

## **Why identify pantheism as the religion opposing Christianity in the culture wars?**

The creation/evolution conflict continues to fester in Christianity, particularly in intellectual and academic circles. Creationist groups such as Answers in Genesis, Creation Ministries International and the Institute for Creation Research are doing good work and seeing good results especially among lay people. But in public challenges, biblical creation has come up on the losing end. In particular: (a) The creation vs. evolution debates on college campuses that were popular 30-20 years ago came to an abrupt stop when evolutionists refused to engage any further;<sup>1</sup> (b) The court cases in Louisiana and Arkansas, and most recently in Dover, Pennsylvania, all found against creation; (c) Massive compromise—more like a stampede—to billions of years and evolution appears to be going on in evangelical theology; (d) The Intelligent Design (ID) movement, although inherently strong, is making near-zero headway; (e) Most of the big evangelical churches seem to want nothing to do with creation, being concerned more with attracting young people while ignoring doctrine and discipleship; and (f) Evolution is being pushed ever more aggressively in the media and schools, even Christian schools, in the face of a mass of counter-evidence that is being assiduously ignored.

The *Kitzmiller vs Dover School Board* trial decision in Pennsylvania was particularly unfortunate. Not only did Judge John Jones III not deal with the constitutional issue of whether a local school board has the right to determine curriculum, he pronounced ID and creation to be religious, in contrast to science, which he believed is not religious. Therefore ID and

creation, he determined, have no place in the science classroom. No one seems to have the courage to challenge that monstrously wrong decision.

We assert that what is necessary is to identify the nature of the opposition to Christianity in general and to creation in particular as entirely religious. Our goal is to persuade the Church that the controversy regarding origins is not between "science" and Christianity, but it's their aggressive religion against ours.

The deep conviction, the commitment to evolution in spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, betrays the opposing religion. ("I readily admit that no species has ever been known to engender another, and that there is no absolutely definite evidence that such a thing has ever taken place. Nonetheless, I believe evolution to be just as certain as if it had been objectively proved," said Yves Delage, Sorbonne zoologist of a century ago, a revealingly religious statement if there ever was one!)

Understanding the conflict this way should totally change its complexion. The perception in the church is, if it's just atheists (and agnostics) *vs* Christians, that's no big deal, they just don't believe like Christians do. Atheists and agnostics simply have absence of faith. They are a negative something, not a positive. But if instead it's their *religion* versus Christianity...that's different. It's now religious warfare! It's their positive *vs* our positive. Now we can get some traction: What theologian wants to be syncretistic? What young person having been raised in the church wants to go over to an alien religion? What pastor would refuse to keep his sheep from straying into a pack of wolves?

Our goal here is to identify evolution and its "science" as outworkings of their religion, and the controversy as warfare.

Now what is the religion? The best answer is pantheism. We are defining pantheism as a religion, not as a philosophy. The definition of pantheist we use is anyone who rejects the God of the Bible and who holds to evolution to explain origins. Every anti-theist (where "theist" refers to Jehovah God) there is, whether atheist, agnostic, humanist, secularist, Marxist, materialist or existentialist, who holds to evolution, is pantheistic.

Perhaps the most basic question anyone can ever ask is, Why is there something instead of nothing? Why does anything exist? Biblical theism and pantheism both explain origins, both make theological statements, both enable us to construct a worldview and interpret reality. And we hold to one or the other with deep conviction. The one is as much a religion as the other.

Now, just as not every Christian has the same experience of God, not every Christian knows his Bible or theology, not every Christian has the same degree of commitment, so not every pantheist necessarily has the same awareness of his religion. This is especially so with pantheism because, as a religion, it's so diffuse, so vague, so difficult to nail down as to its beliefs, practices and any consequent worldview. Pantheism is furthermore very difficult for a Christian to understand because our minds are fixed on God as a Person, a Being. But pantheism has a non-being for deity; their deity is not a person. A pantheist doesn't necessarily have to be aware that his deity is somehow identified with nature, or even that there is any deity. This is

precisely why the first item of faith for a pantheist is not a positive statement but a negative: there is no Creator outside nature.

For a pantheist, the God of the Bible is not Creator. In pantheism there is no Creator. Whether they sense god somehow in nature or not isn't the point; the point is, God is not their god. We see their adherence to naturalism (or positivism) either as how they demonstrate faithfulness and service to their deity, or it's an essential pantheistic belief deriving from its core affirmations—even though pantheists may not be conscious of the existence of that deity.

The second item of faith for a pantheist is that we can find meaning in allegiance to the principle behind nature, which is perceived to be evolutionary progress. To a pantheist, creation is on-going, progressive, directional, and inherent in nature. Biological evolution is progressive, on-going creation. Stellar evolution, likewise. Marxism is progressiveness. In the U.S., we're making moral and political progress in every way: there's no more segregation, we promote women's rights, we're intolerant of child abuse, we have welfare for the indigent, and now tolerance of relaxed sexual mores. The rhetoric of LGBT activists, "we're on the right side of history," demonstrates progressiveness.

So, understanding evolutionists as pantheists identifies them as religious. Judge Jones III got it wrong. Scientists certainly are religious (all humans necessarily are), they are very religious and so is their explanation of origins. Thus the conflict is not objective, dispassionate science with its hard evidence proving

evolution and billions of years against the narratives of the Bible (which are alleged to be myths), as they want it perceived. No. It's their religion, a wholly man-made religion (in which their religious presuppositions always determine their conclusions), against our religion, which comes from God through revelation. It's their grand religious myth against our revealed truth. It's their religion, which seeks to extinguish theism, against ours, which seeks their salvation.

Ultimately, our warfare is not with worldly weapons (2 Corinthians 10:4), nor is it "against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12). Pantheism is a major manifestation of that darkness. And evolution is a core doctrine of pantheism.

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<sup>1</sup> A notable debate occurred in Feb. 2014 between Ken Ham of Answers in Genesis and Bill Nye, known as "The Science Guy." This debate was watched eventually by an estimated 15 million viewers. Nevertheless, the debate was not on a college campus and so far has not had an obvious effect on academia.