

## Pantheism: A Man-Made Religion

- *“You have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.” (Matthew 15:6)*
- *“My son, give more heed to the words of the rabbis than to the words of the Law.” (Talmud)*
- *“...who exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature, rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.” (Romans 1:25)*

The local supermarket displays large trays of cold-cuts and cheese, and cakes, and assorted fruits. They all look tantalizingly real. So real, one wants to buy what's on display and take it home for dinner, which is why the store manager puts them there in front of his customers. But they're not real. They're plastic. The salami is plastic, the cake is plastic, and so are the apples and pears. If they could be digested, they would not support life. They're phony, counterfeits, man-made replicas. They look terrific, but they're not the real thing. Tragically, the same thing, substituting a man-made artifact for the real thing, is happening in the realm of religion. We need to think about this, because the consequences are major.

### I What is religion?

Everybody's religious! We shouldn't have to define it because it's embedded in each of us.<sup>1</sup> We're not (usually) conscious of it yet it's what we use on a daily basis to get through life. Our particular religious beliefs are how we determine what's good and what's not. They are how we determine the meaning of all that happens to us and around us. Our religion motivates us, and it drives the choices and the decisions we make. Our hopes for the future are driven by our religion. We all have some notion of what's ultimate in the universe and, again, it's our religion that guides us in that thinking. Our religious beliefs guide our behavior, our thinking, every aspect of our life. We're all thoroughly religious beings! We're *necessarily* religious.

People who say, “I'm not a religious person” usually mean they eschew religious practices. We tend to think too superficially about religion. We might say, for example, that religion has to do with belief in God, or it has to do with prayer and worship. Or doing certain rituals. Or what happens to us after we die. These may of course be a component of religion and could be termed particular religious beliefs or practices. But these don't define religion. Religion is far bigger; it pervades our being.

“Where did everything come from?” “Are we accountable for what we do in life?” “What's important in life to do?” These too are essential issues that religions answer for us. And we all *must* have answers to such questions as these!

Deep in our souls we entertain certain presuppositions about the world, about others and about us. We're ordinarily not aware of those presuppositions, but they're there and they powerfully influence our thinking. Those presuppositions are not rational. They can't be proved. But they largely determine our world view, our behavior, our thinking. And it's our religion that forms those presuppositions.

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<sup>1</sup> The many definitions of religion on the Internet attest to the difficulty understanding precisely what religion is. Yet it's a word routinely used as if everyone knows what it means. Judge John Jones III, presiding over the Kitzmiller vs Dover Area School District lawsuit in 2005, decided that intelligent design and creation are “religious” (but science is not). Aren't scientists religious? What about Marxists? Atheists? We use the word here as it functions, attempting to make sense of existence in the face of human finitude. Doesn't philosophy do this? Our distinction is, philosophy is something to think about, whereas religion involves conviction; religion determines how we live.

We are religious people because evidently God created us that way. We've been made in the image of God. So we have certain ontological characteristics that enable us to reflect Him. Precisely what those are needn't detain us here. The point is that God made us to reflect Him in some way: either His rule or His being (or both). So building on this premise, religions can therefore be divided into two major classes, those that are theistic, and those that are non-theistic. The theistic religions acknowledge the God of the Bible. They have at their core the belief that God exists, He created all that there is, and He has revealed Himself in the Scriptures. He has spoken, and the Bible is His Word. The non-theistic religions in one way or another deny or reject this God of the Bible. They then build a structure of beliefs upon that basis. Belief in God is not an essential component of religion.

## II Two Major Religions

In the Western world, the main theistic religion is Christianity.<sup>2</sup> The God of Christianity has revealed Himself in the Bible as a Person, a Being who is transcendent (i.e. wholly separate from or beyond His creation), who created, that is, He brought into existence out of nothing everything that is. God is eternal (or perhaps atemporal). And He is a Spirit (aspatial or unembodied), yet He reveals Himself in Scripture in anthropomorphic terms. The over-arching narrative of the Bible includes a fall of man into sin, God's judgment upon sin, man's universal rebellion against God, and God's gracious acts to overcome sin and rebellion with promise of future blessing through a personal relationship with the Son, the incarnate God, Jesus Christ.

Man could not possibly know any of this but for the revelation that God, because of His goodness and love for His creatures, has provided. And to prove the trustworthiness of His revelation, the Bible contains detailed and specific prophecies of the future that, in the course of history, were precisely fulfilled.<sup>3</sup> So the Bible is self-attesting; it comes to us not by the will of man but from the mind of God, who superintended its writing so that its words are God's revelation to us.

Revelation is another way of knowing. We tend to think that we only can know that which we sense and develop through reasoning, but revelation is how we can know that which is otherwise unknowable. The trustworthiness of revelation, obviously, is determined by its source. God asks us to put our confidence in the veracity of His Word, for trusting His Word is tantamount to trusting Him. Biblical salvation is contingent on such trust. So let's say that Christianity, the main theistic religion, is God-made religion.

What, in the Western world, is the main non-theistic religion? Michael P. Levine, philosopher and professor of natural theology, answers, "Pantheism remains the classical religious alternative to theism."<sup>4</sup> Of all the "-isms," why pantheism? Isn't pantheism an Eastern religion, Taoism and such? We need to understand pantheism, because Levine's assertion is accurate.<sup>5</sup>

Pantheism is, at its core, a rejection of the God of the Bible. It believes in a deity, but it's a god that is not personal, not a conscious, minded individual. The pantheist god is not a being. And the pantheist

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<sup>2</sup> For a host of reasons, Orthodox Judaism and Islam, though theistic, needn't be brought into this discussion.

<sup>3</sup> These are the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament, Isaiah chapter 53 for example.

<sup>4</sup> Levine makes this statement repeatedly in his book, "Pantheism: A non-theistic concept of deity," Routledge, London and NY, 1994, see pages 16 and 360, for example. Although Levine does not claim to be a pantheist, the book is regarded as a comprehensive study of pantheism, showing the coherence and consistency of its theology. The book presents Levine's opinions regarding normative pantheism.

<sup>5</sup> Pantheism is not to be confused with polytheism (belief in many deities), nor with panentheism, which is a subset of theism holding that a personal being exists and that the world is his body or the expression of his body. And pantheism is not mysticism.

god is not transcendent. Exactly what the pantheist deity is like or is defined as varies, depending on the particular pantheist – which is not surprising because pantheism is a man-made religion. It doesn't derive from Scripture; it is not based on revelation. It emerges entirely from human reasoning. Pantheism is the product of human speculation.

As to the nature of the pantheist deity, there's no univocal belief. The pantheist deity has been variously described as the cosmos, as the "all-inclusive divine Unity" that is the force or principle, or plan of the cosmos, or as "the spirit of the whole universe." We sample here a few of the many views of the pantheist deity. According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "At its most general, pantheism may be understood positively as the view that God is identical with the cosmos, the view that there exists nothing which is outside of God, or else negatively as the rejection of any view that considers God as distinct from the universe."<sup>6</sup> According to theologian Huw Owen, "God is everything and everything is God...the world is either identical with God or in some way a self-expression of his nature."<sup>7</sup> George Chrystides writes, "God is a principle that runs through the universe, a natural flow of things, a principle of order inherent in the world, the source, guide and goal of the world."<sup>8</sup> Nels Ferré describes pantheism as "...the position that God is the spirit of the whole universe... the soul of the world...the process directing itself...the inner directedness of the world or the process itself."<sup>9</sup>

Pantheist Timothy Sprigge recognizes that some pantheists identify God (or the "divine reality") as the animating spirit of nature, and others see the divine reality as simply the total natural universe, as scientists describe it – although these are not his own pantheistic views.<sup>10</sup> Peter Forrest points to the ubiquitous and pervasive natural order as that which provides unity and divinity to the Universe.<sup>11</sup> Levine argues that normative pantheism doesn't simply identify deity with the world.<sup>12</sup> The pantheist God, he says, is an all-inclusive whole, the everything that is unified with the unifying element, an all-pervasive force or principle; with the unifying element, the all-inclusive whole is God. "Unity is not evolution or nature and its laws. Rather, the pantheist sees evolution, laws of nature etc as themselves part of the Unity subject to higher order (ie pantheistically more fundamental) principles... Unity is not reducible to nature and nature is not explainable except in terms of Unity, and with reference to more fundamental principles"<sup>13</sup> And, "...there is more to the world than can be accounted for, even in

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<sup>6</sup> <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pantheism/> (accessed 27 May 2015). The author of this entry acknowledges that there exists no consensus as to the nature of pantheism, because the concepts involved are complex. The absence of agreement, rather, is because those doing the guessing are finite and cannot know such things apart from revelation.

<sup>7</sup> "Concepts of Deity," Macmillan, London, 1971, cited in Levine, op. cit., p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> "Subject and Object in Worship," *Religious Studies*, 23 (1987): 367-75, cited in Levine, op. cit. p. 325.

<sup>9</sup> "Living God of Nowhere and Nothing," Westminster, Philadelphia, 1966, cited in Levine, op.cit. p. 17 (footnote 2).

<sup>10</sup> "Pantheism," in *The Monist*, 80(2):191-217, 1997. Sprigge (now deceased) writes, "Pantheism, in the sense in which I am taking it, identifies God and the Universe...for the pantheist, 'God is the unified totality of all things.'" He qualifies a pantheist definition of deity: "he, she, or it is the explanation of the existence of all other things," but, emphatically, by definition, the pantheist deity is not a transcendent Creator. Another of his qualifications is, "God is the sole ultimate universal of which all finite things are the instances."

<sup>11</sup> "Pantheism and Science," in *The Monist*, 80(2):307-319. This issue of *The Monist* is devoted to articles on pantheism. Forrest writes, "We could take the whole Universe to have a unity due to the ubiquitous and pervasive natural order or we could instead take the natural order itself to be God." By "natural order," Forrest refers to something that supervenes on the physical world, that includes the topics of study by the natural sciences.

<sup>12</sup> Levine, op. cit. pp.25-47.

<sup>13</sup> Levine, op. cit., p. 45. Each particular thing is not God, but everything is related to or is part of everything else, and the world can be identified with God, but not God with the world.

principle, by the natural sciences...Pantheists believe in some higher unifying force or principle – *but not in a theistic God.*”<sup>14</sup>

In pantheism, everything is somehow divine, and this divine everything somehow constitutes a unity. Rejecting a transcendent Creator God, pantheists identify their deity in some way with the creation.<sup>15</sup> Levine insightfully remarks that there necessarily is vagueness in pantheism’s views. Sure! Pantheists are guessing at everything. This is all conjecture, speculation. There is certainly an extremely high level of conceptualizing of abstract ideas, something only for the most intellectual among us, but there’s no ultimate authority for any pantheistic belief or statement. It’s a made-up religion.

Pantheism not only rejects the Bible’s Creator, it rejects the biblical doctrine of creation. It holds to a “naturalistic ordering principle or force of some kind” that accounts for the order.<sup>16</sup> Levine writes, “Emanationism is the view that ‘creation’ is not a ‘making,’ but in some sense a ‘flowing forth’ from God or its origin.” From the original flowing forth comes all subsequent flowing forths. Levine quotes 5<sup>th</sup> century BC Chinese pantheist philosopher, Lao Tzu: “The Tao engenders one, One engenders two, Two engenders three, And three engenders the myriad things” (*Tao Tê Ching*, XLII). The Tao is ‘the primordial natural force, possessing an infinite supply of infinite power and creativity.’” (p. 195).

Pantheist philosopher Lewis Ford explains that an essential characteristic of the pantheist deity is creative power, or creating.<sup>17</sup> He writes, “There could perhaps be a single temporal act, but since we are witnesses to rich history of emergent novelties [ie, evolution], it makes more sense to think of a temporal series of creative acts. Instead of one, problematically nontemporal, transcendent creation *ex nihilo*, there are many temporal immanent acts of creation building upon past acts.” And, “...creativity...is the underlying activity of all present actualities...we can also think of this creativity as an actual power surging through all things...If creativity is absolutely pervasive, there would be a plenum of finite events. Every portion of spacetime would exercise its own bit of creativity, no matter how feeble it might be.” Instead of creation, Ford prefers the term “emanation...infusing the present with its power of self-creation...it explains how the new can grow out of the old.”

So intrinsic to pantheism is the notion of evolutionary progress, progressive development of the cosmos through time. Development is spontaneous, natural, and inexorably progressive, leading to increasing order and complexity. Stellar evolution, biological evolution, and the progressive development of history are core aspects of pantheistic belief.<sup>18</sup>

Pantheism is unconcerned with the existence of evil in the world. They identify that as a problem for theism. Regarding ethics, pantheists are realists. They recognize that some actions are right and others

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<sup>14</sup> Levine, op. cit., p. 359. Italics added; pantheism enables one to deny the existence of God while retaining integrity as an intellectual.

<sup>15</sup> Romans 1 provides the best commentary on this. Levine writes, “The pantheist believes a divine Unity exists—a kind of god” (p. 313). Substituting anything or anyone for God as the object of loyalty or devotion is idolatry.

<sup>16</sup> Levine, op. cit. p. 190.

<sup>17</sup> “Pantheism vs. Theism: A Re-appraisal,” in *The Monist*, 80(2):286-306.

<sup>18</sup> It had been supposed that the mechanisms driving Darwinian evolution are mutations and natural selection. Like the descriptions of the pantheist deity, these too are vague, but their plausibility led to evolution’s wide acceptance during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Recent thinking however is that what had been termed natural selection is more likely simply the ability of an organism to adapt to changing environments built-into the DNA and is of limited scope. And the recent ENCODE project, revealing the previously unimagined, massive complexity of the DNA codes, along with other recent work, makes mutations admittedly extremely unlikely as the source of variation needed for common descent. Evolution is a mechanistic process without a mechanism. It’s futile to deny creation!

wrong. They strive to life according to their divine Unity of which they're a part.<sup>19</sup> Although pantheism doesn't equate their deity with nature, many pantheists have a mystical one-ness with the natural world, which may account for their concern with ecology and environmentalism. Pantheist Harold W. Wood, Jr, for example, wrote, "Instead of a 'conquer the Earth' mentality, pantheism teaches that respect and reverence for the Earth demands continuing attempts to understand ecosystems...[E]nvironmental conservation [is] tantamount to loving God...Pantheist ethics has as its goal a closeness with nature...a relationship with nature equivalent to traditional religion's relationship with God. It is a closeness based not upon imitation, but upon reverential communion."<sup>20</sup>

Pantheism repudiates biblical salvation as a concept belonging to theism, which it rejects. Pantheists simply want to be happy in this world. They also emphatically deny the biblical view of immortality. They do not believe in life after death. That too, comes from the Bible, which they reject as having authority. The consistent pantheist's view of salvation is knowing and identifying with the divine Unity, which, they believe, has always existed. Death for the pantheist merely deprives him of the opportunity to accomplish anything further or have any more pleasure.

Pantheists don't assemble together, for that smacks of organized Christian religion. There is no body of doctrine, there are no scriptures. And there are no rituals or other practices, simply because they don't want to imitate theistic religion. Pantheists won't worship or pray as that implicitly acknowledges the existence of a superior being, which is antithetical to their core belief. Pantheism is a religion of private expression; individuals act according to their particular understanding of the nature of things. Their goal, if consciously realized, is simply to reflect on the divine Unity, using reason.<sup>21</sup> It's an intellectual achievement.

Let's summarize: Pantheism's formula is, Nothing is which is not God, and God is everything which is. But more descriptive of pantheism are its denials. It denies a transcendent Personal God. It denies biblical Creation, salvation, immortality, revelation, and there's no such thing as a relationship with God. Pantheism is a religion of denials! And it holds to evolutionary development as the means by which everything that is exists; our world is the result of the unfolding of some kind of single primordial cause by a process of progressive development.

Having passed decades working in India and studying Eastern religion, theologian Robert Brow is qualified to speak definitively regarding pantheism.<sup>22</sup> He places pantheism in the category of Monism, the view that "there can be only one eternal principle in the cosmos, and so denies a Creator above and separate from his creation." He then identifies two subsets of Monism, Pantheism and what he terms Modified Pantheism. Pantheism "asserts that God is, and unfolds himself in, everything there is." His Modified Pantheism differs in that "God is not the whole of nature, but the principle behind nature." As

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<sup>19</sup> Levine, op. cit., pp. 238-9.

<sup>20</sup> "Modern Pantheism As An Approach to Environmental Ethics", *Environmental Ethics*, 7 (1985), quoted in Levine, op. cit., p. 227. Wood co-founded the Universal Pantheist Society.

<sup>21</sup> As Sprigge, op. cit., puts it, the goal is sensing oneness with the universe by believing in the truth of pantheism, having a sense of belonging to something greater than oneself.

<sup>22</sup> "Religion: Origins and Ideas," InterVarsity Fellowship, Chicago, 1966, pp. 75-88. His other two subsets of Monism are Absolute Monism and Modified Monism; see his text (available on the internet) for discussion of these. Brow (now deceased) wrote regarding Modified Pantheism, "A very common type of Modified Pantheism is the religion of those who believe in progress. The principle of evolutionary progress is discovered from science and history, and the devotee then gives himself to furthering the principle with a fervent faith in progress as the be-all and end-all of life" (p.82).

a result, “we discover that the universe has an underlying moral, or progressive, principle with which we decide to unite our efforts.”

Based on the above discussion of pantheism, including the insights of Brow, we formulate the following pantheist statement of faith: (1) there is no supernatural Being that is outside of nature, and (2) meaning can be found in aligning ourselves with the principle behind nature, namely evolutionary progress. These affirmations mean that all those who do not believe in the God of the Bible and who hold to evolution as the explanation of origins are religious, and their religion is pantheism.

What about atheism? Pantheists believe in a god, that’s clear. Spinoza used the term, “God.” Levine uses the term, “Unity.” Levine writes, for example, “Unity encompasses ‘all that is,’ but is not constituted by it” (p.121). “The Unity is not identified with or by any particular and it is not a sum of all particulars” (p. 318). “The Unity is not anything material at all, and so cannot be subject to the kind of natural necessity (i.e. laws of nature, etc) a celestial body is.” (p.323).<sup>23</sup> Pantheism is decidedly not atheistic! Atheism rejects belief in the existence of any deity. There are no deities, insists the atheist. Nevertheless, pantheism and atheism are equivalent. That’s because both reject the God of the Bible.<sup>24</sup> In fact, in that both have as their core or essential doctrine the denial of the God of Scripture, we argue that atheism is the same as pantheism, albeit without the notion of an “all-inclusive Unity.” (The pantheist “deity” is entirely suppositional; their notion of deity substitutes for and intellectualizes their denial of the God of the Bible). Both pantheism and atheism are anti-theistic. Moreover, atheism is not a religion. It’s a conscious, explicit rejection of biblical theism. It makes no positive assertions, fosters no specific world view, and holds to evolution and naturalism, as do pantheists.<sup>25</sup> We have already argued that everyone is religious, and that includes atheists. Therefore we add atheists to pantheism to form this one category of a non-theistic religion in the Western world.<sup>26</sup> For want of a better term, and not without reason, we identify it as pantheism.

Existentialists and humanists would be included in this category as well; atheistic, both deny the existence of the God of Scripture and hold to evolution as the explanation of origins. “Agnostics” are

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<sup>23</sup> “Pantheism,” op. cit. Levine writes, “...the all-inclusive divine Unity may include that which is material and embodied, without itself being embodied. The Unity is not identical to the sum total of all that exists – material and non-material” (p. 327). The pantheist deity in some way is identified with the physical universe, contradicting biblical revelation, that God created that which is not Himself.

<sup>24</sup> In philosophy and natural theology, newborn babies can be defined as atheists, as would be persons who have never heard of God’s existence; these instances have been termed “implicit” atheism, as opposed to “explicit” atheism, which is the conscious rejection of God. In this essay, atheism is not only “explicit,” it is specifically the rejection of the God of the Bible.

<sup>25</sup> Atheists adopt a variety of world views, including existentialism, humanism, Epicureanism, Marxism, or some form of nihilism. A consistent atheist, believing that the universe is an accident, that life is an accident, and that everything therefore is meaningless and purposeless, couldn’t face life! To the extent they pursue happiness, posit meaning, find purpose, live moral lives, argue for justice, enjoy beauty, etc, indicates not only that they cannot live with their presuppositions, but that they (perhaps subconsciously) sense that some organizing principle exists in the cosmos; this supports our grouping atheists in the category of pantheism.

<sup>26</sup> According to Carl Sagan’s son, Dorian, that famous atheist was in fact a pantheist. In his 2007 book, “Dazzle Gradually: Reflections on the Nature of Nature” (co-authored with Lynn Margulis, Published by Chelsea Green, White River Jct, VT), Dorian writes (p. 14): “My father believed in the God of Spinoza and Einstein, God not behind nature, but as nature, equivalent to it.” There is evidence Einstein was a pantheist. Whether a scientist consciously has pantheist sentiments or not, our argument here is that all scientists are religious, and to the extent that they fulfill the two affirmations, they can be regarded as pantheists.

atheists without the animosity.<sup>27</sup> And, to the extent they consciously reject the God of the Scriptures and hold to evolution, “secularists” should also be included with agnostics and atheists in the religion of pantheism.

### III Which Religion?

The principal difference between biblical theism and pantheism is authority. Christianity is based on the authority of God’s Word. Pantheism is the product of human reasoning. It has no authority higher than the musings and speculations of finite man. Is there a God in heaven? Is there life after death? Who can know the answers to such questions? They are unknowable. The reality behind these questions lies in another dimension, a spiritual dimension unknowable to creatures not given the ability to sense or to experience such truths. The purpose of revelation is to supply the answers to these questions. Those who reject revelation are left in the dark with no recourse but to make guesses.

Anti-theists write persuasively. People are swayed by rational arguments. And anti-theists invoke science as supporting their views. We in the Western world esteem science highly, so if science is on the side of pantheism, great credibility attaches to it. For centuries (at least since the Enlightenment), the Western world has been engaged in a discussion of a host of anti-theistic views. And anti-theists have drawn many converts to their beliefs. But increasingly anti-theists are seeking to monopolize religious expression. They find Christianity so repulsive that they want to extinguish it and replace it with their own religion. A religious war is going on. So we’re forced to choose sides.

Why should there be a religious war? One reason that seems to stem from core pantheistic belief is, there is a natural, spontaneous progression of history. Christian belief is a thing of the past, it’s superstitious and irrational, perhaps even harmful to individuals and to society. And it impedes the natural progress of history to an era of reason and of science. So it needs to be replaced. Another reason is less explicable but can be illustrated by the statement, “...worship [of the traditional Creator God] reeks too much of the propitiation of a dangerous cosmic egotist...”<sup>28</sup> Mankind is in rebellion against the God of the Bible. We’ll decorate our lives with plastic fruit and plastic salami, which look really good, as long as we don’t have to have the real thing; something man-made, but not that which comes from above!

Is pantheism so coherent and rational that one should choose it over biblical theism? Its two affirmations are self-defeating. How can a non-person direct progressive development? All human experience tells us that progress toward a desired end comes only as the result of conscious, intelligent planning and design, and these are attributes of personality. Evolutionary progress requires a Personal God. Moreover, if the Big Bang is true, the pantheist “deity” only came into existence with the origin of the universe and thus isn’t infinitely existing or self-existing. If our cosmos came into existence and developed by accident, by random events (as naturalism requires), then the pantheist deity can’t be divine.<sup>29</sup> Random events cannot result in a directed, progressive increase in order and complexity. All

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<sup>27</sup> The distinction between agnostic and atheist can be contentious. Some agnostics reject atheism as an unwarranted conviction, preferring the more honest, “one can’t know.” But it’s a distinction without a difference: agnostics reject revelation, don’t believe in the God of the Bible, and hold to evolution to explain origins, so they’re atheistic (or, as argued here, pantheistic). There’s no such thing as neutrality regarding God and His Christ.

<sup>28</sup> Timothy L. S. Sprigge, *op. cit.*

<sup>29</sup> Peter Forrest attempts to deal with these issues in his “Pantheism and Science” *op.cit.* He concludes that pantheists must either commit to life not being accidental, or assert “the rash claim that in fact life was highly likely to arise in our universe.” His attempt to explain the Big Bang issue is not persuasive.

the problems creation scientists have identified with evolution apply to pantheism, because evolutionary progress is one of its core affirmations.

And is biblical revelation so incoherent that one should spurn it? Anti-theists find anthropomorphic depictions of God repulsive. They've got it backwards. God is not made in the image of man, but man is made in the image of God. Certain of God's attributes are communicable, meaning man too shares in God's personality, intellect, willfulness, creativity, love, etc. And is it wrong for God to stipulate behavior to His creatures? God's goodness requires it! Anti-theists resent God's expectation of worship, they call it "fawning." But God's aseity means He has no need of our worship; He is complete and perfect in Himself. Rather, in His infinite wisdom, He knows we need to worship Him. If the existence of evil in the world is a problem, why doesn't the existence of good in the world count for something? And what is more beautiful than the self-sacrifice that God made out of love for us, to save us from the wrath we deserve for having rebelled against Him? If we can't be won by God's grace extended to us in Christ, the historical fulfillment of the Bible's self-attesting prophecies compel humble submission to its authority.

Joe is wandering, lost in the deep, dark woods, and he comes to a fork in the road. He can guess which is the right way to get out of the woods, or he can follow a sign that's pointing to the way out. What shall he do? Pantheists prefer their guesses. Christians read and follow the sign.