

Pantheism in Science

At the *Kitzmiller vs. Dover Area School District* trial in Harrisburg in 2005, Judge John Jones III found that “intelligent design,” like creation, is religious, whereas science is not religious. Of course, science is just a system by which we interpret physical data. But the people who do science are certainly religious. *Everyone* is religious. Even atheists. Therefore, the creation-evolution controversy that festers in America is not, at its core, a conflict of science vs. religion. Not at all! It’s a conflict of the evolutionary scientists’ religion, which can be identified as pantheism, versus biblical or Christian theism. In other words, a war is being waged against the church, a *religious* war.

Pantheism is a religion unlike others. Pantheists don’t meet in groups to worship, and they have no defined practices to go with their beliefs. Pantheism is an undefined and unstructured religion, one most Christians are not familiar with.

What’s pantheism?

Pantheists believe that God is in some way identified with nature. All that is is God and God is all that is. The word God (or god), if pantheists use it, doesn’t have the same meaning as when Christians use the word. Christians believe God is a personal Being who is transcendent. He is above and separate from His creation, He is totally different from anything in our finite, physical world, yet He interacts with His creation. Pantheism however rejects that God has personhood. The pantheist deity is not a being and is not transcendent. The cosmos, to a pantheist, is the outworking or a manifestation of that non-personal, non-being, which they worship by means of naturalism (the belief that nature and nature’s purposeless laws and processes are all that exist).

Regarding origins, most pantheists hold that the universe is eternal, having no beginning and no end. In pantheism, there is no Creator; the cosmos created itself through its innate ability to self-organize. All nature is evolutionary; it’s like a developing organism. This belief that creative power resides in nature identifies pantheism.

In pantheism, creation is an ongoing progressive process, as opposed to the biblical view that creation ended on the sixth day and is now in a state of decay. And in pantheism, creation is by impersonal natural laws, forces and processes, whereas the God of the Bible is outside of nature and He created by His Word. Obviously, pantheism and theism are mutually exclusive religions; they’re opposites.

Religion deals with ultimates. It answers questions such as, Where did I come from? Why am I here? What powers govern history, or determine our destiny? Religion deals with the cause, nature and purpose of life, indeed of all existence. It assumes that this world has meaning. Nazism, communism and humanism are religious because they assert that life has meaning, they involve faith in a goal that’s desired, and there’s an understanding of what is the highest good. Religion involves belief in something that is deeper than what we see in life, some kind of reality that’s behind or beyond the world that we perceive with our senses. Religion doesn’t require a deity! We in America are familiar with organized religions such as Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, but religion also can be non-institutional and without rituals or gatherings. Thus Robert Brow, a theologian who worked for 20 years in India and studied Hindu philosophy, wrote, “Even if a scientist’s only article of faith is ‘I believe in progress,’ he is still religious. He has faith, a goal, a system of ethics and a religious experience which take him up into something greater than his own nothingness.” This belief in progress is pantheistic religion.

If a pantheist statement of faith could be formulated, it would be, 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. This of course means that a Creator and *ex nihilo* creation are rejected, defined out of existence. It means that all those who hold to an evolutionary process as the explanation of origins, as the explanation of all that exists, should be understood as being religious, and that religion is pantheism.

It’s commonly assumed that the alternative to theism is atheism. Not so! The alternative to theism is pantheism. Atheism makes no positive statements, and it has no definite worldview; it views the universe and life as absurd and meaningless. It is not a religion; it’s a rejection, a repudiation of theism. And besides, it’s an absurd assertion, for one cannot prove a negative, especially that a Being doesn’t exist who is a spirit and is therefore unknowable apart from revelation. Atheists can’t even live with their belief: if there’s no God, then reality is nothing more than the chance collision of atoms, yet atheists enjoy beautiful music and they’re concerned about justice and human rights. The worldview they have betrays the impossibility of that which they so ardently espouse. Everyone is religious; holding to evolution, the atheist is a pantheist.

Agnostics claim ignorance; they say they don’t know. But ignorance is not a religion, it’s not a view or an ideology, it’s atheism in disguise. More precisely, agnostics, like atheists, are pantheists.

Same for secularists. Neutrality regarding religion is a mirage. *Everyone* has religious ideas and carries religious presuppositions in their thinking. To the extent that secularists deny the supernatural and believe in evolutionary progress, they also are pantheists.

The first and greatest commandment is, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul and might.” As Romans 1 indicates, either people love God, the God of the Bible, the Creator, whose attributes are “clearly seen” (v. 20), or in some manner they love and worship the creation (v. 25). So pantheism is a misplaced love. It’s a love of nature instead of the One who created nature. As whatever we love that substitutes for God is idolatry, pantheism deifies nature. If one’s deity is not the transcendent God of the Scriptures, the Creator, deity can only be located in nature itself.

Just as not all Christians know their theology and not all Christians sense the presence of God in their lives, even more so, because their god is so vague and indefinite, most pantheists don't perceive or understand their faith. Yet faith it is! Pantheism is the view of nature, indeed of all reality, that is prevalent in the West today – especially as it pertains to origins. And it's all man-made, unlike Scripture, which comes from God.

What's pantheism have to do with science?

The 1925 Scopes trial, and especially the media's portrayal of it in the film and play, *Inherit the Wind*, taught Americans that science (and Darwinism) is for sophisticated and intelligent people, but religion is for “bigots and ignoramuses” (Clarence Darrow's words). Science is supposed to be objective, based on the real world, in contrast to religion, which is just superstition. Well that's nonsense. Scientists are religious, *pervasively* religious, and for many their religion is pantheism. Evolution is the outworking, or a core doctrine, of that religion.

In mainstream science today, common features necessarily mean common descent. Birds, mammals, reptiles and fish, for example, all have in common a bony skeleton; therefore, they must have all descended from a common ancestor, and so they're all related in one long, continuous evolutionary line of descent. Common features certainly could also mean a common Designer, but that is *a priori* ruled out; naturalism won't allow it. The conclusion that common features means common ancestry doesn't come from a controlled scientific experiment. The choice of common descent rather than common design is because their religion requires it. Pantheism requires naturalistic explanations.

Examples of religious belief controlling science abound. Here are five:

- (1) The anthropic principle is the observation that every physical parameter of our universe is ideal for life. That contradicts the notion of random evolutionary processes. So the multiple universe idea has been advanced: our universe just happens to be the lucky one because countless other universes supposedly exist where those parameters are not right. Not one observation supports such a view, but it is being promoted and accepted widely. This is religion, pantheism, joined to science.
- (2) Since Louis Pasteur proved that only life begets life, it's been known that life does not occur spontaneously. Evolutionists nevertheless attempt to demonstrate mechanisms by which life spontaneously originated. Why? It's a religious necessity.
- (3) The earth is supposedly billions of years old because radiometric dating has allegedly demonstrated that. But discordant data abound, and the assumptions that the dating methodologies involve are not only unproved but unprovable. The whole project therefore is invalid. Nevertheless, the dates are said to be as true as gravity. This is religion speaking – their religion, pantheism.
- (4) Geologists interpret the fossils in the rocks, and the layers of stratified rock all over the planet thru an evolutionary framework. The fossils and rock layers could also logically be interpreted as the result of a global flood, but that is ruled out because it derives from the Bible. The biblical young-earth model hasn't been (and cannot be) disproved, it's just ignored or ridiculed.
- (5) Intact soft tissue has been observed in the marrow cavity of dinosaur bones. It's well known that soft tissue undergoes rapid breakdown when an animal dies. If soft tissue is still present, the reasonable conclusion should be that dinosaurs recently existed on earth. But that doesn't fit the standard evolutionary model. Paleontologists therefore now believe that soft tissue has the amazing ability to remain intact for vastly longer periods of time than ever thought possible. Pantheism must be upheld!

Proponents of evolution claim that their study of origins is “science.” Science is a powerful means of discovery, but it's limited to observations and experiments on repeatable events in the present. Study of singular events and processes in the remote past can only be speculative and tentative. When the scientific jargon and highly technical methodology are stripped away, the evolutionary interpretations of the data are merely speculations and conjectures, all based on unbiblical presuppositions.

Assumptions or presuppositions, and that includes religious presuppositions, lie behind all thinking, all actions, all endeavors – including doing science. All scientific inquiry necessarily rests on presuppositions that are religious. This is why advocates of evolution attack creationist scientists and those who hold to intelligent design in a way that far exceeds what would be expected from a disagreement over the interpretation of data. One would think, moreover, that scientists, who pride themselves on their objectivity, would exercise caution in stating what happened in the unknowable past regarding origins. But they don't. Their pronouncements are staggering! This also is the reason naturalistic causes always must be found for all phenomena, including the miracles in the Bible, because pantheistic presuppositions rule out any God intervening in nature. Whenever evidence or data is being analyzed, the evolutionists' religious presuppositions, their commitment to pantheism, compels a naturalistic, or evolutionary, interpretation. Any explanation deriving from the Bible has to be excluded. Evolutionists are committed to their presuppositions every bit as strongly as followers of Christ are to theirs, because these are *religious* convictions. Two diametrically opposite religions are in conflict, pantheism vs. Christian theism.

So in its essence, especially in this matter of origins, what appears to be a conflict of modern science versus religion is really the competition of two opposing religions. It's their religion versus ours. As they see it, pantheism must be supreme and theism must disappear!

Professor of philosophy and zoologist Michael Ruse says it bluntly, “Evolution is promoted by its practitioners as more than mere science. Evolution is promulgated as an ideology, a secular religion – a full-fledged alternative to Christianity, with meaning and morality. I am an ardent evolutionist and an ex-Christian, but I must admit that in this one complaint the literalists are absolutely right. Evolution is a religion. This was true of evolution in the beginning, and it is true of evolution still today.”

Pantheism and the church

BioLogos is an organization that promotes the idea that evolution is compatible with Christian theism. Their belief statement includes the following, “God created humans in biological continuity with all life on earth.” This statement fuses Christianity to core pantheist doctrine. The people at Reasons to Believe likewise foolishly give priority to the flawed interpretations of pantheistic scientists. Compromise between two mutually exclusive, opposing religions is crassly syncretistic. Syncretism is condemned in the Bible (think 1 Kings 18, Elijah at Mt. Carmel, for example).

Christians need to understand who the enemy is. It’s pantheism, a man-made religion that seeks to extinguish biblical faith. If theologians grasped what is argued here, that the pantheism of scientists is a hostile, opposing religion, perhaps fewer would try to harmonize the Bible with evolution. Christians don’t have to try to reconcile the Bible’s narratives to what many modern scientists believe.

The conflict is, at its core, the Word of God vs. the ideas of man. The Word of God is a self-attesting authority of supernatural origin. Pantheism, in contrast, and its core belief of evolution (Darwinism), is based on nothing more authoritative than human speculation.

Understanding that we’re engaged in an epic religious conflict should encourage the church to teach its young people that the views of science they’ll be exposed to in schools and colleges are an anti-theistic religion, pantheism. It’s a *religion* that is being forced onto them in their science courses. Christianity in America appears to have turned inward, into a largely private, or personal matter. Partly this may be because confidence in the Scriptures has been lost, and the revival that is desperately needed could result from a fresh awareness that the underlying issue is, fundamentally, the war of religions discussed here.

Rebellion against the God of Scripture is foolishness. Scripture obliges the church to identify and to confront this rebellion that’s rampant in society today, pantheism.