Souza's admission, Christian witch-hunts killed some 100,000 persons in Europe."

But D'Souza does NOT make that "admission." He cites Harris' CLAIM, notes that it is lower than some other claims, but NOWHERE endorses its accuracy. "That's a substantial figure, but it's a far cry from Sagan's demon-haunted estimate, and 200 percent lower, Harris notes, than some previous absurd estimates."

To say one figure is more reasonable than others, is not to say the former is accurate. D'Souza nowhere in this passage makes the "admission" Avalos claims he made. Nor does he offer any figures of his own.

I don't know where D'Souza got his 200,000 combined figure – maybe I'll ask – and neither apparently does Avalos. 100,000 would seem like a low estimate for the whole episode (*note: I mean the Crusades here – DM*). But of course D'Souza

may also be, not admitting Harris' figures, but adopting them for the sake of the argument, as the upper range of possibilities. I trust Avalos recognizes the difference.

Round 8: Avalos

RE: Marshall: "To say one figure is more reasonable than others, is not to say the former is accurate. D'Souza nowhere in this passage makes the "admission" Avalos claims he made."

I rested my assumption of acceptance on HOW he described Harris' research:

- A. "has actually done some reading on the subject."
- B. "cites contemporary historical sources."
- C. You yourself now say D'Souza admits Harris' figure is MORE REASONABLE than Sagan's which does not exactly mean D'Souza rejects it, does it?

NOTHING indicates that D'Souza thinks Harris' numbers are unacceptable, and the clauses I am quoting directly indicate that he thinks they are reasonable, not unreasonable. That sounds like an endorsement of its accuracy to me.

So where does D'Souza say that Harris is wrong and why do you think it mutually exclusive to cite a figure given by someone else and to accept that figure as reasonable?

The fact that I do not know where D'Souza got his figure of 200,000 DOES NOT MEAN that he did not give that figure. AND THAT figure is FULLY consistent with D'Souza's acceptance of Harris' number of 100,000 witches killed.

In sum, nothing you have provided indicates that D'Souza is rejecting the figure he cites from Harris, and everything he said is consistent with an acceptance of that figure.

Avalos (B):

RE: "Avalos claimed Richard Weikart blames atheism for the Holocaust. I point out that this seems to be false. I couldn't find any such claim, and, as I said, "Avalos provides no quotes to back up his assertion."

Actually you provided no quotes about Weikart I am supposed to be defending, or I might have missed them in the clutter of the discussion.

If so, please provide the EXACT QUOTATION and source where I am supposed to have said what you said I said about Weikart.

John Loftus:

David, I was baiting you. You didn't take the bait. ;-) Do tell us of your credentials though. I'll assume you are embarrassed to answer this question if you don't respond (what else am I to reasonably think?)

I'll never be famous, but I may be infamous. I don't want the fame. I just want to change the religious landscape as so many of us want to do. But if you want to talk about fame let me tell you who I think will be far more famous than me when he's done doing what he's planning to do in his life (a little awkward, I know). It's that guy you previously told to "get an education."

After seeing the movie "The Stoning of Soraya M" this afternoon, I will argue against faith based reasoning till I die in whatever form it appears, whether or not people ever hear of my name. You can count on it.

David Marshall:

John: I probably would have answered your question finally, if you hadn't added that "I'll assume you are embarrassed to answer . . ." line. Maybe it's the Zen in me; I can't help trying to shock people out of making silly and unwarranted leaps. Maybe I just find manipulative arguments of all kinds irritating.

Most important, though, what's the point? Arguments stand or fall on their own merits. If you think my writing stinks, then what would it matter if I were Regius

Professor of All Human Knowledge at Cambridge? If (as happens) my arguments have merit, what would it matter if I dig ditches for a living?

So long as you seem to be whoring after the genetic fallacy, I think it best for the debate to NOT answer that irrelevant question.

More reasonable would be for me to finally answer your comments on faith in the book, and in your first post here. Maybe rather than chasing that other broad, we could spend our conversation time here dancing with "Faith."

If we ever do a debate, I'll include whatever pathetic credentials I may have in the PR material.

David Marshall (to Avalos)

Hector Avalos focuses in this chapter mainly on the causes of Nazism. His primary thesis is not, as one would expect from the chapter title, that atheism did not cause the Holocaust, but that Christianity did:

* "Hitler's holocaust, rather than the result of some form of Darwinist atheism, is actually the most tragic consequence of a long history of Christian anti-Judaism and racism."

* "Nazism follows principles of killing people for their ethnicity or religion enunciated in the Bible."

In my review, and most of our debate above, I emphasized other claims Avalos makes. I have done this not because I find Avalos' central thesis at all convincing -- in fact I find the attempt to blame Christianity for the Holocaust ludicrous -- but for two reasons. First, Avalos already has a very able opponent in Richard Weikart, who is far more of an expert in the historical causes of the Holocaust than he is. I do not read German, and know a lot more about Communism than Nazism. And second, his comments on other subjects were shaky enough to provide plenty of grist for this mill.

But I did mention three serious problems with Avalos' central thesis. First, if as

Avalos says, "Nazism does not represent a radical departure from traditional Christian attitudes towards Jews," why were there 12 million Jews in Europe by 1933? They should have all been long since dead or departed.

Second, Avalos claims that Darwinism cannot be blamed for Nazi ideology, since various elements of anti-Semitism were present in European religion prior to the writings of Darwinism. But so were they present before Christianity -- anti-Semitism existed in ME cultures long before Jesus was born, and also existed in Muslim, Hindu, Marxist-Leninist, and Buddhist movements later on. By Avalos' own logic, Christianity should therefore not be blamed for Hitler's anti-Semitism.

Third, Avalos neglects the larger phenomena of which racism is a part, and in the context of which it must be understood. In this regard I mentioned Rene Girard, who in his works on "Violence and the Sacred" and "Scapegoating" describes the functional use of blame and victimizing of minorities in all human cultures. It is not as if some one religion had to "invent" racism. (Though Girard argues that Christ and the prophets and apostles came up with a cure for scapegoating that has slowly changed the world.) Furthermore, the logic of evolution -- not just the THEORY of Social Darwinism -- implies that races will in fact compete for existence. Neanderthal was probably killed off by early man. Certainly the Woolly Mammoth was.

Finally, he cited Weikart incorrectly: Weikart did not, it seems, actually blame atheism for the Holocaust. (I'll address this again in a later post.) Nor, I think, does Avalos successfully deal with Weikart's actual arguments, at least not in this book. (Which, of course, is what I was reviewing.)

But those four points, which I don't think Dr. Avalos has much responded to, are not all. I am no expert on Nazism, but see several other serious problems with his main argument.

* I said that argument involves stacking the deck. Avalos has not defined what he means by Christianity. Christianity has a very long history, involving billions of believers and people who define themselves as Christians, whether or not they know anything about the religion. Avalos goes through that long history loopy-goopy, picking an unfortunate remark by a pope here, a mob action by some people who were dubious "Christians" (Prince Emico and his crowd) there. There

is no definition or focus to the argument -- you could do this with any great and complex tradition.

* Avalos focuses though on Martin Luther. He ends his argument by summarizing similarities between what Martin Luther said about the Jews, and what Adolf Hitler did about the Jews, in a chart. He's used this chart before. It offers eight bullet-points of "Hitler's Policies" and those by, respectively, Martin Luther and Darwin: "burning Jewish Synagogues . . . Destroying Jewish Homes . . . Destroying Sacred Jewish Books . . . Forbidding Rabbis to Teach . . . Abolishing Safe Conduct . . . Confiscating Jewish Property . . . Forcing Jews into Labor . . . Citing God as Part of the Reason for Anti-Semitism." After each item, Avalos writes a "yes" for Luther and a "no" for Darwin.

But while many readers probably find this persuasive, such a gimmick is a dubious way of establishing historical influence.

For one thing, it is terribly arbitrary. On the one hand, one could just as easily come up with a list that distinguishes the policies of Luther from that of Hitler:

"Advocated the killing of all Jews." No. Yes.
"Had minions make lampshades of human flesh." No. Yes.
"Set up concentration camps." No. Yes.
"Advocated invading Russia for 'living space.'" No. Yes.
"Killed cripples." No. Yes.
"Tried to exterminate the Gypsies." No. Yes.

Weikart makes a similar point in a fuller historical context.

More importantly, if Avalos were to define Christianity in a serious way, one would expect him to offer a comparison like this, between Jesus and Hitler:

Jesus Hitler

"Told Disciples to Love Enemies." Yes. No.
"Healed cripples." Yes. No.
"Inspired a revolution in healing." Yes. No.
"Saw self as fulfillment of Jewish tradition." Yes. No.

"Refused to be made king." Yes. No.
"Said turn the other cheek." Yes. No.
"Died for sins of the world." Yes. No.

The patent absurdity of the comparison is the elephant in the room in this discussion.

One could also make an interesting chart comparing Mohammed to Hitler: "stole property from Jews;" "Mass-murdered Jews;" "invaded neighbors;" "enslaved enemies;" "tortured critics . . . "

That wouldn't mean Mohammed influenced Hitler, though its possible that he did. It would mean doing nasty things to minorities and using hatred for political gain are endemic in human society, and that from ancient times, the Jews stood out, and have suffered from more than their share of racism and murder.

*Avalos tries to connect Luther and Hitler historically by noting that Hitler praised Luther somewhere. Of course it's possible that Luther DID influence Hitler's racism, though at other times New Atheists are keen to portray Hitler as a Catholic. But Avalos is dreaming if he thinks he has shown this historically. In fact, his citation of Hitler on this point is oddly vague.

* Nor should Luther be identified with Christianity. It is far more plausible to say he was influenced by the common anti-Semitism that preceded Christianity and remains endemic. (For example, in the modern Middle East.) And obviously, he was influenced by the normal social or evolutionary pressures that cause people in times of crisis to look for scapegoats.

* A more immediate, and historically provable relationship can be traced from the communists to Nazism.

I haven't read Hitler's entire book. But as I recall, early in *Mein Kampf*, Hitler traces the influence explicitly. He's laboring at a worksite. During breaks, other workers come up and pester him with Marxist propoganda. He goes home and reads up on communism. He decides he hates it. Communism undermines the nation. Why not channel communist methods of terror on behalf of his own ideology? He thinks. And that's exactly what he does.

Therefore, a chart of Lenin / Stalin and Hitler would be not only closer, but more historically pertinent, than the one Avalos uses:

"Tried to conquer as much land as possible militarily." Yes Yes

"Put people in concentration camps." Yes Yes

"Tortured enemies." Yes Yes

"Used terror." Yes Yes

"Focused on specified groups within society to whip up mass hatred." Yes Yes

"Set up a totalitarian regime." Yes Yes

"Starved whole peoples to death." Yes Yes

"Ran a deadly secret police." Yes Yes

* Nor were Lenin and Stalin the only atheists to influence the Nazis. Among others, one might cite Schopenhauer and Nietzsche.

This is not to blame atheism for the Nazis. As I said, D'Souza was wrong about that. Nazism was a mixture of elements borrowed from pagans, Christians and atheists, along with Social Darwinism (as Weikart well shows) put in the stirring bowl and mixed to taste -- as religious entrepreneurs often do. Nazism in practice cannot be fully defined by its founder's thought, but Weikart defined the metaphysical aspect of that thought to me in a rather different way (in an e-mail):

"In fact, I am hoping to write a book in the future on *Hitler's Religion*, in which I will demonstrate that Hitler was neither Christian nor atheist nor occultist. He was a pantheist and/or deist."

That sounds like a book worth reading.

All in all, Avalos' chapter seems more like an indiscriminate smear campaign against a poorly-defined Christianity, than a serious historical argument.

David Marshall (on witches and witch-hunting)

WITCHCRAFT:

I have made the mistake in this thread of developing one minor aspect of my criticism of how Avalos treats witch-hunting in the Christian tradition -- his mis-citation of D'Souza. I would like to expand my critique here to broader problems.

(a) But first on D'Souza. What Avalos should have said is something like this: "D'Souza seems to accept Sam Harris' claim that 100,000 alleged witches were murdered during the Middle Ages, as least for the sake of the argument."

I may ask D'Souza directly what he intended. But of course what an author means, or thinks, is not always the same as what he says. The distinction between what D'Souza says, and what Avalos reads him as saying, is quite clear. It is enough to read the two passages:

D'Souza:

"It's interesting to see the way in which atheist writers try to magnify the horror of the witch trials. In *The Demon-Haunted World*, Carl Sagan writes of the witch trials in Europe, 'No one knows how many were killed altogether -- perhaps hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions.' That's one big 'perhaps.' Sagan cites no sources, and the most reasonable conclusion is that he has no idea. His fellow atheist Sam Harris, who has actually done some reading on the subject, cites contemporary historical sources that put the number of witches burned much lower, at 100,000. That's still a substantial figure, but it's a far cry from Sagan's demon-haunted estimate, and 200 percent lower, Harris notes, than some previous absurd estimates."

Avalos:

"Consider that even by D'Souza's admission, Christian witch-hunts killed some 100,000 persons in Europe."

But let's move on to other, and in some cases, more important issues.

* First of all, Avalos probably realizes that 100,000 is at the high end of estimates.

* Did Christianity "cause" witch-hunting? Again, by Avalos' own standard (Darwinism cannot have caused the Holocaust, since anti-Semitism existed prior

to Origin of Species), it did not. Fear and punishment of witches existed in Europe long before the rise of Christianity.

* Many of the specific traits predicated to witches have no analogy in the Bible, but in folk beliefs -- changing into animals, flying through the air.

* Jesus and his disciples showed no fear or hatred of sorcerors. Jesus cast out demons, Paul liberated a girl who was possessed. Jesus brought a therapeutic approach to such afflictions.

* The early Christian church also appears to have sometimes outlawed the persecution of witches as based on superstition.

* While I am no expert on the "Burning Times," it seems likely that a broader, sociological explanation would help explain them. As scholars have noted, most witch-hunting occurred in areas where both church and state were weak, along the Rhine Valley, for instance. Probably Girard's thesis would come in handy here, too; or Stark's similar description of tensions between civilizations.

* Oddly, the Inquisition seems to have protected "witches" in Spain.

* It seems other motives than religious were often behind the persecution of witches. Often there seems to have been rivalry between official and folk medicine, or between practitioners of folk medicine. In the case of Johann Kepler's mother, a former prostitute became angry at her for personal or business reasons, and drummed up false accusations.

* Fear of sorcery is common around the world.

* How many witches have Christians SAVED from persecution or death? No one ever seems to ask this question, but it is well worth asking. I have personally run into Christians involved in some way with such ministries on three continents. A mission couple was trying to protect children persecuted as witches in a tribe in Peru. A Nigerian convert from Islam I met in Oxford was trying to help old folks scapegoated as witches. And I often used to visit a whole Dai minority village in southern China, founded by people who had been chased out of their villages as "pipa devils," befriended and helped by missionaries, and converted to

Christianity.

I would bet millions of lives have been saved in that way, over the years.

European witch-hunters were often Christian in some cultural or even theological sense, but witch hysteria was not Christian in any deep sense. It betrayed the teachings and example of Jesus, and exhibited emotions and beliefs that show little deep understanding of the Gospel.

Round 9: Hector Avalos:

RE: But Peter said explicitly, "The money was yours!"

This does not explain why the couple was killed. If the money were the couple's money, then they were killed for what? If it is for lying to God about property they did not turn over, then the value of their life was still put below not telling the truth. Stalin might also have killed you for lying.

Once the couple promised to turn over their property and sold it, then the proceeds were not considered theirs anymore. Note the NIV's rendering of Acts 5:4: "Didn't it belong to you BEFORE it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal?" [my emphasis].

Thus, Peter is not saying that the proceeds were theirs in the sense that they had a right to keep them, but rather that the proceeds were in their possession when they should not have been.

Otherwise, explain to me why you are interpreting the Greek expression (OUCHI MENON SOI EMENEN KAI PRATHEN EN TE SE EXOUSIA UPERCHEN?) the way you seem to be in 5:4?

The fact remains Stalin probably would have killed anyone who was supposed to turn over proceeds or property and did not. So the analogy is apt between the system of Acts 5 and Stalinism:

Stalinism: You might be killed for not turning property over, or for lying about property you should have turned over.

Acts 5: A couple was killed for not turning property over and for lying about property Peter thought they should have turned over.

What's the difference in the principles again?

As for Calvin, he actually believed that Peter was acting through miraculous means. The couple died for real, not metaphorically, for Calvin.

Calvin's interpretation shows that mine is not some atheist innovation. Indeed, the long history of Christianity pretty much agrees with me that this couple was punished with death by God.

You are the one who seems out of step with your own Christian exegetical tradition.

Finally, let me ask you a simpler question: Might Stalin have killed Ananias and Sapphira for not turning over, and then lying about, proceeds they had promised to Stalin? YES or NO?

Avalos Round 9 (B)

RE: Acts: 12:21-23: "The voice of a god, and not of man!" Immediately an angel of the Lord smote him, because he did not give God the glory; and he was eaten by worms and died.

It is disobedience because Herod was supposed to give glory to God, and did not. He disobeyed that precept. I don't see anything complicated there.

Edward Babinski

So, to chuck the word "indeterminist," are you agnostic on whether or not everyone will be punished without end, or are you a universalist, damnationist, or annihilationist? Just curious since you and Jason Pratt get along well.

Anna B

Hector, Stalin was indisputably an atheist.

Do you condemn the actions of the Officially Atheistic Governments of the world to the same degree you condemn, in blanket fashion, all religion.

After all, in your book "Fighting Words" you call for the ELIMINATION OF RELIGION FROM HUMAN LIFE.

ELIMINATION. That was YOUR WORD for it.

How do you plan to do that, PROFESSOR?

Hector Avalos

The word "professor" should explain it: EDUCATION.

Hector Avalos

RE: Marshall: It is obvious you are trying to connect "communism" in the simple sense of "a system of holding goods in common" with communism in the sense of "the Marxist-Leninist system." That's the whole purpose of the passage.

Yes, and there is nothing wrong with that because all communist systems would have that feature in common (i.e., shared property).

My argument is that forced collectivization can result in violence whether the communist system is atheist or Christian.

Note my statement on p. 369:

"Since communism is advocated by some biblical authors, then Maoist and Stalinist deaths cannot simply be attributed to atheism, as enforcing collectivization can be deadly in both atheist or Christian forms."

Thus, this statement correctly distinguishes Maoism/Stalinist from Christianity only insofar as the former are atheist, and the latter is theist. However, collective property is a feature independent of theism or atheism, and a feature common to both theist or atheistic communism.

So, unless you can show me why Christians enforcing communism COULD NOT ever be deadly, then my point remains standing. I do assert that Acts 5 provides an example where a couple who acted against that Christian communist system was punished with death.

Therefore, I am justified to say that enforcing collectivization in both atheist or Christian forms can be deadly.

To say that Christian communism is voluntary in Acts 5 is not quite true because that couple obviously did not have the choice to change their mind once they agreed to be part of the system. They were punished with death. Stalin also might give you a choice between cooperating and death, and so I see nothing different from Acts 5.

Round 11: Avalos on Weikart on Atheism & Nazism:

Hector Avalos

RE: "Avalos claimed Richard Weikart blames atheism for the Holocaust. I point out that this seems to be false. I couldn't find any such claim, and, as I said, "Avalos provides no quotes to back up his assertion."

Actually you provided no quotes about Weikart I am supposed to be defending, or I might have missed them in the clutter of the discussion.

If so, please provide the EXACT QUOTATION and source where I am supposed to have said what you said I said about Weikart.

Round 12: David Marshall

I'll be glad to.

"In any case, this chapter will analyze in greater depth the argument that the deaths caused by Hitler should be attributed to some form of Darwinian **ATHEISM**, something especially **ARGUED BY RICHARD WEIKART** in his book, *From Darwin to Hitler* (2004). Weikart's book is one of the sources for D'Souza's pronouncements. In fact, I shall argue that:

"Hitler's holocaust, rather than the result of some form of Darwinian **ATHEISM**, is actually the most tragic consequence of a long history of Christian anti-Semitism and racism." (Hector Avalos, PhD, "Atheism Was Not the Cause of the Holocaust," in *The Christian Delusion: Why Faith Fails*, Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2010, 369, emphasis added.)

Hector Avalos

RE: "In any case, this chapter will analyze in greater depth the argument that the deaths caused by Hitler should be attributed to some form of Darwinian ATHEISM, something especially ARGUED BY RICHARD WEIKART in his book, *From Darwin to Hitler* (2004)."

Mr. Marshall could save himself a lot of trouble if he read the books he discusses a bit better. He seemed surprised by D'Souza's reference to 200,000 people being killed by the Witch-Hunts, Crusades and Inquisition, something that shows Marshall did not read D'Souza's book carefully.

It seems the same applies to his reading of Weikart's *From Darwin to Hitler* (=

FDTH). Look at p. 114:

"Indeed, Darwinian materialists and monists were the leading apostles of scientific racism in Germany."

Now, does Mr. Marshall know what "materialists" are? In Discovery Institute lingo, this usually refers to those who see the world in purely material terms, without any notion of "spirit" or supernatural causation. This pretty much describes atheism, and it is often used as a synonym for atheists by ID folks.

FDTH, p. 13 : "Almost all thinkers I will discuss in this study embraced this naturalistic Darwinian worldview."

FDTH, p. 13: "German theologians...because of the onslaught of antireligious Darwinists..."

So, yes, there is plenty of evidence, if Mr. Marshall would just bother to read more thoroughly, that Weikart saw Hitler's Nazism as a FORM of Darwinian atheism.

I also point out how inconsistent Weikart is in defining Darwinism, and on p. 114 of FDTH, you will see Weikart try to say certain thinkers were Darwinist but maybe they did not really get their ideas quite from Darwin, etc. I discussed that inconsistency in more detail in my "Avalos contra Weikart: Part I" on Debunking Christianity.

Mr. Marshall, please do try to read the sources you discuss more thoroughly before you waste your time accusing me of misrepresenting Weikart.

Round 13: David Marshall

Your original comment in CD is about "the deaths caused by Hitler," that is the subject of the chapter, and that is what you refer to Weikart about. You cite the second sentence of the second full paragraph on page 114. But the FIRST sentence of that paragraph reads, "BEFORE THE 1890s, almost all the influential Darwinian anthropologists and ethnologists -- along with most Darwinian

biologists and popularizers -- embraced scientific racism."

So we are talking about, on the one hand, the 1880s or earlier, and on the other, the Nazi movement, which took power in 1933. And most of your chapter is about HITLER, not about racist influences on his movement from 50 years earlier - indeed you seem to avoid the latter subject.

The same is also true of page 13. The subject is influences on the Nazis, not Nazi metaphysics per se. It is a *non sequitur* to say, "Darwinian materialists were an influence on the Nazis, therefore the Nazis were materialists." It would be like saying, "Hegel was a theist, Hegel influenced Marx, so Marx must have been a theist, too," or, "Theism caused the Gulag." There is, in fact, no evidence whatsoever in the quotes you give that "Weikart saw Hitler's Nazism as a FORM of Darwinian ATHEISM." (as you put it, my emphasis added to last word)

This is your leap of logic, for which you are apparently unable to find any justification in *From Darwin to Hitler*.

I also asked Weikart. He responded:

"If Avalos is claiming that I am blaming the Holocaust on atheism, he is completely mistaken. In fact, I am hoping to write a book in the future on *Hitler's Religion*, in which I will demonstrate that Hitler was neither Christian nor atheist nor occultist. He was a pantheist and/or deist. In my radio debate Avalos insisted that Hitler was a creationist because of certain passages in *Mein Kampf*. However, even if Hitler did believe in some kind of creation (and I'm not sure he did, but as a deist this is possible), he was certainly not a young-earth creationist and he certainly believed in evolution, including human evolution, as I demonstrate in my new book, *Hitler's Ethic: The Nazi Pursuit of Evolutionary Progress* (2009)."

Are you willing to own up to this clear-cut error?

Nor do I think you can get out of this by saying, "I meant Weikart only meant that atheistic beliefs contributed historically to Nazism, not that Hitler or the Nazis were atheists." If that is what you meant, you should have said it. But I don't think that IS what you meant, rather, "the deaths caused by Hitler should be attributed to some form of Darwinist atheism," which sounds like a lot more than

just one of several contributing influences.

As for wasting time, your error is so clear, the imprecation might well run in the other direction. It's an important point, since the chapter of your title ("Atheism was not the Cause of the Holocaust") responds to this phantasmal claim by Weikart. Did you feel you needed a more hefty opponent than D'Souza? Or were you just being sloppy? In either case, please do be more considerate of impressionable readers who may not take the time to read the original for themselves.

I don't know what you think my error is with D'Souza. You have given no grounds for thinking he agreed with Harris. The 200,000 total in no way implies 100,000 for the witch-hunts, nor do you offer any evidence that it does. If I've read him incorrectly, you have not pointed to anything that I've overlooked, that would undermine my reading.

Avalos Round 13

I've already pointed how Weikart keeps redefining "Darwinism" just as much as he keeps redefining "materialism," "pantheism," "Christianity," "Judeo-Christianity." That was the whole point of my series *Avalos Contra Weikart*. Now he is just doing it again in any communication with you.

After all, do you just take what I say when I tell you "I mean X, and not Y"? You don't seem to do that equally, except for the authors you already favor. If Weikart wants to clarify further now, that is fine, but that does not change what he said in *From Darwin to Hitler* (FDTH). Nor does it prove I was unreasonable to interpret him that way on the basis of *FDTH*.

I can only go by Dr. Weikart's words in *FDTH*, and so maybe he should use a different and more precise wording, and you should be more critical of how he phrases his thoughts (e.g. note my criticisms in DC of how he defines "Darwinism" as what is found in *On The Origin of Species*, and then goes on to include other works or permutations of Darwin, but he does not do the same with permutations of Christianity)

RE: "So we are talking about, on the one hand, the 1880s or earlier, and on the other, the Nazi movement, which took power in 1933."

It is not the case that Weikart distinguishes those time periods as starkly as you say in *FDTH*. On p. 17 of *FDTH*, he says:

"The final chapter will show how these ideas contributed to the development of Hitler's ideology." After all, the book stresses CONTINUITY--FROM DARWIN TO HITLER--not from "Darwin to the 1880s form of Darwinism."

And what were THESE IDEAS? One of them was Darwinian materialism, which is atheism for ID folks. Thus, I am certainly justified to interpret him to say that "deaths caused by Hitler should be attributed to SOME FORM of Darwinian ATHEISM."

Notice also the bottom of p. 16, where he talks about how Darwinism devalued life: "Darwin and most Darwinists denied the existence of an immaterial and immortal soul, a central tenet of Judeo-Christian worldview..." Are you saying that this denial of an immortal soul occurred only before 1880, and was not part of Nazism, for Weikart? Is Weikart not suggesting here that Hitler's Nazism accepted this "Darwinian" atheistic idea (no soul)?

Then, go to page 233, the last page, where he connects it all to Darwinism again: "Darwinism by itself did not produce the Holocaust, but without Darwinism, especially in its social Darwinist and eugenic permutations, neither Hitler nor his followers would have the NECESSARY scientific underpinnings to convince themselves and their collaborators that one of the world's greatest atrocities was morally praiseworthy. Darwinism--or at least some NATURALISTIC interpretations of Darwinism--SUCCEEDED in turning morality on its head."[emphasis mine].

So what does NATURALISTIC INTERPRETATIONS OF DARWINISM mean? To me, it means some form of atheism. How am I unreasonable to see it that way?

To summarize:

A. Weikart IS saying this NATURALISTIC Darwinism was necessary to explain one

of the world's greatest atrocities (= Holocaust).

B. He IS saying that without NATURALISTIC Darwinism, Hitler and his followers would not have found the atrocity (= Holocaust) morally praiseworthy.

C. NATURALISTIC DARWINISM IS synonymous or consistent with atheism.

Thus, it is reasonable of me to interpret Weikart to say that the Holocaust was caused by SOME FORM OF DARWINIAN ATHEISM.

BTW: Is Weikart identifying any "contribution" that Christianity or the Bible made to the Holocaust at all (any influence he admits there--why not)?

RE: D'Souza My observation was that you did NOT SEEM TO KNOW that he had given that figure of 200,000, which does speak to your ability to read thoroughly.

It seems now you simply are desperate to find something that I have misrepresented, when it is clearly you who misrepresented Urban VIII's pronouncements on slavery. So would it make more sense for you to look at your own work first, before criticizing that of others?

Avalos B

I must add that your interpretations are very different in quality and methodology.

I, at least, base my interpretations on readings of the authors I am discussing. Even if you don't agree with my interpretations, I try to base them on the author's words, and I make inferences based on what authors have said in their writings. At best, you may show that my interpretations/inferences may be unreasonable or mistaken (though I don't believe you have yet), but you seem to go beyond and accuse me of willful misrepresentation of what could simply be interpreted differently.

In contrast, for example, your pronouncements ARE NOT based on the actual words of Urban VIII, but rather on what someone else said he said. The same goes

for many of the claims you make in your slavery section of your book. You take as fact something that someone else is saying on authority and not on your own examination of the primary sources. Do you see a difference?

Fritz Ward:

Wow David: I never cease to be impressed with how charitable you are with those who disagree.

Let me briefly respond to John Loftus, who also strikes me as a thoughtful individual. John, I have a PhD in history, specifically church history (though my specialty is early modern, not ancient) and frankly, Avolos's demand that David "get an education" and your insistence that he reveal his degrees are both simply smokescreens. The vast majority of scholars I have met have a very narrow area of expertise and relatively little grasp of formal logic. To the extent that they have a political, social, or religious axe to grind, even that limited expertise is suspect. I have found many self-educated individuals who are far more widely read than established scholars. Among 20th century historians, for example, I would wager that very few are as familiar with the primary sources on American and Japanese relations as the late John Toland, an amateur.

The bottom line is this: scholarship is not a monopolistic enterprise to be pursued by those who hold a tenured university position, despite what some might want to believe. Scholarship is a human enterprise, and David does it very well. Having read every post in the discussion, David's response to Avolos was devastating, though not surprising. Avolos is hardly the only scholar whose work can only survive scrutiny in the relative comfort of academe.

Round 14: David Marshall

Dr. Avalos: The thread started off with a little jockeying for position, some of it perhaps rather silly. There's no doubt you're intelligent, well-read, and have established yourself effectively in the world of scholarship. We're peers in terms of age, and have probably done similar amounts of reading, language study, and research, though your formal credentials are clearly better than mine. We are

both passionate in our opinions. It's certainly true that I can't read your mind, or your motives. Nor do I have any great desire (right now, anyway!) to embarrass you or make you look foolish.

This discussion began with a review of *The Christian Delusion*, including sharp criticism of your chapter in that book. For reasons I have given, I think your argument in that chapter is almost totally bogus. I also think that, for whatever reasons, you baldly misrepresent your opponents and those you criticize in that chapter. I see your appraisal of Christian history as a bad caricature of an argument, and even worse, your general approach as an exercise in massive and systematic stacking of the deck. You completely omit, to add yet another example, such issues as what Christians have done to overcome racism, scape-goating, genocide, and in dozens of ways, change the world very much for the better. But I have explained my main criticisms already in some detail; there is no need for me to repeat them here.

I can only believe that you are a better scholar than you show in this chapter. This is what drives me to consider motives -- as we all probably recognize, strong feelings about an issue may encourage us to see all the grays as pitch black, and to overlook the whites entirely. This is a human characteristic, which certainly does not automatically dissolve in academia.

But perhaps our discussion here has come to an end. Apparently you'll be posting a critique of my last book some time, no doubt detailing some of the errors you believe I have made. I welcome that critique, and welcome whatever specific corrections you suggest: I can only learn from it.

Again, I make no apology for writing a general response to such wide-ranging books as *The God Delusion*, *The End of Faith*, and *Breaking the Spell*, nor do I see you criticizing Dawkins, Harris, and Dennett. I think if you examine Dawkins' citations, and mine, you'll find that I give about four times as many per page, and of exponentially better quality: you may find an error in Hugh Thomas, but he's a serious scholar, which cannot be said for most of Dawkins' sources. I also know the topics covered far better than any of these gentlemen, and have read much more of the primary documents in the original languages. But that's what critics are for: blast away.

Avalos, Round 14

"Dr." Ward,

For a man who claims to have a Ph.D. in history you already prove yourself to be a very poor reader. First, you repeatedly misspell my name as "Avolos." Yes, everyone makes spelling mistakes, but it is when you keep repeating the mistake that it becomes noteworthy. Second, you provide no specific evidence of any "devastating critique" on the part of Marshall.

Third, your claim about scholarship not being a monopolistic enterprise is a good reason to praise Loftus' book even more. Loftus acknowledges that he is not an expert on all the subjects discussed in TCD. That is why he recruited scholars with expertise in the areas they discuss.

In contrast, Marshall is not an expert in ANYTHING he discusses. Unlike Toland's abilities with primary sources in the subjects you mention, Marshall is NOT FAMILIAR WITH ANY PRIMARY SOURCES he discusses about slavery. He admitted he did not know if Hugh Thomas' claims about Urban VIII were correct or not (they are not). He apparently could not even tell us where Thomas got his information. As someone with a Ph.D in "specifically church history," maybe you could help him out and answer the questions I posed about Urban VIII.

I defended all my main assertions mentioned by Marshall about how I interpreted D'Souza and Weikart with very specific passages. In contrast, Marshall seemed surprised by the number of 200,000 that D'Souza had given for the deaths caused by the Crusades, Witch-Hunts and Inquisition. This showed that Marshall did not even read A SECONDARY SOURCE very carefully.

Besides, I do not necessarily insist that Marshall have formal degrees. I insist that he possess the skills and abilities required check the sources he cites. That is what I mean by getting an "education."

Marshall is what we, in academia, call a hack writer. He lazily slaps together materials from writers that agree with him, but he is unable to tell you whether their information is accurate or not. He does not have the ability to check most, if

any, primary sources written in Latin, for example. He does not fact-check very much even in English, but seems content to quote someone once he finds they agree with him. Look at the bibliography of his book and you will see how thin and superficial it is.

So, if you have a Ph.D in history, you should be praising Loftus, and not some hack writer.

Marshall, Round 15

"Dr." Avalos: Back to the "when proven wrong, attack my opponent's credentials" strategy, eh?

All the points in my review have been well-substantiated. I've also added several perhaps even more fundamental criticisms, especially in a long post a few days ago that you haven't responded to.

Most of my criticisms of your argument here, including the most serious, you simply have not responded to. But they cast grave doubt on the quality of your own scholarship, if you insist on putting it in such terms.

Two relatively minor criticisms were your false citations of D'Souza, claiming that he admitted 100,000 people were killed in the European witch-hunts, and that Weikart blamed atheism for the Nazi Holocaust. You attempted to respond to both, but badly failed in both cases, as I showed.

Your subjective impression that I was "surprised" at D'Souza's combined figure of 200,000 is completely irrelevant. Did you assume that if a person has carefully read a book, he has memorized everything in it, and will recall it three years later? Anyway, I wasn't surprised because the number was so big (as you seem to think) but so small. More importantly, the figure of 100,000 for witches is Harris' claim, and D'Souza does NOT say it is correct, so your claim is simply false.

Your phony citation of Weikart, which is more important since it helps justify the title and argumentative stance of your chapter, has been even more decisively refuted. It turns out the quotes you base it on were not about the Nazis, but

about 19th Century Social Darwinists. Not only did THE SENTENCE BEFORE THE ONE YOU CITED made this clear (making me wonder about a scholar who just edits out passages that undermine his interpretation like that.) I also asked the author himself, who repudiated your interpretation in so many words.

As an historian, Fritz no doubt recognizes anachronism when he sees it.

A conventional Internet expression is "ROFL," or "rolling on the floor laughing." When I read your renewed attempt to undermine my arguments in this thread by referring to a miscitation Hugh Thomas evidently made on a minor point in a popular response I wrote to the amateurish *God Delusion*, I did hit the floor and pound the chair in my office. "There you go again," as Ronald Reagan so aptly put it.

The attempt to work a single and trivial apparent error I cited from a highly distinguished historian in a wide-ranging 230 page book that is not even under discussion here into some sort of a "case" against my scholarship is pathetic, especially in light of the grave defects of your over-the-top attack on Christian history in this chapter, as shown in some detail already. I found and annotated 160 "errors, gross exaggerations, and highly dubious claims" in *The God Delusion*, most more serious than the one you've pointed to, but I've never denied that Dawkins is a "real scientist."

No, I don't read Latin. Neither, I think, do Dawkins or Harris, despite their claims about the Inquisition. Yes, it may be possible to find a few minor errors in my books, though probably not any as substantial as those in your chapter. But as I've explained several times, if it's legitimate for Dawkins, Harris, Dennett, and Hitchens to write broad-brushed attacks on Christianity, it's legitimate for better-informed Christians (like myself) to respond. Hopefully you can come up with something better than that when you review my book.

It is also false (what is this, blatant error #95?) to say "Marshall is not an expert in anything he discusses."

Limiting it just to the topics of this thread, I do in fact seem to be both better credentialed and far more experienced than you when it comes to communism. I certainly have a deeper understanding of world Christian history and theology,

though I'll grant you Latin, since you make such a point of it. And I think I have shown (to the satisfaction of eminent scholars) that I understand Christian theology and the philosophy and sociology of religion pretty well, which you evidently do not.

But all that is irrelevant. As in a Chinese cook book, your goose has been cooked three dozen different ways. It's silly to gloat, but if you're not only going to stay in denial about it, but play your foolish little game of attacking the credentials of any scholar who disagrees with you, you have it coming.

Avalos, Round 15

RE: Marshall---"The attempt to work a single and trivial apparent error I cited from a highly..."

As you will soon find out, this is one of MANY errors or blatant misrepresentations of sources I found in your section on slavery. But I guess you'll have to wait for a more complete review.

The rest of your latest response is just flatulent hyperbole and cleverness masquerading as substance.

Round 16: Marshall

I don't know if any summary is necessary here. I think I've substantiated all or almost all points in the review in detail. Aside from his habitual *ad hominem* and a show of pedantry on questions not at issue in this thread, frequent mis-citations of sources, confident but bad guesses about opponents, and hollow patronizing, Dr. Avalos has simply failed to seriously answer my criticisms -- in some cases for the likely reason that they are unanswerable.

If I have time, I may make a list later -- I've found the spectacle rather enlightening.

Marshall B

But I see I missed a long post by Avalos. Let me respond.

Really, Dr. Avalos, you get a lot of mileage out of the fact that Weikart said he defined Darwinism in relation to *Origin of Species* in one place, but then includes *Descent of Man* in some other place. I don't know how many times I've seen you refer to that. If you had any serious arguments against Weikart, I assume you would spend less time beating that little drum. But I'm not here to defend Weikart per se; he can do that ably himself.

Of course Weikart believes Darwinian thought influenced Nazism; in fact he demonstrates that rather well. And of course a lot of the Darwinian thought in the lineage was produced by atheists and other kinds of skeptics. Again, as with my Hegel example, pointing out that Hegel was a theist and influenced Marx does not prove Marx was a theist. You really ought to be able to tell the difference between claiming that atheists helped develop the idea of Social Darwinism that Hitler ultimately adopted, and, as you say, "Weikart saw Hitler's Nazism as a FORM of Darwinian atheism."

You have simply been flailing in the attempt to support your error -- perhaps in order to distract attention from the deeper problems with your argument I pointed to in previous posts, which you failed to respond to. You quote Weikart yet again:

"The final chapter will show how these ideas contributed to the development of Hitler's ideology."

But of course Weikart's belief that ideas held by atheists contributed to the development of Nazism, in no way implies that "Weikart saw Hitler's Nazism as a FORM of Darwinian atheism." You can't find a sentence in the book to support the idea, the author himself repudiates it, yet you cling to your error like a man in the South Seas clinging to his life jacket.

Equating influence with doctrine is especially ludicrous given the eclectic character of many religions in their formative stages. Hong Xiuquan borrowed from folk religion and from Confucianism; but his ideology was not a form of

Confucianism. Mohammed borrowed from Christianity, Jewish, Persian and Arab pagan sources, but Islam is not Arab paganism or Judaism. Joseph Smith borrowed from the Masons and from Indian ideas; that doesn't mean Mormonism is a Native American religion.

But now you seem to be retreating a pace from your earlier position:

"Thus, it is reasonable of me to interpret Weikart to say that the Holocaust was caused by SOME FORM OF DARWINIAN ATHEISM."

Surely you recognize the difference between:

Avalos A: "Weikart saw Hitler's Nazism as a FORM of Darwinian atheism."

and

Avalos B: "The Holocaust was caused by SOME FORM OF DARWINIAN ATHEISM."

When you arrive at the next stage, you will have completed the circle and the three of us will be in agreement:

Avalos C (?): "Materialistic Darwinism was a contributing factor to the development of ideas culminating in Nazism."

On D'Souza: "My observation was that you did NOT SEEM TO KNOW that he had given that figure of 200,000, which does speak to your ability to read thoroughly."

That's just a statement about your subjective and irrelevant impressions, not about any issue at hand.

"It seems now you simply are desperate to find something that I have misrepresented . . . "

Hardly. Your whole argument is one long mis-representation of the history and character of Christianity. You haven't responded to my MAIN arguments yet. And there have been dozens of other misrepresentations on your part in the chapter and in this thread. No need to go looking.

"When it is clearly you who misrepresented Urban VIII's pronouncements on slavery. So would it make more sense for you to look at your own work first, before criticizing that of others?"

Nice try . . . At least, it was the first time. This is what, the fifth time you've brought that obscure quote up, now? Maybe you should post your review on the site for Hugh Thomas' book, or challenge him to a debate on the role of religion in the abolition of slavery. Or give a lecture on the subject to the Oxford history faculty -- they all seem to be under this delusion that Christianity had a lot to do with the abolition of slavery. Go enlighten them.

Avalos, Round 16

I think my replies stand on their own. Your replies are now simply tedious, and no less substantive than what you have posted before.

My criticisms of Dr. Weikart on DC explain clearly enough that he has inconsistent definitions of "Darwinism" on many levels, and you seem to simply be acting as though he has one definition of "Darwinism." If Dr. Weikart wishes to reply directly to those posts, then he has had plenty of opportunity to do so. The last thing I want to do is have any debate between Dr. Weikart and myself filtered through you. He can take care of himself, as can I.

Don't worry, as your turn will come soon enough, when readers will learn of your blatant factual errors and incompetent handling of the simplest facts. They will see that what you said about Urban VIII is part of a pattern of abuse of sources to make bombastic claims Christianity's role in abolition.

Avalos B

Mr. Marshall,

I think you are now simply nit-picking at the phraseology of causation:

Avalos B: "The Holocaust was caused by SOME FORM OF DARWINIAN ATHEISM."

Avalos C (?): "Materialistic Darwinism was a contributing factor to the development of ideas culminating in Nazism."

To me, Materialistic Darwinism = Darwinistic atheism. Saying that the Holocaust was caused by SOME FORM OF DARWINIAN ATHEISM" is not really that different (to me) from saying that some form of Darwinian atheism was a contributing factor. We simply differ on phraseology insofar as you are apparently interpreting me to say "the Holocaust was caused ONLY by SOME FORM OF DARWINIAN ATHEISM."

To me, my phraseology representing Dr. Weikart is analogous to these sentences:

A. Car accident X was caused by some form of driving while intoxicated (e.g., alcohol, drugs):

B. Driving while intoxicated was a contributing factor to Car Accident X.

Clearly, many people might say "intoxication did not cause the accident" but rather crossing the median, or being distracted, or a number of other things that related to the intoxication THAT LED TO THE ACCIDENT. But, if the person was intoxicated, it is usually common to say driving while intoxicated caused the accident.

So you are being pedantic rather than finding some authentic and willful misrepresentation of Dr. Weikart on my part.

Round 17: Marshall

(Acts, Ananias & Saphira) I've checked a few commentators and translations, and asked a couple Acts scholars. Let me respond more fully now to Avalos' bizarre reading of Acts, in which he tries to maintain that Ananias and Saphira were punished for not giving their goods to the commune, like good socialists:

"Once the couple promised to turn over their property and sold it, then the

proceeds were not considered theirs anymore. Note the NIV's rendering of Acts 5:4: "Didn't it belong to you BEFORE it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal?"

What need one say to this? The text Avalos quotes himself refutes his point -- the error is there in plain sight. "After it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal?" This, as opposed to Avalos' "the proceeds were not considered theirs anymore." Clearly they were.

The parallelism of the two rhetorical questions is obvious. The NIV translators clearly saw that.

So did the translators of the NASB: "While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control?" (In both cases translating *kai* as "and," connecting the two parallel phrases.)

The translator of the "Modern Chinese Translation" does the same: *tian chan mei you mai chu, shi ni de, mai le yihou, qian YE shi ni de* where *YE* translates *kai* or "and."

The New Translation in Japanese picks up on the same parallel: *sorewa motomoto anatano mono deari, u-te kara MO anata no*, with *MO* underlining the fact that ownership and freedom continued after the sale.

The same is also true of the Russian translation (my transliteration, may be slightly non-standard): *ii . . . tvoyei vlasti nahodilos?* ("ii" meaning "and," again emphasizing the parallel nature of the two phrases and the fact that the "power" (*vlasti*) of ownership remains in the couples' hands when the property has been liquidated into cash.)

And French translators agree:

"N'étais-tu pas libre de garder ta propriété? Ou MEME, après l'avoir vendue, ne pouvais-tu pas faire de ton argent CE QUE TU VOULAIS?"

Translators don't seem to agree with Avalos' interpretation:

"Thus, Peter is not saying that the proceeds were theirs in the sense that they had a right to keep them, but rather that the proceeds were in their possession when they should not have been."

What do commentators say?

Witherington: "Acts 5:4 tells us not only that the property belonged to Ananias before he sold it, but that even after he sold it the proceeds were at his disposal. In other words, the giving was strictly VOLUNTARY, not mandatory." (*Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 215)

Conzelmann: "Sharing within the community and a stress on the VOLUNTARY nature of this sharing result in a tension in Luke's narrative." (*Acts of the Apostles*, 38)

Haenchen (comparing to Achan): "Here, however, it is not a question of booty consecrated to Yahweh, but of a VOLUNTARY gift of money to the community."

Haenchen stresses the idea that Luke was "suggesting that the primitive Church also realized the Greek communal ideal." But only a "few" gave their whole property; "at all events, Barnabas and Ananias were the only names handed down." That wasn't the point of this story at all, Haenchen argues.

FF Bruce: "The community of goods was plainly VOLUNTARY. The negative *ouchi* governs the whole sentence . . ."

Ward Gasque, author, *History of the Interpretation of Acts of the Apostles* (by e-mail):

"There was NO COERSION to sell the property or to give money, nor does the text suggest that anybody killed A & S. They were exposed in their attempt to give the impression that they were more generous than they really were. They are a counterpoint to the example of Barnabas in ch 4. When their hypocrisy was exposed, they were horrified. In effect, that had committed taboo . . . The sin was not assuming that the property they sold was theirs to possess but rather giving a false impression of their piety."

A younger Acts scholar to whom I showed Avalos' argument:

"Avalos is just completely full of it. His diversion of referring to the Greek without even giving any specific issue with regard to it is an obvious red herring. But the charge is made clear: they lied to God and put the Spirit of God to the test. It wasn't that they withheld some of the money, it's that they pretended to give all of it when they only gave some of it. It's the equivalent of the sin of Achan in the Old Testament."

But here's Avalos again:

"Otherwise, explain to me why you are interpreting the Greek expression (OUCHI MENON SOI EMENEN KAI PRATHEN EN TE SE EXOUSIA UPERCHEN?) the way you seem to be in 5:4?"

Since you seem to disagree with both translators and commentators, and since I see nothing here that suggests A & Q had no right to retain their property if they liked, maybe you should explain where you find that in this text. I don't see it, either: it doesn't seem to be there.

Marshall B

I am hardly being "pedantic." You said, "Weikart saw Hitler's Nazism as a FORM of Darwinian atheism."

As we've seen, that is simply, clearly, and grossly false. It is justified by nothing Weikart says in *Darwin to Hitler*, your attempts to support it have been futile rhetorical shell games, and he disavows the notion with understandable heat. It is also far from a trivial issue, given that the title of your chapter derives in part from this claim.

Isn't it time you forthrightly admitted your error?

Whether or not it was "wilfull" is another issue.

Marshall C

"Don't worry, as your turn will come soon enough, when readers will learn of your blatant factual errors and incompetent handling of the simplest facts. They will see that what you said about Urban VIII is part of a pattern of abuse of sources to make bombastic claims Christianity's role in abolition."

Heh. That's what I like, a reviewer with passion. I hope and expect your assault will be more interesting than those of some of the sillier atheist critics on Amazon, at any rate.

You'll have to keep a closer reign on facts than you've done in this forum, though. Even here, for instance, when you say, "What you said about Urban VIII" can hardly be "part of a pattern of abuse of sources," since I was citing the eminent historian Hugh Thomas. It is not an "abuse," still less "bombastic," to accurately cite an acknowledged expert, even if it turns out he made some slight error which thereby gets passed along. You would do well to make such distinctions clear next time, or the confusion you create about whether D'Souza or Harris made the "100,000 witches were killed" claim will again be repeated, and meet with the same fate.

As for Christianity's role in abolition, I expect you'll do your best to obscure or undermine that well-established historical reality, no doubt by the same techniques you use in this chapter. You'd probably do better to attempt this feat in response to a fuller statement of this history than my own less than 4 page treatment. But you have to start somewhere, I suppose, so be my guest.

Avalos, Round 17

Mr. Marshall cites apologists that already agree with him to prove that they agree with him. This is like Hitchens citing Richard Dawkins to prove atheism is true. Marshall was unable to give HIS OWN reasons for explaining the Greek. He simply cites secondary sources, and nothing in those sources addresses why the Greek terminology or syntax makes one interpretation better than another.

Round 18: Marshall

Dr Avalos is under the not uncommon delusion that calling an eminent scholar an "apologist" refutes his arguments. He knows better. Conzelmann, Bruce, Witherington, Gasque, and the English, Chinese, Japanese, Russian, and French translators are not "apologists," they are scholars.

What's to dispute about the Greek? Am I, and all these other scholars, wrong in supposing that *kai* means "and?" Or that *ouchi* applies to both phrases? Or that the parallelism all of us see is genuine, and undermines and refutes Avalos' ridiculous interpretation?

Thus ends Avalos' argument not with a bang, but an *ad hominem* whimper, nicely symmetrical given that that's where he came in. Note one additional point, though: at one point Avalos tried to distinguish between me and "real" scholars, in whose number I believe he included Stark and Weikart. But now he's reverting to his old "the only Christian scholar is a phony scholar" (aka "apologist") defense.

But no response at all to the most serious arguments against his thesis in this chapter. Not to beat a dead horse, but maybe I'll start a separate discussion forum for those more central issues. This forum has become a bit too obscure even for me, now, and the most important issues here have gotten lost in the shuffle.