

## Theistic Evolution: An Incoherent and Inconsistent Worldview?

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### Abstract

In recent years there has been an explosion of literature in which theistic evolutionists describe, explain, and defend three beliefs at the core of their worldview. Firstly, God was/is working in and through the evolutionary process. Secondly, the evolutionary story of origins is not only scientific but also compatible with the biblical record of creation. And thirdly, they believe their worldview is entirely plausible, intellectually satisfying, and logically consistent. The aim of this paper is to defend the following thesis: Christians are caught up in theistic evolutionism without realizing that the worldview of theistic evolutionism is incoherent and inconsistent with the teachings of Scripture. I first provide some preliminary remarks about worldviews and the way to assess them. I then contrast the core characteristics of young-earth creationism and theistic evolutionism as they apply to a description and explanation of the kinds of entities that exist, their natures, their coming to be, the cause of evil in the world, and how it can be known. Along the way, I highlight various critical issues to consider and provide a critique of theistic evolution.

**Keywords:** theistic evolutionism, young-earth creationism, worldview.

### Introduction

In recent years there has been an explosion of literature in which theistic evolutionists describe, explain and defend three beliefs at the core of their worldview. The first belief is that although life originated from non-life and humans from ape-like creatures (so-called hominids) through an evolutionary process over billions and millions of years, God was/is working in and through the process. The second belief is that the evolutionary story of origins is not only scientific but also compatible with the biblical record of creation. And third, proponents of the theistic evolutionary-scientific picture of the world believe it is “entirely plausible, intellectually satisfying, and logically consistent” (Collins 2007, p.208; cf. Alexander 2008, 2010; Berry 2007; Bishop 2011; Enns 2005, 2010a, 2010b; Falk 2009; Giberson and Collins 2011; Lamoureux 2008, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c; Louis 2011; Pope 2007).

My aim is to defend the following thesis: Christians are caught up in theistic evolutionism without realizing that the worldview of theistic evolutionism is incoherent and inconsistent with Scripture, thus contrary to what they believe. In order to show that, I will first provide some preliminary remarks about worldviews and the way to assess them. I will then contrast the core characteristics of young-earth creationism and theistic evolutionism. Details will be fleshed out as they apply to a description, explanation, and an understanding of the kinds of entities that exist, their natures, their coming to be, the cause of

evil in the world, and how it can be known. Along the way, I will highlight various critical issues to consider and provide a critique of theistic evolutionism. But before I proceed, it will be useful to clarify a few issues.

It is a misconception to think that the creation-evolution controversy is a “battle” between “science” and “religion” as so often portrayed by theistic evolutionists in their published works (see, for example, Collins 2007, pp.4–6). Neither do Christians lack the ability to understand the evolutionary story of origins and/or Scripture, which is also the implicit message of theistic evolutionists to proponents of young-earth creationism. Dr. Francis Collins is a world-renowned geneticist and founder of The BioLogos Foundation, and the former executive vice president of BioLogos, Dr. Karl Giberson is professor in physics at Eastern Nazarene College. According to them, “evolution, properly understood, best describes God’s work of creation” (Giberson and Collins 2011, p.251; cf. Pope 2007, p.2). Thus, evolution, “the grand story of the creative world that God brought into existence,” constitutes what they refer to as “the BioLogos worldview” (Giberson and Collins 2011, p.37).

It is not difficult to see that the “battle” between young-earth creationism and theistic evolutionism is a controversy that involves the inerrancy and authority of Scripture, and the nature and character of the Creator. The evidence will show that proponents of theistic evolution should not be taken seriously when they inform us that they are committed to the

truth of Scripture. Further, the evidence suggests that proponents of theistic evolutionism have strong reasons to think they are panpsychists, if not pantheists. In a nutshell, the worldview of proponents of theistic evolutionism is weakened by many disqualifications, which undermine their arguments. The areas of confusion are ontology (God and man), etiology (creation and life), epistemology (science and Scripture), ethics (the moral nature of man), and the cause of evil in the world. It is to these issues that I now turn.

## Worldviews: A Comparison

### *Preliminary remarks*

For the purposes of this paper, a “worldview” is understood as “a comprehensive and integrated understanding of reality in all of its aspects” (Crowe 2009, p. 229). At the core of this understanding is a set of interrelated assumptions and beliefs in response to four interrelated questions. The assumptions and beliefs are united in such a way that it provides a coherent understanding of everything that is or exists. But before we look at the questions, it is of critical importance to keep four things in mind.

First, a worldview must accurately accord with the entities within its range of description, explanation and understanding. In different words, it must accord well with reality. It is therefore important to know the implications of what will be the case if its descriptions, explanations, and understanding are false. If, for example, a human being is only a material body/brain, what are the implications for our understanding of life after death? For if it is true then human beings decompose and eventually disintegrate upon death. This would make a belief in life in an intermediate state between death and a reunion with a resurrection body impossible to hold. Second, it is important to have an adequate understanding of what a belief is. A belief is, first of all, what a person accepts about reality, to varying degrees of strength. And since a belief is of or about things in the world, a belief is either true or false. Put differently, the mental content of a belief is identical to a proposition or a number of propositions. So understood means that a belief is not an opinion or hypothesis (conjecture or guess) and, if true (that is, when corresponding to facts), constitutes knowledge (Boghossian 2006; Wolfe 1982).

The third thing we need to understand is something about categories. Fundamental to any investigation of reality and the question about the kinds of things that exist, their properties and the relation between them, are categories; they help us to determine the answers to our basic or fundamental questions. To put it somewhat differently, all things that exist fall under one or other category which indicates what something is, for example, a substance (a human being, a dog, an

angel, a leaf), a quality (strong, being wise), quantity, relation, place (it is always good to ask where something exists), time (it is always good to ask when something exists), action, event, state, posture, and so on. In short, categories help us to identify things in the world; they help us to make distinctions; they prevent us from confusing one thing with another thing, and they help us to judge things as they are in themselves. In other words, in categorical thinking, the issue is about how to understand reality and to keep things apart that should be kept apart.

Here is an example from Scripture. Isaiah 5:20 reads:

Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil;

Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness;

Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

Not only does our Creator think in terms of categories, but distinctions between good and evil, light and darkness, and sweet and bitter are also not made without a reason. That is how things are in themselves. It should therefore be a good thing to bear in mind when assessing various beliefs.

Finally, a crucially important issue about the assessment of worldviews is naturalness. Any postulated entity or entity believed to exist in the world should be naturally at home with other entities in a worldview. If, for example, the worldview postulates the existence of an immaterial God, mental substances, properties (qualities or attributes) and relations, then it would be natural for that worldview if it bears a relevant similarity to other entities in the worldview. If God is an agent, then it would be reasonable to think that humans, who have been created in His image, would resemble naturally their Creator. Also, if God is a paradigm case of a person, then it would be reasonable to think that human persons resemble naturally their Creator, and not some imaginary hominid (ape-like creature). With this in mind we can now consider the core questions every worldview must provide answers to.

1. *What is real?* This is an ontological question about the kinds of things that exist, their natures, including the question of the highest kind of reality. Related questions are: Does the world consist of only one kind of stuff, say matter? Does God exist, and if so, what kind of being is He? Are there such things as human persons, and if so, are they mere biological organisms, and if not, why not?
2. *How did the world and life on earth originate?* This is an etiological question, since it asks about the source or cause of the universe, including the earth and life. The most relevant questions in this category are: Has the world and life originated from chemicals in some primordial pond (that is, mindless and unconscious processes of nature)? Have human beings descended from ape-like

creatures over millions of years of evolution, or are the world and life the products of an intelligent Creator/Designer?

3. *How can we know?* To this epistemological question, there are three answers relevant to the discussion that is to follow: (a) scientists tell us how God created, and the Bible tells us that God created. In this view the Bible is representative of a pre-scientific view of how the world is and came to be; (b) accept that science is inherently atheistic. Any person asking a question about the nature of immaterial entities such as God, angels, the soul, spirit or mind has, by definition, become unscientific. It would therefore be preferable if such questions are relegated to the realm of theology or metaphysics (philosophy); (c) there are many sources of knowledge, but the Bible is a Christian's highest source of knowledge and absolute authority in all matters about which it speaks.
4. *How should we live?* This is the question about ethics. In general, once people formed their beliefs about the kinds of things that exist, and how they relate to them, the way is paved for how they believe they ought to live and how things, including human beings, are to be treated. It is then that beliefs about what is right and good are formed. The questions of importance here are: (a) is the moral sense of a human being the product of a Holy God implanted in him at creation, or is it something that could have evolved from physical atoms and/or something we could have inherited from ape-like ancestors? and (b) how does the worldview account for evil in the world? The last question refers to "the problem of evil" and the response is called a "theodicy." A theodicy explains, in other words, the ways of God concerning moral and natural evil in the world.

To summarize, a worldview must accurately accord with the phenomena within its range of description, explanation, and understanding. Scripture is a Christian's highest standard of knowledge and authority. Consider the implications of the beliefs—whether true or false. An adequate understanding of categories of reality helps to determine answers to our fundamental questions: What exists? How did it originate? How can we know? And, how should we live? Finally, coherence, consistency, and truth are yardsticks by which to judge a worldview, therefore, the merits of accepting or rejecting it.

### **The Central Characteristics of Young-Earth Creationism**

The reader is asked to bear in mind that this section merely lays out the core ontological, etiological, epistemological, and ethical commitments of young-earth creationism. A defense of its truth or rationality

will take us beyond the scope of this paper. For the affirmations and denials essential to a consistent Christian (young-earth creationism) worldview, see Mortenson and Ury (2008, pp.453–456). Readers can also consult Crowe (2009), DeWitt (2007), Kelly (1997), and Morris (2000). For a theology of creation based on Genesis 1–11, the reader is referred to Kulikovskiy (2009). For an excellent defense of a creationist explanation of evil and the origin and nature of death, see Mortenson (2009) and Stambaugh (2008) respectively. And for a critique of "christian physicalism" and a defense of our Lord and Savior's view of Scripture against the background of theistic evolutionism, the reader is referred to Joubert (2011) and Joubert (2012b).

### **Ontological commitments**

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1; cf. Malachi 2:10; John 1:1–3; Colossians 1:16–17; Hebrews 1:10, 11:3). Heaven and earth had a beginning; God exists, and is its cause. God is a necessary being, and the world and everything in it is contingent. That is to say, God could have existed without the world, but not vice versa. In other words, the world owes its existence and continued existence to God. God as the first cause of the world makes other things possible, and other things are therefore dependent on God to become real. God is the intelligent Creator/Designer of the universe, and nothing can cause Him to act besides His own choices and will (Daniel 4:35; Revelation 4:11). God is therefore absolutely sovereign. He is omnipotent (almighty), omniscient (He knows everything, even the number of hairs on our heads and the thoughts we entertain), omnipresent (nothing is outside His awareness), and is absolutely good and perfect (He is a God of truth; He cannot lie, and cannot approve evil)—Matthew 5:48, 10:30; Numbers 23:19; Psalm 139:7–10; Isaiah 40:12–14, 18, 21, 22, 25, 26, 28, 65:16; Habakkuk 1:13; Titus 1:2. Among other things, God's creative activity is an expression of knowledge, wisdom, and skillful workmanship (Job 37:16; Psalm 147:5; Proverbs 3:19; 1 John 3:20).

God is a spirit being, an immaterial, invisible, spiritual substance (John 4:24; 1 Timothy 1:17). God is also a paradigm case of what a person is. He exemplifies thoughts, propositional attitudes, and various other mental properties of consciousness, such as sensations, attitudes, desires, and choices that are constitutive of His own conscious life (Psalm 45:7, 51:6, 139:17–18; Isaiah 55:11; Jeremiah 18:9–10; Ezekiel 18:23; Romans 9:18; 1 Corinthians 2:11). He said "...I AM WHO I AM..." (Exodus 3:14), which means, among other things, that God's I knows things from an immediate, direct and first person point of view (1 Corinthians 2:11); He is immutable,

therefore retains His identity through time (Psalm 90:2; Malachi 3:6; James 1:17). God is also a paradigm case of rationality, intelligence and moral excellence (knowledge, wisdom, truthfulness, holiness, kindness, compassion, and so on). God is thus a being of the order of mind, from which follows that consciousness and mental properties are more basic or fundamental in reality than are physical realities.

God created various things, but humans are unique in the sense that they are created in the image of God, therefore, to resemble or to be like Him (Genesis 1:26–27, 5:1–2; Psalms 100:3; Colossians 3:10; James 3:9). If human beings are persons, then they and God are of a kind, since human persons bear similarity to their Creator. To be more specific, human beings are immaterial spiritual souls and have material bodies (Psalm 31:9; Matthew 10:28); they know things about themselves immediately and directly from a first person perspective (1 Corinthians 2:11); they have an irreducible conscious mental I that remains the same through change over time; they are agents who have the power to will to do something or refrain from doing it, and they can act with a purpose in mind and plan how to achieve their ends (Romans 6:13, 19, 12:1). They also have an essence or nature—humanness and personhood—which grounds their membership in the created order “mankind.”

### ***Etiological commitments***

God created the world and the things in it through direct action and indirect processes, with several simple commands: “Let there be . . . and it was so.” Man was an exception; God made him from the ground of the earth and breathed into him his spirit (Genesis 2:7; cf. Ecclesiastes 12:7; Zechariah 12:1). The Word was in the beginning; the Word was with God, and was God. Not a single thing—visible and invisible—came into being apart from Him. He was therefore before all things and in Him all things endure. The Word also became flesh; He is Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord (John 1:1–3, 10, 14; Colossians 1:16–17, 2:19).

Life demands a Life-Giver, who is the Holy Spirit (John 6:63). Death is the absence of life, in three senses. There is death once the soul or spirit becomes separated from the body (John 19:30; Acts 7:59; James 2:26); there is spiritual death (John 3:1–7, 5:24–25; Romans 6:23; James 5:20); there is death which comprises an eternal separation from God (Revelation 2:11, 20:6, 14–15, 21:8). God promises new life in this world, and new bodies at the resurrection of the dead (1 Corinthians 15:42–57).

It is a reasonable principle that a first member in any given series of subsequent members can only pass on what it itself possesses. Personhood, intelligence, power, and moral natures can only be passed on by One who is already a person, intelligent, powerful

and moral. Jesus said, for example, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words I have spoken to you are spirit and life” (John 6:63). There is not a single example or instance in the Bible of matter being the cause of life, although many examples of spirits interacting with matter, matter coming alive when the spirit from God entered it, and material bodies becoming corpses when spirit left them (Genesis 35:18; 1 Kings 17:17, 21, 22; Matthew 10:1, 20; Acts 2:1–4, 38, 16:16–18).

### ***Epistemological commitments***

Christians have at least three sources of knowledge. The first is personal knowledge, which is knowledge of their selves and mental states of thinking, sensing, desiring, and so on. God has equipped every human being with a set of faculties and capacities to interact with Him, the world of things, and their fellow human beings. The faculties comprise the spiritual, mental, and moral seats of the soul. Each faculty consists of thousands of capacities that are inseparably linked with each other, and can function either in the way the Creator intended for them to function or in a dysfunctional way. Fundamental capacities, such as thought, belief, sensation, feelings, emotion, desires, choice, and volition (to will or not to will something), are also the basic categories of the soul. And since they are natural kinds of entities, they are both describable and explainable. Our senses have been given to us in order to gain knowledge of how the world outside of ourselves is. If therefore we see something red, or hear something loud, or smell something rotten, then colors, sounds, and aromas must exist; they are not constructions or imaginations of the mind, but real existents in the world.

This implies that proper knowledge of human beings, their immaterial selves, is gained through an understanding of their spiritual souls, and not solely by understanding their bodies or brains. A different way of making the same point is to say, knowledge of the spiritual soul/mind cannot be reduced to knowledge of the body/brain and its various functions or mechanisms and replaced by biology and neuroscience.

A second source of knowledge is the created world or nature, referred to by theologians as God’s general revelation (Psalm 19:1–3; Romans 1:19–20, 2:14–15; Ephesians 2:10). This world is studied through the methods of science. There is also a third source of knowledge, and that is God’s special revelation, namely, our Scriptures (Proverbs 30:5–6; Matthew 22:29; John 17:17; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19–21, 3:15–16; Jude 3). Two points should therefore be emphasized. First, there is a distinct difference between “science as the alleged facts of nature explainable by man and Scripture as



the certain facts of God given and explained by God” (Mayhue 2008, p. 109). What Richard Mayhue said in this quoted passage, he said elsewhere differently:

Revelation does not include what man discovers on his own (i.e., knowledge) but rather what God discloses that otherwise man could not find on his own. General revelation in nature, as defined by special revelation, discloses the existence of God, the glory of God, the power and intelligence of God, the benevolence of God, and the fallenness (evil) of humanity (Mayhue 2008, p. 119).

In other words, special revelation (the Bible) authenticates what man discovers in and through general revelation; nature is not “the 67th Book of the Bible” (Mayhue 2008, pp. 105–129). The second point is simply that advocates of young-earth creationism accept Scripture as their highest source of knowledge and absolute authority in all matters about which it speaks.

### **Ethical commitments**

There is evil (death, pain, and frustration) in the world. Death, pain, and frustration entered the world because of Adam’s rebellion against God (Genesis 3, 4:8, 6:5, 8:21; Ecclesiastes 7:29, 9:3; Mark 7:21–23; Romans 5:12, 14, 17, 21, 8:20–22). The result is a radical incongruity between what the world and everything in it is and how it was originally intended or designed to be. Corruption and dysfunction are, in other words, hard realities of the world we are living in.

Part of man’s constitutional nature are his moral faculties (Romans 2:14–15), which God implanted in him when He created him (Ecclesiastes 7:29). Ethical directions and morality are therefore grounded in the nature of God (1 Peter 1:14–16), and what God required for man is what He himself was and is. There is no better evidence for this fact than the command: “Be holy, for I am holy” (Leviticus 11:44; 1 Peter 1:16).

### **The Central Characteristics of Theistic Evolution Introductory remarks**

While the writer acknowledges that some theistic evolutionists are not comfortable with the words “theistic evolution,” it will be retained in this paper for a single reason: whereas some proponents of theistic evolution such as Collins (2007), and Giberson and

Collins (2011) prefer BioLogos, and others such as Denis Lamoureux (2010a) prefer “evolutionary creation,” they all share their three core beliefs with other variants of theistic evolution, such as the emergentism, panentheism, process theism, or naturalistic theism of Barbour (1990), Clayton (2000; 2006), Griffin (2000), and the late Arthur Peacocke (2006).

“BioLogos,” Collins (2007) informed his readers, is his “modest proposal to rename theistic evolution as Bios through Logos, or simply BioLogos” (Collins 2007, p. 203). This “synthesis” or middle-way between young-earth creationism and atheistic evolutionism, he says, is achieved through combining *bios*—the Greek word for “life” (the root word for biology and biochemistry), and *logos*—the Greek word for “word,” since “the Word is synonymous with God” as expressed in John 1:1.

Now it may be that the reader is not aware of it, but *bios* or life is not a word for mere biological life, although the Greeks may have thought of it as such. I will explain. The word *nepshesh*, the Hebrew word translated as *soul* occurs 756 times in the Old Testament (Pfeiffer, Vos, and Rea 1975, p. 1616). Not only is the word used in reference to animals and humans, but also in reference to God. This is an important point, because proponents of theistic evolution are of the opinion that the soul is not what sets humans apart from animals (Green 2005; Jeeves 2005).<sup>1</sup> Now if that is the case, then the soul is also not something that sets animals apart from God.<sup>2</sup> When the word soul is used in reference to God, it refers to God as an immaterial, transcendent self, fully capable of thinking, willing, feeling, desiring, and so on (cf. Leviticus 26:11, 30; 1 Samuel 2:35; Job 23:13; Amos 6:8). Since this is so, and the Word was with God and was God before the world came into being, it becomes difficult to reconcile life with biology. The reason is simple: in His pre-incarnate state, Jesus had no material body, just as is the case with God the Holy Spirit. Jesus also said, “It is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life” (John 6:63).

Moreland and Rae (2000) inform us that *nepshesh* is always translated *psychē* and never *bios* in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. If *bios* is the Greek word for biological or

<sup>1</sup> Professor Joel Green, who teaches New Testament theology at Fuller Theological Seminary, says: “[W]e err when we imagine that it is the ‘soul’ that distinguishes humanity from non-human creatures” (Green 2005, p. 3). Neuropsychologist Malcolm Jeeves’s argument is simply that “the word translated ‘soul’ in Genesis 2:7 is a word that has already appeared in Genesis 1:20, 21, 24, and 30 where in every case it refers to animals...” (Jeeves 2005, p. 172). These views are not views from nowhere. This is how Charles Darwin expressed them in 1871: “The ground upon which this conclusion rests will never be shaken, for the close similarity between man and the lower animals... are facts which cannot be disputed... He who is not content to look, like a savage, at the phenomena as disconnected, cannot any longer believe that man is the work of a separate act of creation... [T]he conclusion is that man is the co-descendant with other mammals of a common progenitor (Baird and Rosenbaum 2007, p. 70).

<sup>2</sup> Christian philosopher Peter van Inwagen said this about himself: “I will say only that when I enter most deeply into that which I call *myself*, I seem to discover that I am a living animal” (van Inwagen 1995, p. 475).

physical health, why have the translators avoided translating soul (*nephesh*) into *bios* in the Septuagint? In the words of Moreland and Rae, this avoidance “is best explained by their recognition that *nephesh* refers to a transcendent, irreducible aspect of living things that goes beyond mere breath or physical life” (Moreland and Rae 2000, p. 30). The implication to be drawn from these facts is that it would be a mistake to assume that *bios* is a mere biological concept or one belonging to biochemistry.

It is important to know that advocates of theistic evolution/BioLogos adhere to what is known as the “scientific worldview,” which Collins distinguishes from what he refers to as the “spiritual worldview” of the Bible (Collins 2007, pp. 1–6). In fact, Giberson and Collins contrast the “spiritual worldview” of values with the facts of science (Giberson and Collins 2011, p. 7). Contrarily, advocates of young-earth creation do not separate the values they find in Scripture from the propositional truth of its contents.<sup>3</sup>

However, Giberson and Collins expressed their regret that “many Christians cannot fully appreciate how science enriches our understanding of God’s creation” because of

an unfortunate misunderstanding that the scientific picture of the world is not compatible with their belief that God created the world (Giberson and Collins 2011, p. 17).

What their scientific picture of the world entails is that “the world is made of invisible atoms” (Giberson and Collins 2011, pp. 16–17) and, as we have seen, that “evolution, properly understood, best describes God’s work of creation” (Giberson and Collins 2011, p. 251). To claim otherwise, they say, is “illogical and philosophically preposterous” (Giberson and Collins 2011, p. 23). Let us examine their claim.

Professor of philosophy at the University of California (Berkeley) John Searle, who is also a naturalist and physicalist, describes the main tenets of the scientific picture of the world, to which proponents of theistic evolution subscribe, as follows:

Some features of this world view are very tentative, others well established. At least two features of it are so fundamental and so well established as to be no longer optional for reasonably well-educated citizens of the present era... These are the atomic theory of matter and the evolutionary theory of biology (Searle 1992, p. 86).

What we need to know is, if proponents of theistic evolution adhere to the same worldview as advocates of scientism, naturalism, and physicalism, why is God necessary to explain the origin of the world? If atoms and the evolutionary process serve as the answer to the question, as atheists, advocates of naturalism and

members of BioLogos believe it does, then God has certainly become an unnecessary extra to explain the realities that exist, their natures, and their coming to be. This is neither an illogical nor a philosophically preposterous conclusion. Pope lists, among other things, the following features of the evolutionary process:

1. The process is “blind,” meaning that it is mindless, has no foresight, and can therefore not think and plan to achieve goals (Pope 2007, pp. 12, 56, 187);
2. The process is purely physical (Pope 2007, p. 56);
3. The process is productive; it produced human behavior (Pope 2007, p. 7) and species marked by contingency and chance (Pope 2007, p. 11);
4. The process is highly creative; it has the inherent capacity to “generate,” for example, new kinds of entities (Pope 2007, pp. 7, 56).

Compare now Pope’s description of the evolutionary process with how atheist Richard Dawkins (2006) describes his “maker”:

Natural selection, the blind, unconscious, automatic process which Darwin discovered, and which we now know is the explanation for the existence and apparently purposeful form of all life, has no purpose in mind. It has no mind, and no mind’s eye. It does not plan for the future. It has no vision, no foresight, not sight at all. If it can be said to play the role of watchmaker in nature, it is the *blind* watchmaker (Dawkins 2006, p. 5; emphasis in the original).

What we need is an explanation: if there is no difference in their respective descriptions of the evolutionary process, why is it necessary for proponents of theistic evolution to insist that God must be part of the process, or better, “in” the process when Darwin’s fundamental discovery was that the process is creative enough, “although not conscious” (Ayala 2007, p. 8573), to produce or create beings like ourselves? Giberson and Collins also said, “nature does things—often quite remarkable—without assistance from outside” (Giberson and Collins 2011, p. 134). Who is illogical and philosophically preposterous here?

### **Ontological commitments**

Collins appears to have spoken for all theistic evolutionists when he says that in spite of “the many variants of theistic evolution, any typical version rests upon six premises” (Collins 2007, p. 200). For our purposes, of relevance are premises 4–6, which are worded as follows:

4. Once evolution got under way, no special supernatural intervention was required.
5. Humans are part of the process, sharing a common ancestor with the great apes.

<sup>3</sup> To see why this dichotomy is not biblical, the reader is referred to Kulikovskiy (2009, pp. 18–29, 31–33) and Pearcey (2005).

6. But humans are also unique in ways that defy evolutionary explanation and point to our spiritual nature. This includes the existence of the Moral Law (the knowledge of right and wrong) and the search for God that characterizes all human cultures throughout history.

Collins then added:

If one accepts these six premises, then an entirely plausible, intellectually satisfying, and logically consistent synthesis emerges: God, who is not limited in space and time, created the universe and established natural laws that govern it (Collins 2007, p.200).

How could that be if it appears from the preliminary remarks that the theistic evolutionistic/scientific picture of the world can do without the Creator? At best, God has become an unnecessary explanation who has very little work to do. Moreover, if theistic evolution is congruent with Searle's naturalism, the scientific grand story, then theistic evolution must be understood as an expression of scientism and physicalism. Collins's commitment to scientism is unequivocally clear: "Science is the only reliable way to understand the natural world" (Collins 2007, p.6).

If we now recall that proponents of theistic evolution and the scientific picture of the world describe both the evolutionary process and the laws that govern the universe as purely physical in nature, then it follows that only a physical specification will suffice to tell us what has happened in the past and is going to happen in the future. This means further that no atomist or evolutionist can appeal to any immaterial entity or supernatural intervention to explain anything at all in the world. Neither is such an appeal deemed necessary at all (see premise 4). But then, what is God doing, or has God done, in or through the evolutionary process? How can the spiritual nature of a human being "emerge" from or be caused by matter, or ape-like creatures, which were not spiritual or moral in the senses indicated by Collins (premise 6)? At what point in human evolution has a previously and supposedly value-neutral action (for example, one ape killing another ape over feeding or mating rights) become a "moral" one?<sup>4</sup>

If God is working in and through the evolutionary process; if God's role is/was that of supervisor of the process (Giberson and Collins 2011, pp.122, 129, 205); if it would be a mistake to think that God was "in absolute control of every event" happening in this world (Pope 2007, p. 100), and a mistake to think that God engaged in reasoning in order to "steer courses of events in the desired direction," which means that "evolution does not have to be pre-programmed to be described as reflecting the divine plan" (Pope

2007, p.102), then, why is there an appeal made to the Creator? If the earth emerged from the universe; if life emerged from the physical conditions on earth; if human beings emerged from hominids as products of a natural process, and if God is working in and through the evolutionary process (Pope 2007, pp. 11–12, 110, 267, 276), what was God doing in the process if He was supervising the process but not steering the events in the process? In exactly what sense was/is God in the process? Is God "in" the process like water in a glass? This cannot be, for water and a glass are indifferent to each other. Neither is it the case that water and a glass depend on each other for their mutual existence or explain each other. Is God metaphysically "in" the evolutionary process? If so, how can we distinguish between God, who is not a process, but a substance, from the process itself? Not only are these questions nowhere asked and answered by proponents of theistic evolution, but nothing about their understanding of God and the evolutionary process makes any sense. It is logically incoherent, to say the least.

Consider this. Giberson and Collins (2011) and Pope (2007) tell us that God is the primary cause of the universe, and the evolutionary process the secondary cause of things that came to be, but Pope also admits that "the notion of secondary causation is not found in Scripture" (Pope 2007, p.104). But then there must certainly be a reason why that is so, especially since the secondary cause is equated with the evolutionary process. Yet, in utter self-contradiction, proponents of theistic evolution believe that the theory of evolution, "properly understood," best describes how God brought this world and humans into being. Let me clarify what Pope is telling us. "Primary cause" should not be taken as God acting first, and then the secondary cause later or that the secondary cause is the effect of God acting first. Far from it; primary "refers to a metaphysical relation, not a temporal sequence" (Pope 2007, p.105). In simple terms, this logically implies that God did not exist prior to matter and/or the evolutionary process. To put it another way, God exists with or alongside it, and was therefore as dependent on the process as the process was/is on God.

Do proponents of theistic evolution believe that God created the world out of nothing (*ex nihilo*)? According to theologian and physicist Ian Barbour (1971) God has not. Pope (2007) reckons it is a mistake to identify creation with a temporal beginning of the universe (Pope 2007, p.101). This view, they hold, wrongly implies that God exists outside of nature, or "Mother Nature", as Giberson and Collins (2011, p.130) also refer to nature. It would therefore be a further mistake to think of the process in terms of a plan

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed discussion of why theistic evolutionists are unable to explain the origin of morality, see Joubert (2012a).

or strategy God implemented to achieve His goals. Again, why has God been placed “in” the process when He supervised the process, but not controlling, planning, or knowing its outcomes (Pope 2007, p.94)? Who, or is it what, is this “God” proponents of theistic evolution describe to us?

Giberson and Collins tell their readers that

God is an artist bringing beauty from ugliness and order from disorder... the world is good (Genesis 1:31). The pinnacle of that goodness is humankind, made in God’s image and charged by God to be caretakers of the creation (Giberson and Collins 2011, p.102).

These are highly misleading statements. First, Genesis 1:31 does not teach that God created the world “good,” but “very good.” Second, these statements create the false impression that Giberson and Collins believe in the literal truth of Genesis 1–3, when they do not. While they appear to accept a literal interpretation of the “good world” God created, they seem to ignore what “very good” in the context in which it appears implies and entails: the creation could not have been very good if there was “ugliness” and “disorder” in the world prior to when the Creator uttered the words “very good.”<sup>5</sup> They therefore assume their conclusion is correct before an argument is offered in support of it. Third, they appear to accept the literal truth of “humankind as the pinnacle of that good creation” at the same time as they do not believe that Genesis 2 provides actual descriptions of the creation of Adam and Eve (Giberson and Collins 2011, p.206). Similarly, Pope (2007) believes that Adam and Eve were not literal people; Lamoureux (2010b) believed Adam never existed, and Brannan (2007) suggested that we think of Adam as a child, who was unable to distinguish between right and wrong, therefore not responsible for the death, pain, and suffering that entered the world. Their declarations are therefore a highly arbitrary affair. And lastly, their conception of the Creator is also not consistent with the character of the Creator revealed in Scripture. If God created order out of disorder, then we need to know where the disorder came from, or who or what was responsible for the disorder. And if God was working in and through the evolutionary process and capable of creating disorder, then surely He must have been able to create order without disorder in the first instance. The impression we are left with is that our Creator is not really almighty, never mind not absolutely intelligent.

Lamoureux who holds three doctorates—in dentistry, evolutionary biology, and evangelical theology—categorically stated that science “reveals *how* the Creator made” the world, “while the Bible

[reveals] precisely *who* created it” (Lamoureux 2010a, p.45). From this follows that every single person on earth who read the opening chapters of Genesis, including our Lord, believed falsehood until Darwinists appeared on the scientific landscape to reveal to us how God actually created the world. Lamoureux, it seems, has unconsciously asked us not to take him seriously, therefore we will not. Yet, he expects us to take him seriously when he said he “uphold[s] the Scriptural and Christian view of intelligent design” (Lamoureux 2010a, p.32). But then, closer scrutiny reveals that proponents of theistic evolution give us reasons to think exactly the opposite. The “God” they describe to us not only lacks the intelligence to clearly communicate how He created the world; He not only withheld from us how He created the world; He is not only not really in control of the evolutionary process or every event that is happening in the world, but also does not need to know small details in, of, or about the evolutionary process (Giberson and Collins 2011, p.121). We can therefore not accept their god as the Creator of the world.

Giberson and Collins also tell their readers that they commit a categorical mistake to think of the Creator of the world as we think of human designers. To refer to the “Creator” is “God talk” in metaphorical terms (Giberson and Collins 2011, p.120), they say. If these two proponents of theistic evolution would think of the Creator as infinitely wise, that His knowledge is exhaustive, and that His thoughts are all-encompassing, then we cannot but agree. If, however, they mean that the designation “Creator” in Scripture (cf. Ecclesiastes 12:1; Isaiah 40:12–14, 26, 28, 43:15; Romans 1:25; 1 Peter 4:19) is a term that is the product of human language or perception, then they are mistaken. Scripture indicates that “... we are His workmanship...” (Ephesians 2:10), created in His image and “according to [His] likeness” (Genesis 1:26–27; James 3:9). It is therefore no accident that 1 Corinthians 2:11 reveals a similarity between man and God: the spirit of man is to man as the Spirit of God is to God. Thus, knowledge and thoughts, which entail intelligence, are predicated of both man and the Holy Spirit. Moreover, the Bible speaks of “Bezalel the son of Uri” whose source of wisdom, understanding and knowledge of craftsmanship—“to make designs” and “to perform in every inventive work,” for example, the work of “... an engraver and of a designer and the tapestry maker...”—was the Spirit of God (Exodus 35:31–35). What these facts show is an analogy between the Creator and human persons in virtue of the fact that humans bear similar features to their

<sup>5</sup> See Lubenow (1998). About those who hold to the “scientific” millions of years of creation, “death, pain, and suffering in Genesis 1.” James Stambaugh wrote: “They try to hold to some of the orthodox moorings of Christian theology, yet they include many doctrines that contradict what they say they believe” (Stambaugh 2008, p.385).



Creator—literally.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, to refer to the “Creator” as “God talk” in metaphorical terms is false.

What makes us human? Giberson and Collins speculate that “various human characteristics might be built into the evolutionary process” (Giberson and Collins 2011, p.204), but their speculation is totally without foundation. If humans descended from hominids, as evolutionists believe they did, then we will be unable to say where “humans” began and where they end. To hold that the Creator somewhere along the evolutionary process infused some ape-like creature with a soul (or the image of God) would be (1) to contradict Collin’s premise 4, or (2) amount to accepting that the Creator performed a miracle. If proponents of theistic evolution opt for (2) as well as that our Lord and Savior’s resurrection from the dead was a miracle, then there is absolutely no reason not to accept that Adam was created directly and immediately by the Creator from the dust of the earth, separately from animals, and in mature form (Genesis 2:7). In other words, advocates of theistic evolution register an inconsistent view of what our all-powerful Creator is able to do and has done. But if we have to take Giberson and Collins seriously, then where one kind of nature begins and another ends in its evolutionary development is wholly arbitrary. The logical implication is that there simply is no such thing as a human nature. It follows that it is inconsistent for proponents of theistic evolution to even refer to or talk about human nature.<sup>7</sup> In any case, proponents of theistic evolution know very well they cannot admit the discontinuity between animals and humans: “The outstanding characteristic of an essence [essential nature] is its unchanging permanence.... If species had such an essence, gradual evolution would be impossible” (Hull 1989, pp.74–75; cf. Mayr 1987, p.156).

But that creates a further problem for evolutionists. If the process is purely physical and mindless, how can an immaterial soul and mind “emerge” from matter? Ironically, in opposition to ontological reductionism, certain proponents of theistic evolution proposed their own version of physicalism, which they call “emergent materialism” or “material emergentism” (Pope 2007, pp.170, 172). It is an evolutionary and materialist position that is variously known as nonreductive physicalism, “Christian physicalism” (Murphy 2006b), emergent monism (Clayton 2000; 2006), and double-aspect monism (Jeeves 2005). The core premise of material emergentism can be stated as follows:

The evolutionary process is best explained as the gradual emergence of radically new kinds of entities that cannot be reduced to the matter and material processes from which they emerged (for example, soul from body, and mind from brain, see Pope 2007, pp.47, 67, 70, 115, 137, 153).<sup>8</sup>

Thus, there is no such thing as a pure spiritual mental being because there is nothing that can have a mental property without having a physical property, and whatever mental properties an entity may have, they emerged from, depend on, and are determined (caused) by matter.

As a first response it should be said that a review of criticisms advanced against Christian physicalists (nonreductive physicalists) have shown that if their thesis, that the human person is identical to his body/brain or is just a property of the brain is true, then sameness of identity through change will be impossible, which means that the resurrection and life after death will be incoherent notions (Delfino 2005), the existence of angels, Satan and demons become an illusion (Garcia 2000), free will and eternal life will be incompatible with Christian physicalism

<sup>6</sup> Two crucially important points in the analogy are these: (1) consider the ways the two beings are like each other and the ways they are different, and (2) consider whether the comparison is relevant to the analogy being used. My few Scripture references reveal that the Spirit of God and the spirit of man are similar and dissimilar in various ways, which means that both the quantity and quality of the respects of resemblance are relevant to the analogy. I conclude that Giberson and Collins’s argument serves to weaken or obscure the analogy of design and intelligence; their thought resembles more the blind watchmaker thesis of atheist Richard Dawkins (2006) than the thought revealed by Scripture.

<sup>7</sup> Theistic evolutionist and philosopher Donald Wacome stated, to have been able “to function as his [God’s] agents [that is, Adam and Eve] in the created world, representing him as they exercise dominion over the creation... [makes it] reasonable to suppose that human beings performing these functions presupposes their having certain characteristics” (Wacome 1997, p. 7). While he is prepared to grant that no “convincing scientific theories of how we came to have these characteristics are generally currently available” and that “these characteristics comprise the image of God,” it “adds nothing to the argument against the possibility of a naturalistic [evolutionary] explanation...” (Wacome 1997, p. 7). The problem is that Wacome does not offer us an explanation of how blind, mindless processes with no consciousness can produce entities with a mind and consciousness. Moreover, if nature consists entirely of physical processes, then it follows that from the physical by means of the physical only the physical can come. But since Wacome believes that no “plausible interpretation of the imago Dei [image of God] maintains that it is our physical resemblance to God that is involved here, since he [God] is not a material being” (Wacome 1997, p. 7), it follows that something is a person only if there exists a relevant similarity to the supreme Person.

<sup>8</sup> It is important to distinguish between emergentism as an ontological thesis and emergentism as an epistemological thesis. The latter view entails that new structures, patterns, and properties at any level in an ontological hierarchy or system are caused by the interaction between entities or parts at a level below it, irrespective of the number of levels postulated. Each higher level requires its own description, for instance, physics at the base, followed by chemistry, biology, psychology, and so on. The crucial point is, the “fundamental causal processes remain, ultimately, physical” (Clayton 2006, p. 6).

(Larmer 2000), and most important of all, the Incarnation of Christ cannot be true (Siemans 2005). The second response is, if the soul is an immaterial entity, radically different in kind from the material (hominid) body from which it “emerged,” then there is no logical reason to preclude the idea that angels (God’s “...ministering spirits...” [Hebrews 1:14]) could have emerged from hominids as well. But if emergent physicalists preclude this possibility then it becomes an incoherent and self-defeating notion. What originates or comes to be from the physical by means of the physical can only be physical. To deny the principle is illogical.

It seems that immaterial entities such as the soul, spirit, mind, and unchanging natures are not natural phenomena for “Christian” physicalists, and are therefore not consistent and at home with theistic evolution. There is therefore only one way proponents of theistic evolution can overcome their problem, and that is to reduce a human person to a body or brain. But that will not do, for God is a complete person without a body and brain. He is also the first Person in a series of subsequent persons—angelic and human—therefore able to have passed on what He already possessed, namely, personhood.

### ***Etiological commitments***

Giberson and Collins (2011) state that a “compelling explanation of the origin of life here on earth has not yet emerged” (Giberson and Collins 2011, p. 174). In blatant contradiction to what the Bible asserts, they hold that “the Bible does not specify that God uttered a unique command, one at a time, for each new species” (Giberson and Collins 2011, p. 122). Yet,

they must have had evidence when they asserted that “God’s Spirit guides the progression of life” (Giberson and Collins 2011, p. 122). And what that evidence is we are not told. We shall later see that this is a classic example of what I will refer to as a card-stacking approach to Scripture. But, and again, if the Spirit of God is able to guide the progression of life, why are we told He did not control or plan it? Since when can it be said of this Person (or human person, for that matter) that He guides<sup>9</sup> a process without controlling or planning, for example, what He has to avoid and what not? Could God not have decided that a human must have four arms instead of just two?

Recall that proponents of theistic evolution adhere to the “scientific worldview.” Now if atoms, the most basic building blocks of matter, are purely physical in nature, as is also the evolutionary process, how can lifeless and unconscious matter cause life and consciousness to “emerge?”<sup>10</sup> Panpsychists (Skrbina 2005) and panexperientialists (Griffin 1997) realized that this question creates insurmountable obstacles for proponents of theistic evolution. They therefore postulate that all objects in the universe have an inner or psychological nature; physical reality is conscious; mind is a basic characteristic of the world, and atoms have experiences.<sup>11</sup> They had, in other words, the insight to see that a first member in any series of subsequent members can only pass on what it itself possesses. This suggests that proponents of theistic evolution should seriously consider the fact that they are no longer theists, at least not in any biblical sense of its meaning, but indeed panpsychists, if not pantheists.

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<sup>9</sup> My *Oxford Paperback Dictionary* reflects the following meanings of guide: a person who shows others the way; one employed to point out interesting sights on a journey or a visit; an adviser, a person or thing that directs or influences one’s behaviour; a book of information about a place or subject; a thing that marks a position, guides the eye, or steers moving parts. All of these meanings point toward the reality of rational action, agency, intelligence, knowledge, efficiency, and so on. However, none of these meanings fit the description of the Holy Spirit, if we take proponents of theistic evolution on face value. It is not only a clear indication that evolution defies commonsense, but is also totally at odds with the character of God described in the Bible.

<sup>10</sup> Searle admits that, “The way that human and animal intelligence works is through consciousness” (Searle 1998, p. 31). But where consciousness originates from remains a mystery for the evolutionist. Professor of psychology and philosophy Margaret Boden said: “The existence of consciousness as such remains a mystery—at least, given our present state of knowledge... I agree... we have not the slightest idea how anything material could be conscious” (Boden 1998, p. 10). The good news is that consciousness is no mystery for the biblical Christian, for God is a personal and conscious Agent that communicates and acts, which is clearly evident from Scripture (cf. Genesis 1:1ff).

<sup>11</sup> It is arguably the case that panpsychism is the main rival to naturalism and “Christian physicalists.” In a paper entitled *Realistic monism. Why physicalism entails panpsychism*, Professor of philosophy Galen Strawson stated that you are “not a real physicalist, if you deny the existence of the phenomenon whose existence is more certain than the existence of anything else: experience, ‘consciousness’...” (Strawson 2006, p. 3). The panpsychist thesis is very simple: you cannot get A from non-A. That matter or atoms can be conscious and have experiences are therefore a brute (unexplainable) fact of reality. Put another way, the idea that B can “emerge” from A, if B is radically different than A in kind, is an incoherent notion. Anyone who denies that “emergence” is not an incoherent notion, Strawson said, “is a member of the Humpty Dumpty army and [I will] be very careful with him” (Strawson 2006, p. 18).

However, proponents of panpsychism also face a number of challenges. Even if we grant that it is a brute fact that matter can be conscious and experiences feelings, precisely how has consciousness got into matter in the first place? If each and every part in a whole (for example, an organism) is conscious and is having experiences, then we need to know how the self/subject could be a unified conscious whole rather than a fragmented entity with lots of separate and individual conscious experiences. And if thought implies a thinker, and experiences implies an experiencer, then an aggregate of parts implies that thoughts and experiences are causing a self/subject to come into being, and that is absurd. No thought, no thinker, simple.

### Epistemological commitments

Lamoureux writes that Genesis 1–2 reflects the “science-of-the-day in the ancient Near East, and this calls into question historicity [sic] the creation of humans as stated in the Bible” (Lamoureux 2010c, p. 1). “None of these ‘explanations’ can possibly be actual descriptions,” said Giberson and Collins (2011, p. 206). It is evident that proponents of theistic evolution place science in some upper story of facts while lowering the teachings of Scripture to mere belief *that* God created the world. Lamoureux even quotes Scripture in support of the fact that he and fellow advocates of theistic evolution are blatantly ignoring the facts of the Bible. This is how he put it:

The greatest problem with evolutionary creation is that it rejects the traditional literal interpretation of the opening chapters of Scripture... Even more troubling for evolutionary creation is the fact that the New Testament writers, including Jesus Himself, refer to Genesis 1–11 as literal history (Matthew 19:4–6; Romans 5:12–14; Hebrews 4:4–7; 2 Peter 2:4–5). Therefore, the burning question is: ‘How do evolutionary creationists interpret the early chapters of Holy Scripture?’ (Lamoureux 2010a, p. 34).

What is Lamoureux doing here? He acknowledged the exalted nature of Scripture by referring to it as “Holy;” he acknowledged that Genesis 1–11 was accepted by New Testament writers, including our Lord, as literal history, but then ignored everything he said. Proponents of theistic evolution leave us no alternative but to conclude that neither the Bible nor the Creator is consistent or at home with the worldview of theistic evolutionists. Theologian and philosopher Nancey Murphy who teaches Christian philosophy at Fuller Theological Seminary has this to say about science:

[F]or better or for worse, we have inherited a view of science as *methodologically* atheistic, meaning that science... seeks naturalistic explanations for all natural processes. Christians and atheists alike must pursue scientific questions in our era without invoking a creator... (Murphy 2007, pp. 194, 195).

Let us therefore be clear on this one point: proponents of theistic evolution make it impossible for biblical Christians to think they possess any knowledge of the world. On the one hand, proponents of young-earth creationism make a mistake to read

Genesis 1–3 in a literal sense. On the other hand, they cannot consult science on questions of the nature of the soul and/or mind, for science cannot tell us anything about the existence of entities that cannot be studied by their methods. To put it slightly different, on the one hand, Scripture cannot make an appeal to knowledge. If it does, then it must wait until validated by or accepted by the scientific community. But on the other hand, scientists have already “discovered” that immaterial entities such as the soul, spirit, mind, self, I or me do not exist (Pinker 2002). This is how Murphy expressed this “insight”:

[N]euroscience is now completing the Darwinian revolution, bringing the mind into the purview of biology. My claim, in short, is this: all of the human capacities once attributed to the immaterial mind or soul are now yielding to the insights of neurobiology ... [W]e have to accept the fact that God has to do with brains—crude though this may sound (Murphy 2006a, pp. 88, 96).

That the existence of an immaterial spiritual soul presents a huge problem for Christian physicalists there should be no doubt about. The real reason is simply this:

Immaterial souls just do not fit with what we know about the natural world. We human persons evolved by natural selection... [which is] part of the natural order, but immaterial souls are not (Baker 2007, p. 341).

In short, Murphy and fellow proponents of theistic evolution realized that an immaterial soul and mind are not naturally at home with the scientific/atheistic evolutionary worldview to which they and proponents of naturalism adhere. It is therefore mistakenly assumed that neuroscience confirms their physicalism when it does not (see Beauregard and O’Leary 2007; Moreland 2008).<sup>12</sup> Yet their mission remains single-minded: to convince Christians that a human being is nothing more than a body/brain. The question is, at what price? Contrary to Christian physicalists who find it uneasy (“unnatural”) to accommodate the immaterial soul and mind in their worldview, it is perfectly consistent and at home with young-earth creationism. Therefore, any denial of the existence of these entities constitutes a serious compromise of Scripture and is not a price advocates of young-earth creationism have to pay.

<sup>12</sup> Elsewhere Murphy said that there is a “massive amount of evidence” which suggests that we no longer “need to postulate the existence of a soul or mind in order to explain life and consciousness” (Murphy 1998, p. 17). Her physicalist account of the mind, “nonreductive physicalism,” is also a view many theistic evolutionists subscribe to, for example, psychologists Warren Brown and Malcolm Jeeves (1999), theologian Joel Green (2008), and ethicist Stephen Pope (2007).

The problems that Murphy has with immaterial entities such as the soul, spirit, and mind are also those of atheists. This is how professor of psychology Steven Pinker described it: since Darwin explained how life originated from the blind and mindless physical processes of natural selection, science overcame “one wall standing in the landscape of knowledge”: the existence of the “ghost in the machine” (Pinker 2002, p. 31). “Science has now shown”, he said, that entities such as “the self, the soul, the ghost, the person, the ‘me’” (Pinker 2002, p. 42) do not exist. What is strange is that it escaped Pinker’s attention that he continues to talk of self-knowledge without a conscious self who is the possessor of that knowledge! It is incoherent, to say the least.

### **Ethical commitments and theodicy**

It was noted previously that advocates of theistic evolution cannot uphold the atomic theory of matter without conceding that matter is also equipped with life and mind, in which case they must become panpsychists. We have also noted their challenge, and that is to explain how life can come from non-life, and how something non-physical can “emerge” from something physical. Exactly the same challenges await proponents of theistic evolution in the area of human morality. That they realized that human morality presents a problem to their etiology there is no doubt: “Morality cannot be grounded in atoms and molecules” (Giberson and Collins 2011, p.144). This means that neither can the moral sense of “rape is wrong” be grounded in human evolutionary history. It therefore becomes logically inconsistent to argue that life, consciousness, mind, and mental capacities can emerge from matter, but not morality. One needs appropriate capacities to execute what is in accordance with one’s nature.

Pope has quite a number of things to say about human nature, human capacities, and morality from an evolutionary perspective.<sup>13</sup> Two things require mention. First, morality itself did not evolve (Pope 2007, p.250), but is nevertheless the result of the evolutionary process. Second, any view that regards either God or the evolutionary process as the sole source of morality will be unacceptable to the theistic evolutionist (Pope 2007, p. 265). By now we know the reason: God depends on the process as much as the process depends on God. One comment will suffice. If it is a sound principle that a first member in any series of subsequent members can only pass on that which it itself possesses, then it is inconsistent for Pope to say that we did not inherit our moral sense from so-called hominid ancestors. The alternative explanation would be one that accords with Scripture, and that is that the Creator of human beings is the Cause of their moral natures.

What about evil? First, proponents of theistic evolution hold that “the problem of evil...has no satisfactory answer whatsoever” (Giberson and Collins 2011, p.128). Second, proponents of young-earth creationism are simply wrong to “propose” that “no animals were carnivorous before the Fall” (Giberson and Collins 2011, p. 130). Third, to “ascribe

the creation of anything in nature to Satan is to elevate Satan from a creature to a co-creator of the world with God” (Giberson and Collins 2011, p. 133). Fourth, “a God who creates by direct intervention must be held accountable for all the bad designs in the world” (Giberson and Collins 2011, p.137). And finally, “If human sin is not the culprit responsible for all the evil in the world, what is?” (Giberson and Collins 2011, p.132). Exactly! What is, if a literal understanding of Genesis 1–3 is out of the question, and when Satan, God, and sin are precluded from being possible causes of evil in the world?

The answer is short: the evolutionary process (Giberson and Collins 2011, p.137; Pope 2007). It creates another problem for theistic evolution.<sup>14</sup> Again, what is/was God doing in and through the process, and how can the process produce evil if the Holy Spirit guided the process? The logical implication is that the Holy Spirit was misguided or less than omnipotent to control or steer the process. That is the illogical implication of their worldview. Whatever alternative advocates of theistic evolution would pick, it will be against the clear facts of Scripture.

What I will do next is to take a brief look at how proponents of theistic evolution exhibit the character of the Creator, how committed they are to Scripture, and precisely how they manage to find a fit between Scripture and atheistic evolution.

### **Theistic evolutionists and the character of God, their commitment and approach to Scripture, and their self-defeat**

Whether they do this intentionally or unconsciously we do not know, and is also beside the point, but it appears that some theistic evolutionists do not see a problem in creating impressions that there is something suspect with Scripture and/or the character of the Creator. I offer three examples in support of the statement.

Lamoureux (2010a), as previously noted, believes the Spirit of truth (John 14:17, 15:26, 16:13), who inspired Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16), accommodated Himself to the misguided “scientific understanding” of the ancient world and, by so doing, allowed it to be recorded in Scripture. If that is the case, then the Spirit of truth has become a deceiver; the Holy Spirit

<sup>13</sup> Proponent of theistic evolution and professor of biology at Abilene Christian University Daniel Brannan quoted Canon Wilson who said, “To the evolutionist sin is not an innovation, but... incidental to an earlier stage in development [and sinful tendencies] were actually useful” (Brannan 2007, p.196, fn.24). So if humans evolved, then God must have intended for them to inherit a sinful nature as well as evolving a conscience to counteract the tendencies of the sinful nature. If this is true, then the so-called hominids were actually in a better state than their supposedly more developed humans after the Fall. This seems to make the requirement of conscience superfluous. Further, if sinful tendencies were useful prior to the Fall then evolution by natural selection actually caused a regress into a less than potent human condition.

<sup>14</sup> At the end of the sixth day of creation our Creator declared his works “very good” (Genesis 1:31). If millions of years of death, suffering and “struggle” was a process set in motion by God, “who are too pure to approve evil” (Habakkuk 1:13), then God is not whom He revealed Himself to us; there is no sense in believing the Bible.



allowed our Lord and Christians to put their trust and faith in nonsense or absurdity and waited patiently for more than 1,850 years for inspired “prophets” of Darwinism and anti-biblical worldviews to reveal to us how God actually brought human beings into the world.<sup>15</sup> He leaves us no option but to think that his explanation binds good and evil into one place; he mixes what should be kept apart.

The second example is found in the writings of psychiatrist Dr. Curt Thompson. At the same time that he acknowledges that God “breathed into [Adam’s] nostrils” and that God was doing the “job himself,” Thompson tells his readers that it is “not particularly sterile, if you think about it” (Thompson 2010, p.206). This writer has indeed thought about it, and wondered why we should think it was something infectious or even disgusting, given the nature of the Creator and the fact that humans breath through their nostrils if and when not through their mouths.

The third example comes from the lips of Murphy. She believes that Numbers 22 has no “historical content. It is a violation of the nature of a donkey to make it speak” (Murphy 2005, p.8). Why she chose such a strong word as “violate” in reference to the Creator when she is consciously quoting the Bible in which it is recorded, she nowhere says. My *Oxford Paperback Dictionary* reflects the following meanings of the word: “to break and act contrary to; to treat with irreverence and disrespect; to disturb; to rape.” However, if she is right in what she asserts, then the following never happened: ravens never brought Elijah bread and meat (1 Kings 17:4–6), lions were not prevented from killing a man who honored his Creator more than man and a false god (Daniel 6:22–23), and a fish was never instructed to spew out what it was instructed to swallow (Jonah 1:17, 2:10). But if it did happen, then we must accept that God is somehow a violator of sorts.

To justify their beliefs they must do two things. The first is, they must adopt a card-stacking approach to both Scripture and scientific data. Card-stacking “ignores evidence on the other side of a question. From all the available facts, the person arguing selects only those that will build the best (or worst) possible case” (Troyka 1996, pp. 146–147).<sup>16</sup> Prominent professor of evolutionary biology Jerry Coyne at the University of Chicago concluded his review of two books by theistic

evolutionists this way: “Attempts to reconcile God and evolution keep rolling off the intellectual assembly line. It never stops, because the reconciliation never works” (Coyne 2009). The second thing proponents of theistic evolution must do in order to justify their beliefs, is to (a) establish a biblical standard of acceptability for their assertions, (b) place themselves under that standard of acceptability, and then (c) fail to meet that standard of acceptability. Here is one more example that will demonstrate the points just made.

Giberson and Collins (2011) are telling their readers they

are evangelical Christians, committed to the historic truths of Christianity and the central role of the Bible in communicating those truths. But as scientists, the authors are mindful that the changing understanding of the natural world invites continuous reconsideration of some of those truths... (Giberson and Collins 2011, p. 7).

The implication is, of course, that Scripture is subject to continuous revision, contrary to Jude 3. On page 102 of their book the authors bring the following to light:

[W]e do a great disservice to the concept and power of inspiration when we reduce it to mere factual accuracy, as though God’s role were nothing more than a divine fact checker, preventing the biblical authors from making mistakes.

It is on page 206 where the reader finds what the authors had in mind when they wrote these words. That

Adam was created from dust and God’s breath; Eve was created from Adam’s rib; the animals, fish and birds were created by divine commands: “let there be...” None of these “explanations” can possibly be actual descriptions.

It would be useful to note what the late Dr. Henry Morris (2000) wrote in reference to statements such as those made by Giberson and Collins:

To judge such a full-grown creation as impossible or unscientific is equivalent to saying God could not create, and this would be equivalent to atheism (Morris 2000, p.24).

It should be evident that the card-stacking approach of theistic evolutionists and their failure to adhere to their own standards are inconsistent with being a biblical Christian. It is utterly self-defeating.

<sup>15</sup> Andrew Kulikovsky said this about Lamoureux’s kind of reasoning: “Theologians of a more liberal persuasion have longed believed that divine revelation necessitated the use of time-bound and erroneous statements... This is essentially another way of saying that Scripture is always wrong when it contradicts modern scientific conclusions” (Kulikovsky 2009, p. 37).

<sup>16</sup> Theistic evolutionist and physicist Howard van Till raised a similar criticism against old earth creationists (that is, Christians who believe that the six-days of creation refer to billions or millions of years). This is how he put it: ...old earth special creationism, by its choice to accept the scientifically derived timetable for cosmic history, is in the exceedingly awkward position of attempting to interpret some of the Genesis narrative’s pictorial elements (interpreted as episodes of special creation) as historical particulars but treating the narrative’s seven-day timetable as being figurative. I see no convincing basis for this dual interpretive strategy” (van Till 1999, p.211).

## Conclusion

Theistic evolution is not consistent with the biblical picture of the world and how things came to be, and neither is God at home in the theistic evolution/scientific picture of the world, just as atheists are contending. Proponents of theistic evolutionists have reasons to think they are panpsychists, if not pantheists, or at least a version thereof. To state that God is in a natural process, yet also transcends the natural world is nothing more than empty words when your descriptions of Him reduce Him to anything less than what the Bible describes Him to be.

If God is the first Person in a series of subsequent persons—angelic and human—then spirit, mind, mental states, consciousness, and morality are not natural phenomena, and are therefore not at home with theistic evolution. It is for this very reason that proponents of theistic evolution must either reject the existence of immaterial souls, spirits, minds, and human nature, or accept that a human being is constituted by two radically different ontological kinds of things: an immaterial spiritual soul and material body. Moreover, once the existence of these phenomena is denied, then one cannot refer to them to explain anything about human beings, including the fact of a disembodied existence in an intermediate state between death and the resurrection of the dead at the second coming of Christ.

If a process is blind, mindless and unconscious, then a process cannot think about the difference between good and evil, and are therefore unable to select one or the other; the distinction is invisible to such a process. On the other hand, if the Holy Spirit guided the process, as proponents of theistic evolution hold, then God must be the cause of evil in the world and less than omnipotent.

We conclude that the worldview of theistic evolutionists does not provide a coherent description, explanation and understanding of the kinds of entities that exist, their natures, their coming to be, the cause of evil in the world, and how it can be known. Neither is theistic evolution reconcilable with Scripture. There is therefore only one way proponents of theistic evolution can escape the illogical implications of their beliefs, and that is to give up theistic evolutionism and adopt a historical-grammatical interpretation of Genesis 1–3.

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