

Spinoza's Ghost in the Evangelical Closet

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Abstract

Scientists, the media, and the courts routinely reject critiques of evolutionary ideas by arguing that such critiques are religious. Conversely, critiques of the straightforward reading of Genesis texts assert that such texts are not scientific. We show that this situation developed from the ideas of Baruch Spinoza, a 17th-century philosopher who argued that philosophy (including science) must be separated from theology. For him, the goal of philosophy is to determine truth, while the goal of theology is piety. Spinoza correspondingly denied the supernatural inspiration of Scripture and developed his own philosophy, which can be identified as a form of pantheism. Spinoza's ideas strongly influenced the Enlightenment and maintain a grip on intellectuals to the present. A pantheism similar to Spinoza's is now effectively an established religion in our culture. This pantheism masquerades as science, while denying any supernatural deity. Spinoza's legacy in today's society is consequently a conflict between two religions: pantheism versus Biblical Christianity. Christians should recognize this influence and eschew compromises with pantheistic religion.

Key Words: Spinoza, pantheism, Enlightenment, naturalism, secularism, humanism, presupposition, Big Bang

Introduction

On December 20, 2005, federal judge John E. Jones III ruled that intelligent design (ID), like creation, is religious in nature—unlike science, which is not religious. His decision¹ marked the end of the case of *Kitzmiller vs. Dover Area School District*. The school board in

that Pennsylvania district had mandated that intelligent design be cited as an alternative to evolution. Judge Jones stated that ID violates “the ground rules of science” by making allowance for the existence of the supernatural, adding that “since the scientific revolution of the 16th and 17th centuries, science has

been limited to the search for natural causes to explain natural phenomena.” Such is the dominant view in our culture today. Those who reject evolution are commonly labeled as “science deniers.”²

In an interview with Diane Sawyer of ABC News in 2010,³ famous cosmologist

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Stephen Hawking stated, “There is a fundamental difference between religion, which is based on authority, [and] science, which is based on observation and reason. Science will win, because it works.”

Secularists try to win the cultural and spiritual battle by claiming to be non-religious. For example, Harvard University humanist chaplain Greg Epstein wrote a book called *Good Without God: What a Billion Nonreligious People Do Believe* (Epstein, 2009). By claiming to be non-religious they imply that they are objective, scientific, and relying on reason rather than superstition or arbitrary religious authority.

This paper first shows how the truth about origins is not determined by reason outside of Scripture. Then we demonstrate that people such as Judge Jones, Stephen Hawking, and Greg Epstein actually do have their own religion. Next, in their attempts to separate scientific truth from Scripture, we show that they are following Baruch Spinoza, and that their religion is similar to his. Finally, we indicate how strong Spinoza’s influence has been on intellectuals, even intellectuals in the Church.

Observational Science and Origins Science

Stephen Hawking is correct in the sense that common science is based on observation. That is, scientists make conclusions from observations of repeatable events in the physical world. However, events in the past cannot be observed or repeated. In origins science, any evidence left over from the past must be interpreted.⁴ This situation is similar to court cases such as murder trials that involve forensic science. In such cases, there may be eyewitnesses and testimonies of “experts.” The prosecution and the defense have different ideas on how any evidence should be interpreted. The judge may wrongly exclude evidence due to personal bias.

Both Judge Jones and Stephen Hawking confuse observational (experimental) science with the use of scientific techniques in interpreting data from the past. Christians are often similarly confused. For example, some try to separate “philosophical naturalism” from “methodological naturalism.” The former refers to the attitude of those epitomized by Psalm 10:4, “God is in none of his thoughts.” The latter refers to doing observational science without any explicit reference to God, as Christians may also do. However, if one studies origins without reference to God, one is already a “philosophical naturalist.”

The study of origins always involves presuppositions that determine how data is interpreted. Those presuppositions assert how God interacts with His creation, or deny God altogether. In particular, mainstream conclusions about the past rest on unproven assumptions (presuppositions). Indeed, as well-known Christian philosopher of science J.P. Moreland has observed, “*The conclusions of science cannot be stronger than their presuppositions*. There are many things that science presupposes. But science itself cannot justify those presuppositions” (Moreland, 2018, p. 69; emphasis in original).

Mainstream presuppositions are actually not based on reason but on a bias against any explanations involving a creator God outside of nature (Mortenson, 2004a). For example, similarity in the features of living beings is supposed in Darwinism to be due to common descent. Common design is arbitrarily ruled out, because it implies a Designer.

Similarly, the fossils and rock strata are supposed to be the result of slow processes over long ages (“uniformitarianism”). Explanations consistent with a global flood are arbitrarily ruled out because they imply judgment on sin by a Creator. Mainstream geology for almost 200 years has been based on Charles Lyell’s expressed distaste for the eyewitness account of the Flood in

Genesis. Lyell himself was probably a deist (Mortenson, 2004b, pp. 224–227). Geologist Derek Ager (most certainly not a Christian)⁵ observed that the presupposition of uniformitarianism had been “brainwashing” geologists for all this time (Ager, 1993, p. xi).

Concerning presuppositions in cosmology, Stephen Hawking admitted that “we are not able to make cosmological models without some admixture of ideology” (Hawking and Ellis, 1973, p. 134). Modern cosmology, such as the Big Bang theory, arbitrarily assumes that we live in a universe that is unbounded and has no center.⁶ This presupposition was first termed the cosmological principle by Einstein, and later was called the Copernican principle. Like Hawking, Edwin Hubble before him arbitrarily ruled out a universe with a center.⁷ A center could mean there is a special place of God’s attention (i.e., the Earth).⁸ By assuming on the contrary that the universe is indeed bounded and has a center, Christians have derived cosmologies from Einstein’s gravitational equations of relativity that are consistent with a straightforward reading of Genesis 1.⁹

In any scientific effort, a theory cannot be considered as valid unless all alternative explanations for the experimental data are proven inadequate. In the case of a court trial, alternate explanations for the evidence must be ruled out without a reasonable doubt before a defendant can be convicted. By refusing to consider eyewitness accounts from the Bible, and by arbitrarily excluding explanations of the evidence consistent with Scripture, mainstream scientists have not arrived at the truth about origins. Their reasoning outside of Scripture has not determined truth.

When people like Hawking proceed to speak as if they were the authority, we should also wonder if they are not expressing a religion of their own. After all, Hawking said that religion is based on authority. What could be his religion? We consider next the possible

options and identify what is the religion of Hawking as well as that promoted by Greg Epstein and upheld by Judge Jones.

The Religion Behind Mainstream Views of Origins

Religion is the set of beliefs in ultimate matters—especially regarding the existence and nature of God—that lie at the core of one’s being that account for the world, our relationship to it, and the meaning to life. Humans are religious because we believe in a meaning to life and a goal, even if it is only progress or pleasure (Brow, 1966, pp. 77–78). Worship, awe, or wonder are not a necessary component of religion. Consequently, there is also religion in science. Unprovable philosophical presuppositions consciously or subconsciously underlie every interpretation scientists make—especially in the area of origins, in which truth claims are religious statements.

Romans 1, 2, and 3 describe the basic religions of the world.¹⁰ Romans 1 describes those who knew God, but did not like to retain the one true God in their knowledge. Consequently, they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, worshiping and serving the creation rather than their Creator. Whether or not they have obvious physical idols, such people are non-theists, denying the supernatural Creator of the universe. What they believe causes them to sin against the real God. Some will fall into sexual immorality of all sorts, malice, or greed. Others will simply be proud, boasters, or unforgiving.

Theologian Robert Brow has succinctly outlined the basic non-theistic, or monistic, religions (Brow, 1966, pp. 79–88). Brow graduated from Princeton Theological Seminary and benefited from living in India for 20 years as an army officer, student, and teacher. He wrote that there are four logically possible types of monism, and these have been discussed by Hindu philosophers

for centuries. In modern terminology, the four types are Absolute Pantheism, Modified Pantheism, Absolute Monism, and Modified Monism.¹¹ Absolute Pantheism holds that everything is God, while in Modified Pantheism God is the principle behind nature. “In this case, the way of salvation is...to discover the principle behind nature, and to ally oneself with that” (Brow, 1966, p. 81). For Hegel, the principle behind nature was the development of a superior culture (through the evolution of consciousness). For Karl Marx it was social progress through the class struggle,¹² and for Nietzsche it was the rise of the superman. For Darwin and his followers, the principle behind nature is evolutionary progress. Those in our society today who deny the supernatural God of Scripture, particularly those in mainstream science, often find meaning in that principle.

Naturalism is the idea that nature is all there is. Since this idea typically includes a belief in the principle of evolutionary progress, naturalism commonly corresponds to Brow’s Modified Pantheism.¹³ As some Christians have noticed,¹⁴ naturalism is more than just a philosophy. Its adherents promote it with a religious fervor in current efforts to remove Biblical Christianity from the public square.

Some have labeled atheism as the religion opposing Christianity in this way. Absolute atheism (Brow, 1966, p. 76) is not religious; it is a denial that cannot provide any meaning to life. But atheists cannot live without meaning. Some may just believe in doing what makes them happy. To the extent that they believe in evolutionary progress, however, their atheism is just pantheism in disguise. While atheism seems non-religious to many people, pantheism is clearly a religion. By identifying the opposition as pantheism, we clearly indicate its religious nature.

In the following, we investigate Spinoza’s similar pantheistic ideas to show how they contributed to modern

views on how truth about origins is determined.

The Influence of Baruch Spinoza

Historical Setting

The family of Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677), Sephardic Jews, emigrated from Iberia and settled in Holland. The name Spinoza derives from the town in Portugal, Espinosa, from which the family came.¹⁵ Like others fleeing to Holland, his family had been secretly practicing Jewish rituals while posing as Catholics to avoid persecution. As a child he was taught Hebrew and the Talmudic writings, and he subsequently received tutoring in the usual subjects of mathematics, science, philosophy, etc. His first name, given at his birth in Amsterdam in 1632, was Baruch, but after he was excommunicated from the synagogue (for reasons not entirely clear) at the age of 23, he changed it to Benedict (both names mean “blessed”). Unlike many famous intellectuals, Spinoza was a kind person who lived humbly and simply (Johnson, 1988).

Spinoza had several reasons for his radical ideas. First of all, Spinoza reacted against ecclesiastical authority and political repression. In Portugal, the ecclesiastical authorities required citizens to identify as Catholic or suffer persecution, and Galileo’s troubles with the Catholic church were partly due to entrenched Aristotelian ideas in Catholic universities. Even in more liberal Holland an ecclesiastical decree in Utrecht in 1642 forbade teaching of any philosophy besides Aristotle’s.

Secondly, he reacted against the continual strife within Christendom exemplified by the Thirty Years’ War (1618–1648) and the malice associated with differences of dogma. For example, in the Preface to his most famous work, *Theological-Political Treatise* (1670), he wrote:

I have often wondered that men who make a boast of professing the Christian religion, which is a religion of love, joy, peace, temperance and honest dealing with all men, should quarrel so fiercely and display the bitterest hatred towards one another day by day.... (Spinoza, 1670, p. 390)

In beginning Chapter 7 of the *Treatise*, which has the heading *On the Interpretation of Scripture*, Spinoza wrote about theologians:

On every side we hear men saying that the Bible is the Word of God, teaching mankind true blessedness, or the path to salvation. But the facts are quite at variance with their words, for people in general seem to make no attempt whatsoever to live according to the Bible's teachings. We see that nearly all men parade their own ideas as God's Word, their chief aim being to compel others to think as they do, while using religion as a pretext. We see, I say, that the chief concern of theologians on the whole has been to extort from Holy Scripture their own arbitrarily invented ideas, for which they claim divine authority. (Spinoza, 1670, p. 456)

Thirdly, Spinoza believed that ordinary folk were subject to religious superstitions as a result of fear of punishment or hope of reward from an Almighty God.

The two main works Spinoza left, his *Ethics* and his *Theological-Political Treatise*, have profoundly shaped modern thought. The *Treatise* was published anonymously in 1670. Spinoza's *Ethics* was published posthumously in 1677. The *Treatise* and the *Ethics* worked together to "offer a profound critique of religion: the former from a theological, political, and historical perspective, the latter from a metaphysical and moral one" (Nadler, 2011, p. 33). By rejecting ecclesiastical authority and separating the study of truth from Scripture, Spinoza became the father of what is called secularism or modernism. The subtitles of two books on Spinoza by philosophers

make this case: "The Renegade Jew Who Gave Us Modernity" (Goldstein, 2006) and "Spinoza's Scandalous Treatise and the Birth of the Secular Age" (Nadler, 2011). Enlightenment scholar Jonathan Israel also argued that Spinoza "forged a line of thought which furnished the philosophical matrix, including the idea of evolution, of the entire radical wing of the European Enlightenment" (Israel, 2001, p. 159). The Enlightenment characteristically rejected ecclesiastical authority and elevated human reason to the place of supreme authority (above Scripture) for determining truth.

Some of Spinoza's ideas probably developed from reading the works of the famous Jewish scholar Moses Maimonides (1138–1204), medieval Jewish philosophers, and Cabbalists.¹⁶ He was also influenced by the mathematically deductive reasoning of René Descartes (1596–1650) and to some extent by the Italian philosopher Giordano Bruno. Bruno (1548–1600) "represented the first Western monistic reaction to medieval priestcraft, and his Pantheism influenced the Jew Spinoza" (Brow, 1966, p. 34).

Spinoza evidently read Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*, in which Hobbes (1588–1679) asserted that religion should be subservient to monarchy. Hobbes' view of religion was that it had grown out of superstition, that religious laws had simply been invented by those seeking power, and that reason superseded revelation (Nadler, 2011, pp. 30–31). Instead of monarchy, Spinoza put his confidence in democracy. Spinoza himself was surely too optimistic about democracy when he opined in Chapter 16 of his *Treatise*, "in a democracy there is less danger of a government behaving unreasonably, for it is practically impossible for the majority of a single assembly, if it is of some size, to agree on the same piece of folly" (Spinoza, 1670, p. 530). Spinoza also went further than Hobbes by developing an elaborate philosophical system in his *Ethics*.

Separating Science and Truth from Scripture

A central object of Spinoza's *Treatise* was to "attack the notion that the limits to science and philosophy are to be determined by religious criteria, and especially by Scripture and its sectarian interpreters" (Nadler, 2011, p. 180). In particular, Spinoza wrote in Chapter 14 of the *Treatise*, "Between faith and theology on the one side and philosophy on the other there is no relation and no affinity." There he declared that

The aim of philosophy is, quite simply, truth, while the aim of faith, as we have abundantly shown, is nothing other than obedience and piety. Again, philosophy rests on the basis of universally valid axioms, and must be constructed by studying Nature alone, whereas faith is based on history and language, and must be derived only from Scripture and revelation. (Spinoza, 1670, p. 519)

By demanding a separation of theology from science (also called at that time natural philosophy) and the study of truth, Spinoza laid the foundation for the modern ideas expressed by Judge Jones and Stephen Hawking. In his *Ethics*, Spinoza developed his own philosophy. As discussed below, that philosophy amounts to a kind of pantheism.

For Spinoza, the separation between philosophy and theology was not simply the exaltation of reason over Scripture. In particular, Spinoza denied Maimonides' teaching that theology, or the interpretation of Scripture, had to be subservient to reason. If that teaching of Maimonides were correct, Spinoza argued, then

it would follow that the common people, for the most part knowing nothing of logical reasoning or without leisure for it, would have to rely solely on the authority and testimony of philosophers for their understanding of Scripture, and would therefore have to assume that philosophers are infallible in their interpretations of Scripture. (Spinoza, 1670, p. 469)

Spinoza rather argued "...that the meaning of Scripture is established from Scripture alone" (Spinoza, 1670, p. 469). So far, Spinoza sounded rather orthodox. However, Spinoza was only arguing that some kind of "faith" was necessary to understand Scripture. He denied that Scripture was a source of truth.

Spinoza also refuted the teaching of Maimonides' opponents.¹⁷ Those opponents argued

...that reason should be ancillary to Scripture, and completely subservient to it... that nothing in Scripture requires a metaphorical explanation merely on the grounds that its literal meaning is contrary to reason, but only if it is contrary to Scripture itself, that is, to the clear pronouncements of Scripture. (Spinoza, 1670, p. 520)

This teaching that Spinoza refuted also sounded orthodox, because it implied that Scripture was a source of scientific truth.

So Spinoza tried to get around the apparent contradiction (in refuting both Maimonides and his opponents) by claiming that both theology and reason, or faith and philosophy, are valid in their own realms. He did this by removing truth from theology, claiming that Scripture was useful only for promoting piety, as "...scientific truth is not established from Scripture itself..." (1670, p. 469). "Each man's faith, then, is to be regarded as pious or impious not in respect of its truth or falsity, but as it is conducive to obedience or obstinacy" (Spinoza 1670, 517). "...faith requires not so much true dogmas as pious dogmas, that is, such as move the heart to obedience; and this is so even if many of those beliefs contain not a shadow of truth, provided that he who adheres to them knows not that they are false" (1670, p. 516). So, Spinoza has clearly indicated that faith need not be based on truth. For him, reason was sufficient to determine truth but not the meaning of Scripture, since Scripture could contain falsehood as long as it promoted piety.

Spinoza's Redefinition of Biblical Terms

In reading Spinoza, one must understand first how he redefined terms like God, salvation, and the Holy Spirit (see Appendix A for an extensive list). His fundamental redefinition was to equate God with nature. Spinoza also co-opted many Biblical themes in the *Treatise* (see Appendix B). Spinoza and others like Hawking capitalized "God" probably partly because they believed that nature is the one true God, as opposed to the Greeks, for example, who had many "gods." Spinoza was also eager to obtain tolerance for his views and to avoid being labeled as an atheist.

For example, after the quotes cited just above, Spinoza proceeded to list seven tenets of a universal faith that could be accepted by all men without controversy.¹⁸ The last of these is:

God forgives repentant sinners. There is no one who does not sin, so that without this belief all would despair of salvation, and there would be no reason to believe that God is merciful. He who firmly believes that God forgives men's sins from the mercy and grace whereby he directs all things, and whose heart is thereby the more inspired by love of God, that man verily knows Christ according to the spirit, and Christ is in him. (1670, p. 518)

Nowhere else does Spinoza address such forgiveness. He does not attempt to explain how a God identified with nature could provide any meaningful forgiveness. But for Spinoza, the main thing was promoting piety even if the belief was based on falsehood. Piety itself was living in accordance with a principle behind nature, namely a vague love for one's neighbor.

Spinoza pleaded for tolerance in the *Treatise*. He tried to avoid charges of atheism and avoided some offense by referring to God in emphasizing the need for piety. However, by arguing that the Scriptures were not inspired by a

supernatural God, and since he "ruled out the possibility of miracles, identified God's providence with the laws of nature, [and] deflated the revelations of the prophets" he angered the Reformed church consistories of Utrecht, Leiden, Haarlem, and Amsterdam (Nadler, 2011, pp. 222–223). These church bodies then pressured the civic authorities to ban the *Treatise*, initially with only limited local success. Even though the *Treatise* had been published anonymously in 1670, it was suspected that Spinoza was the actual author. After the *Treatise* was re-published not only anonymously but under false authorship, the Dutch Republic formally banned it in 1674. The Jewish religious leadership had excommunicated Spinoza much earlier, in 1656, but had no legal authority to ban his books.

Spinoza's Pantheism

In *Ethics*, Spinoza developed his own system of religious thought, starting with Part I, "Concerning God." He began with eight definitions and seven unproven axioms, from which he proceeded to prove various theorems ("Propositions") in the same way that one proves theorems in geometry.¹⁹ The Appendix to Part I contains this summary:

I have now explained the nature and properties of God: that he necessarily exists, that he is one alone, that he is and acts solely from the necessity of his own nature, that he is the free cause of all things and how so, that all things are in God and are so dependent on him that they can neither be nor be conceived without him, and lastly, that all things have been predetermined by God, not from his free will or absolute pleasure, but from the absolute nature of God, his infinite power (Spinoza, 1677, p. 238).

In Part IV, Proposition 4, he explicitly equated God with nature (Spinoza, 1677, p. 324). He insisted that his

Propositions described the only logically possible universe: "...I do not presume that I have found the best philosophy, but I know that what I understand is the true one. If you ask me how I know this, I reply that I know it in the same way that you know that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles" (letter from Spinoza to Albert Burgh, December 1675; Spinoza, 2002, p. 949).

It is generally agreed now that Spinoza espoused a kind of pantheism, although he never used the word pantheism, since that word was coined after his death.²⁰ There remains some debate about how Spinoza's identification of God with nature relates to pantheism. Philosopher Steven Nadler divides pantheism into two types: reductive (God is identical with everything that exists) and immanentist (God is contained within the world). These types correspond loosely to Robert Brow's Absolute Pantheism (everything is God) and Modified Pantheism (God is the principle behind nature), respectively. Nadler claims that Spinoza's pantheism could not be immanentist, since that would be a theistic concept open to superstition (Nadler, 2006, pp. 119–121). While for convenience Spinoza refers to God as "he," Spinoza's God was not a personal Being who must be worshiped; Spinoza rejected that as an anthropomorphic concept. Nevertheless, Spinoza's God could be identified with the principle behind nature. For Spinoza (and for many of today's humanists), this principle included (in addition to evolutionary progress) a kind of moral piety associated with the best interests of society and a love for one's neighbor. Hence Spinoza really did espouse Modified Pantheism as described by Brow.

Spinoza's pantheism was attractive precisely because it fully satisfied fallen humanity's yearning for autonomy from a personal God. It was a repudiation of God's authority, of His claim on us as Creator. Absolutizing nature meant that theology was no longer the "queen"

of the sciences; physical (or natural) science was. It nullified the testimony of God that nature declares His glory (Psalm 19:1). It meant that an understanding of nature—not religion—held the key to truth, and that those whose work was with nature (that is, scientists) had more authority than clergy.²¹ While pantheism did not originate with Spinoza, his pantheism was very influential in subsequent Western intellectual thought, as we will see.

From Aristotle to Spinoza to Darwin

Ironically, some of Spinoza's ideas were developed in a way similar to those of Aristotle whose philosophy was promoted by ecclesiastical authorities of Spinoza's time. Like Spinoza, Aristotle and other Greek philosophers believed they "could deduce how nature ought to behave from first principles" (Meyer, 2021, p. 22). Further, both claimed that nature developed necessarily from those principles (Goldstein, 2006, pp. 50–53; Nadler, 2011, p. 81; Meyer, 2021, pp. 22–23).

Some may object that Spinoza's rationalism (belief that fundamental truths can be deduced by reason) could not be a main source behind modern secular scientists' empiricism (belief that truth only comes by sense-experience observation). However, "almost no author fits neatly into one camp or another" (Markie and Folescu, 2021).²² While Aristotle and other Greeks downplayed the need for observations (Meyer, 2021, pp. 22–23), Spinoza recognized the importance of scientific observations made by Galileo, for example, in understanding the physical side of nature. Conversely, modern mainstream scientists set reason as well as observation against Biblical authority (recall the quote from Hawking in the Introduction). In particular, they develop their presuppositions about origins not from observation, but completely from their reasoning that,

in turn, is based on their religious and philosophical ideas.

Modern science developed from a belief that there is a rational God separate from nature. Since He created us in His image, we are capable of discovering His laws and designs in nature. Nonetheless, since we all also inherit the fallen nature of Adam, our hypotheses must be checked by experiments and observations.²³ These views consequently overcame Aristotle's ideas, which had been a stronghold in Christian universities. Early Christian scientists Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) and Francis Bacon (1561–1626) also argued against interpretations of Scripture about the present natural world that were not checked by experiments and observations. Unlike Charles Lyell (1797–1875), however, they did not argue that Scripture could be ignored in scientific discussions of origins.

Many intellectuals soon began to promote, like Spinoza, the specific separation of Scripture from the study of truth. Not only did they reject any insight from the Bible in observational science, they cemented Spinoza's legacy in the presuppositions of mainstream scientists about origins. Hence, as discussed earlier, they were not only methodological materialists but also philosophical materialists. For example, Spinoza directly influenced the Deists and liberal Biblical critics (particularly in Germany), who both in turn influenced the development of modern science in the 18th and 19th centuries (Mortenson, 1997, pp. 226–228). People all over the world today accept the Big Bang and evolution as truth without questioning the epistemological basis for these other than that some scientists like Hawking say so.

In particular, ideas like Spinoza's influenced Charles Darwin (1809–1882). For example, Darwin had a copy of Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* with him on his voyages on the *Beagle*. Lyell's old-Earth dogmas were essential

for Darwin's speculations on evolution. Similar to the way Spinoza wished to separate philosophy and science from Scripture, Lyell argued that "the physical part of geological inquiry ought to be conducted as if the Scriptures were not in existence" (Mortenson, 2004b, p. 225).

Spinoza also influenced Darwin through Hegel. Hegel (1770–1831) wrote, "to be a follower of Spinoza is the essential commencement of all Philosophy."²⁴ Then Nietzsche (1844–1900) observed, "without Hegel there would have been no Darwin."^{25,26} Enlightenment ideas also influenced Charles Darwin's grandfather Erasmus Darwin, who formulated the first formal theory of natural evolution in his book *Zoonomia; or the Laws of Organic Life* (1794–1796).

In arguing Spinoza's foundational influence on the Enlightenment and the concept of evolution in particular, Jonathan Israel wrote:

...the probing towards the concept of evolution from inert matter, and of higher from lower forms of life, was derived, as its foremost champion, Diderot [1713–1784], stressed, directly from the doctrine that motion is inherent in matter, a concept generally regarded with horror and universally acknowledged in Enlightenment Europe as quintessentially Spinozist. The claim that Nature is self-moving, and creates itself, became indeed the very trademark of the *Spinosistes*. (Israel, 2001, p. 160)

Spinoza's Legacy in Modern Thought

Spinoza uniquely influenced modern thought because he both elevated reason in determining truth and specifically denied the supernatural origin of the Scriptures. Greek philosophers had elevated reason and promoted some kind of naturalism, but they had not addressed the Scriptures. Those like

Maimonides, Aquinas, and Descartes also elevated reason, but they had not denied the supernatural. In particular, evidence from Descartes' writings and correspondence show that he believed "the truths of revelation are beyond the scope of rational criticism" (Clarke, 1982, p. 101). Thus it was Spinoza's ideas that fueled the anti-clerical sentiments of the Enlightenment and the anti-Church and anti-Scriptural attitudes of today.

Spinoza viewed the Bible as a piece of literature of human origin, variously corrupted and inconsistent. (See, for example, quotes from Spinoza about the Bible in Appendix A.) Higher criticism of the Bible developed from these ideas.²⁷ He rejected the incarnation of Christ as "absurd," a contradiction of terms just like saying that "a circle has taken on the nature of a square" (letter from Spinoza to Henry Oldenburg in 1675; Spinoza, 2002, p. 943). Yet he valued Christ's ethical insights and teachings, mainly as directed towards loving fellow human beings. He referred to Jesus as a great moral example for us to follow (Nadler, 2011, p. 175). Spinoza's patronizing words continue to be mouthed today, particularly among humanists.

More than 200 years after Spinoza's death, some of the main ideas of his *Treatise* became the foundation for the humanist Ethical Culture movement. In founding that movement in 1876, Felix Adler sounded just like Spinoza when he said, "freedom of thought is a sacred right of every individual man.... Diversity in creed, unanimity in the deed. This is that practical religion from which none dissents" (Radest, 1969, p. 28; cited in Epstein, 2009, p. 213). Humanist Epstein also wrote that "He [Spinoza] was arguably the first public Humanist in modern Western history" (Epstein, 2009, p. 49).

Epstein approvingly noted that mainline Protestants, most organized Jewish groups, and even a goodly number of

evangelicals also have no problem with the humanist position on evolution. He wrote that "science is a much better method than revelation for determining the nature of reality" (Epstein, 2009, pp. 160–161). If we identify "nature of reality" with "truth," we find that his position is similar to Spinoza's. In contradiction to the tolerance of "diversity of creed" commonly expressed by humanists, such diversity is not an option for humanists when it comes to belief in evolution. As an expression of pantheism, humanism also holds that evolutionary progress is a fundamental principle behind nature.

By excluding Christian ideas of origins from the science classroom, Judge Jones was expressing a preference for another religion, namely pantheism. Indeed, public schools generally exhibit the existence of pantheism rather than Christianity as the established religion in America. Even in private schools, evolution is commonly taught. For example, Catholic schools in the United States teach evolution²⁸ as part of their science curriculum. They teach evolution as a fact. In such ways, Christianity becomes a cultural background rather than a living hope.

Even Albert Einstein often described himself as a "disciple of Spinoza" (Goldstein, 2006, pp. 61–62). In 1929 Einstein wrote, "I believe in Spinoza's God, who reveals himself in the lawful harmony of all that exists, but not in a God who concerns himself with the fate and the doings of mankind" (response to Rabbi Goldstein as quoted in Isaacson, 2007, pp. 388–389). He further wrote in 1939 in response to another rabbi:

The religious feeling engendered by experiencing the logical comprehensibility of profound interrelations...does not lead us to take the step of fashioning a god-like being in our own image—a personage who makes demands of us and who takes an interest in us as individuals. There is in this neither a will nor a goal, nor a must, but only sheer

being.” (Dukas and Hoffman, 1979, pp. 69–70)

In this way, Einstein summarized Spinoza’s insistence that all things follow necessarily from the divine nature by means of nature’s laws. This view also inspires some modern scientists, such as Hawking, to try to come up with a “theory of everything” such as string theory. So Hawking concluded:

If we discover a complete theory... we shall all, philosophers, scientists, and just ordinary people, be able to take part in the discussion of the question of why it is that we and the universe exist. If we find the answer to that, it would be the ultimate triumph of human reason—for then we would know the mind of God.” (Hawking, 1988, p. 191)

For Hawking, “I use the word ‘God’ in an impersonal sense, like Einstein did, so knowing the mind of God is knowing the laws of nature” (Hawking, 2018, p. 28). His God was like Spinoza’s. Hawking explicitly denied the existence of a supernatural Creator: “...it’s my view that the simplest explanation is that there is no God. No one created the universe and no one directs our fate” (Hawking, 2018, p. 38).

Human reason is not sufficient to find truth, since the Fall also affected our reason. What passes for reason or wisdom is often simply speculation based on non-theistic religious presuppositions. As Paul wrote, “For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe” (1 Corinthians 1:21). The message of the Cross will always appear as foolishness to the unbeliever, but it is wiser than men. Through his speculations, Spinoza could never come to the knowledge of the true God and eternal life (1 John 5:20). Jesus Himself is the truth (John 14:6), and He will win.

Because Spinoza elevated reason in determining truth, the project of

modernity would be the domain of the intelligentsia. The intellectuals of the Enlightenment reinforced this with a vengeance, even turning the idea around: Anyone who identifies as—or who aspires to be—an intellectual, must adopt Spinoza’s legacy. (See, for example, Hegel’s quote cited above.) If a believer in Christ identifies as an intellectual, then Spinoza’s legacy will prey upon that person’s soul. To be an intellectual in today’s world one must, almost by definition, hold to an evolutionary explanation of origins and/or to billions of years.

Spinoza’s Legacy in the Church

Pressure from Spinoza’s legacy has unwittingly motivated many evangelical intellectuals to compromise Biblical beliefs. First of all, they have bought into Spinoza’s idea that theology must be separated from all science, including origins science. For example, consider the following in *The Expositor’s Bible*, used by countless pastors in past decades:

If anyone is in search of accurate information regarding the age of the earth, or its relation to the sun, moon and stars, or regarding the order in which plants and animals have appeared upon it, he is referred to recent textbooks in astronomy, geology, and paleontology. No one for a moment dreams of referring a serious student of these subjects to the Bible as a source of information. It is not the object of writers of Scripture to impart physical instruction or to enlarge the bounds of scientific knowledge. (Dods, 1947, p. 5)

Secondly, many evangelicals have accepted the idea that whatever “science” says, even about origins, has more authority than a plain reading of Scripture. Such a notion follows naturally from Spinoza’s denial that the Scriptures are the source of truth. For example, Gleason Archer was a highly respected

Christian who was a translator for the NASB and NIV versions of the Bible. He was known for his stand on Biblical inerrancy, while convincing himself that the inerrant Bible indicates the days in Genesis were not literal.²⁹ In his book *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, he wrote (Archer, 1985, p. 187):

From a superficial reading of Genesis 1, the impression would seem to be that the entire creative process took place in six twenty-four-hour days. If this was the true intent of the Hebrew author...this seems to run counter to modern scientific research, which indicates that the planet Earth was created several billion years ago...

Archer’s thoughts were influential in convincing other evangelicals such as J.P. Moreland to change from a young-Earth perspective to an old-Earth one.³⁰

Significantly, Christian theologians who dream up various alternatives to a plain reading of Genesis 1 all begin with the assumption that billions of years for the age of the universe is a proven scientific fact. These include Meredith Kline, who espoused the framework hypothesis (Kline, 1966), John Walton, who promotes the idea of a cosmic temple (2009, pp. 91, 107), C. John Collins, who suggested the “analogical days view” (2003, p. 95), and John Lennox, who claims there could be long gaps between the days in Genesis 1 (2011, pp. 54, 154). The continual generation of new mutually contradictory alternatives indicates that none has been found to be satisfactory. Like the Gap Theory and the Day-Age Theory before them, they are the end results of exalting human speculation above revelation. As we have shown, ideas about long ages for the Earth are not scientific fact but rather rest on pantheistic presuppositions.

A torrent of books by evangelical authors and concerted efforts by ostensibly Christian organizations are attempting to harmonize evolution and/or billions of years with belief in the Bible.³¹ As

a typical example, a recent book by William Lane Craig argues that one should look for the religious meaning of Genesis 1–11 rather than literal truth. Accounts such as a talking serpent in Genesis 3 “...if taken literally, would be so extraordinary as to be clearly false” (Travis, 2021). Craig’s other justification for rejecting literal readings of Genesis 1–11 is mainly in one paragraph beginning with “young earth creationism’s scientific claim is wildly implausible” (Craig, 2021). Such a view is consistent with Spinoza’s argument that the Scriptures are mainly meant for promoting piety, and may contain falsehoods.

For many similar evangelical intellectuals, it is simply anti-intellectual to consider that the early parts of Genesis could be taken at face value. Consider the following reasoning by Oxford professor John Lennox. Noting “the current scientific evidence for an ancient earth,” he advises that “we would be very unwise to ignore science through obscurantism or fear, and present to the world an image of Christianity that is anti-intellectual” (Lennox, 2011, p. 86). Sadly, such Christians also ignore the very strong evidence for a young Earth presented by many Ph.D. creation scientists who are far from being anti-intellectual. That evidence not only deals with cosmology, but also with such things as geology and genetics.

The resulting capitulation or compromise by Christian leaders has a disastrous effect on the perceived trustworthiness of the Bible. For example, most unbelievers see that the Bible clearly teaches a young universe. They then ridicule the Bible, often using the perceived settled “science” of the Big Bang. They either are not aware of, or are not impressed by, attempts to fit long ages into Genesis 1. Christians who use the Big Bang Theory to try to prove the existence of God or to justify their interpretation of Genesis fail to understand the pantheistic ideology behind the Big Bang’s fundamental presupposition.³²

That presupposition is the cosmological or so-called Copernican principle promoted by Stephen Hawking, which states, as mentioned earlier, that the universe is unbounded and has no center. In using the Big Bang Theory, Christians allow the character of God to be stained. A God who presides over billions of years of creation and hundreds of millions of years of death shown in the fossils is weak, identifies Himself with the evil of death, and cannot even judge evil by a worldwide Flood. If our view of the early chapters of Genesis depends on pantheistic presuppositions, we weaken our testimony and displease our Creator.

Hawking was right that religion is based on authority. Since all things were made through Christ (John 1:3 and Colossians 1:16) and all things in heaven and on Earth were reconciled to God through Christ’s blood (Colossians 1:20), all authority in heaven and on Earth was given to Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18). Let us therefore submit to the authority of Jesus, the Word of God, and not to the words of sinful men.

Conclusion

In his *Theological-Political Treatise*, Spinoza deeply influenced modern intellectuals by demanding a separation between science and theology (and the Bible). Spinoza’s *Ethics*, with its denial of the supernatural, also led to widespread acceptance of pantheism by intellectuals. As long as we allow non-Christians to frame the conflict in society as “science versus religion,” we will always be on the defensive. We need to perceive and expose this conflict in our culture as basically a pantheistic religion versus Biblical Christianity.

Not only did Spinoza try to separate science from Scripture, he tried to separate the study of truth from Scripture. Scripture for him was useful only for promoting “piety,” even though it could be full of falsehoods. Modern evangelical intellectuals have unwittingly

succumbed to Spinoza’s influence (his “ghost” lurking undetected in the closet of our minds) by putting more confidence in speculations of mainstream scientists than in the plain reading of Scripture. In so doing, they seriously weaken the authority of the Bible.

Acknowledgment

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Appendix A

See Table I

Appendix B

Spinoza’s co-opting of Biblical themes: selected quotes

“1 John 4:13—Through this means we recognize that we remain in God, and God remains in us—that He gave to us from His own Spirit.” Title page of the *Treatise* (1670, p. 387).

“...the moral value of a man’s creed should be judged only from his works.” Preface to the *Treatise* (1670, p. 393). Compare James 1:27.

“To the early Jews religion was transmitted in the form of written law because at that time they were just like children; but later on Moses (Deut. Ch. 30, v. 6) and Jeremiah (Ch. 31, v. 33) told them of a time to come when God would inscribe his law in their hearts.” *Treatise*, Ch. 12 (1670, p. 504).

Table I. “Spinoza Speak” – Spinoza’s redefinition of Biblical terms.

When Spinoza Says	What Spinoza Means	Representative Quotes	Reference	Page in Spinoza 2002
God	Nature	“...God, or Nature...”	<i>Ethics</i> , Part IV, Proposition 4	324
Divine	Referring to a principle behind nature (piety)	“A thing is called sacred and divine when its purpose is to foster piety and religion...” “...natural knowledge is divine...”	<i>Treatise</i> , Ch 12 <i>Treatise</i> , Ch 1	505 395
Salvation	Blessedness	“...it is not reason but revelation that can teach us that it is enough for blessedness or salvation for us to accept the divine decrees as laws or commandments...”	<i>Treatise</i> , Supplementary Note 31	580
Word of God	Right theology; the universal true religion	“...the phrase ‘Word of God,’ when used in connection with anything other than God himself, properly means the Divine Law...; that is, religion universal to the entire human race...”	<i>Treatise</i> , Ch 12	506
Bible	A variously corrupted set of books transmitted by human authors	“...faulty, mutilated, adulterated and inconsistent, that we possess it only in fragmentary form...” “...the letter, a mere shadow of God’s word. “ “...letters that are dead, and may have been corrupted by human malice...”	<i>Treatise</i> , Ch 12 <i>Treatise</i> , Ch 15 <i>Treatise</i> , Ch 15	503 521 521
Scripture	The part of the Bible containing the “Word of God”	“...Scripture, insofar as it contains the Word of God, has come down to us uncorrupted” “...Scripture has come down to us uncorrupted in respect of its doctrine and its chief historical narratives.”	<i>Treatise</i> , Ch 12 <i>Treatise</i> , Ch 15	503 525
Theology	Studies whose aim is piety, not truth	“...faith demands piety rather than truth...”	<i>Treatise</i> , Ch 14	518
Philosophy	The study of truth	“The aim of philosophy is, quite simply, truth, while the aim of faith, as we have abundantly shown, is nothing other than obedience and piety.”	<i>Treatise</i> , Ch 14	519
Piety	Doing justice and charity; loving one’s neighbor	“Worship of God and obedience to him consists solely in justice and charity, or love towards one’s neighbour.”	<i>Treatise</i> , Ch 14	518
Obedience	Leading to piety	“...faith requires not so much true dogmas as pious dogmas, that is, such as move the heart to obedience; and this is so even if many of those beliefs contain not a shadow of truth, provided that he who adheres to them knows not that they are false.”	<i>Treatise</i> , Ch 14	516
Revelation	Prophecy; superior imagination	“Prophecy, or revelation, is the sure knowledge of some matter revealed by God to man.” “...the prophets perceived God’s revelations with the aid of the imaginative faculty alone...” “...prophecy varied not only with the imagination and the temperament of each prophet but also with the beliefs in which they had been brought up...”	<i>Treatise</i> , Ch 1 <i>Treatise</i> , Ch 1 <i>Treatise</i> , Ch 2	394 403 405
Miracle	Unusual work of nature	“...unusual works of Nature are termed miracles, or works of God, by the common people; and partly from piety, partly for the sake of opposing those who cultivate the natural sciences...”	<i>Treatise</i> , Ch 6	444
Religion (ordinary)	Relics of man’s bondage; superstition	“...religion—that is, the relics of man’s ancient bondage...”	<i>Treatise</i> , Preface	390
Holy Spirit	Peace of mind	“...the Holy Spirit itself is nothing other than the peace of mind that results from good actions.”	<i>Treatise</i> , Ch 15	525

In the above, *Treatise* refers to Spinoza’s *Theological-Political Treatise*.

“Romans 1:20—‘For the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen through the intellect in the things that are made, even his power and his Godhead which is unto eternity, so that they are without excuse.’ Here he quite clearly indicates that, by the natural light of reason, all can clearly understand the power and eternal divinity of God...” *Treatise*, Ch. 15 (1670, p. 434).

“Blessedness is not the reward of virtue, but virtue itself. We do not enjoy blessedness because we keep our lusts in check. On the contrary, it is because we enjoy blessedness that we are able to keep our lusts in check.” *Ethics*, Part V, Proposition 42 (1677, p. 382). Compare Romans 8:2.

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Endnotes

- 1 Available, for example, at <https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/FSupp2/400/707/2414073/>.
- 2 See, for example, Livio 2020. Popular astrophysicist Livio claims that there is not even the slightest scientific doubt about evolution (p. 223).
- 3 <https://abcnews.go.com/WN/Technology/stephen-hawking-religion-science-win/story?id=10830164>.
- 4 For an expanded discussion of the difference between observational science (also called operation science or experimental science) and origins science, see Mortenson (2020b).
- 5 In his book, Ager clearly expressed his disdain for Bible-believing Christians. In the preface he wrote (in bold font) that "... nothing in this book should be taken out of context and thought in any way to support the views of the 'creationists'" (p. xi), and on p. 129 he wrote: "Since the ideas of Darwin and Wallace first burst upon the scientific world, we need no longer concern ourselves with the opposition of the 'fundamentalists' and 'creationists'..." His pantheistic views were evident in the following: "I am very much included towards the views of Lovelock...and his concept of the Earth as *Gaia*, like a huge working organism, with everything related to everything else, without the intrusion of outside bodies" (Ager, 1993, p. 196).
- 6 Mainstream cosmologists imagine that the universe is like a three-dimensional surface of an expanding four-dimensional balloon.
- 7 In several places in his classic book (Hubble, 1937, pp. 50, 51, 59), Hubble exhibits a distaste for any idea that the universe could have a favored position or center. For example, "Such a condition would imply that we occupy a unique position in the universe, analogous, in a sense, to the ancient conception of a central earth. The hypothesis cannot be disproved but is unwelcome and would be accepted only as a last resort in order to save the phenomena." He makes the "sheer assumption" that "There must be no favoured location in the universe, no centre, no boundary; all must see the universe alike."
- 8 In his famous book *Pale Blue Dot*, Carl Sagan claimed that "the delusion that we have some privileged position in the universe" is challenged by the fact that "Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark. In our obscurity, in all this vastness, there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves" (1994, p. 9).
- 9 Such cosmologies include possible explanations for distant starlight (Humphreys, 2008b) and the cosmic background radiation (Humphreys, 2014). In particular, due to the relativistic effects of gravity on time, time on Earth could pause (stop) during Day 4 of Genesis 1 while light traveled billions of light-years from newly created stars. Furthermore, red shifts of light from stars actually do indicate that the universe has a center (Humphreys, 2002). Other creationist

cosmologies exist. Humphrey's theories are heavily informed by Scripture and explain additional data such as planetary magnetic fields (Humphreys, 2008a) and signals from distant spacecraft (Humphreys, 2007).

10 Romans 2 and 3 can be viewed as follows. Chapter 2 describes theists, those who proclaim belief in a Creator outside of nature, but are self-righteous. They end up breaking their own laws and doing the same sorts of things as the non-theists. Their religion can be Islam, Judaism, or nominal Christianity. In Romans 3 we finally find those who realize that righteousness before a holy God only comes through faith in Jesus Christ. Temptations can come to such Christians to fall back into the ways of those described in Romans 1 and 2. For example, 1 John 5:21 exhorts us to keep ourselves from idols. Galatians warns us not to fall back into trying to gain righteousness through the law and efforts of the flesh.

11 Modified Monism has a personal World Soul, and Absolute Monism holds that everything is illusion (Brow, 1966).

12 Gertrude Himmelfarb writes, "What they [Marx and Darwin] both celebrated was the internal rhythm and course of life, the one the life of nature, the other of society, that proceeded by fixed laws, undistracted by the will of God or men" (Himmelfarb, 1959, p. 348). In Marx's system, there is natural progression of history from primitive societies to more advanced ones, just as in Darwinism there is natural progression of living forms from the primitive to more advanced ones; progress is inherent in the nature of the cosmos. Marx himself actually lived in active rebellion against God; his pantheistic system obscured an underlying Satanist religion (Wurmbrand, 1986).

13 Stephen Meyer argues for a distinction between naturalism and pantheism, because naturalism does not have an impersonal god (Meyer, 2021, pp. 219–220). In Modified Pantheism, however, the reality or the principle behind nature is considered as god, whether or not explicitly labeled as such.

14 For example, Hedin, 2019, p. 213.

15 Rebecca Goldstein suggests Spinoza was motivated to reject the Biblical God's existence because of the terrible suffering his people experienced in the Spanish Inquisition (2006). He had a problem, in other words, with theodicy. But his system fails to resolve the problem. Doing away with the God of the Bible does not do away with the existence of evil, nor does it explain the presence in the world of good. Deeper knowledge of and reflection on the Scriptures might have rewarded Spinoza with true *baruch* (blessedness). Had the Jews of the medieval era not deliberately suppressed Isaiah, Chapter 53, Spinoza might have seen that Scripture is self-authenticating and of supernatural origin, given by a loving God who desires all His creatures to be blessed by His presence.

16 Spinoza certainly would have been familiar with the esoteric writings of Jewish mystics called Cabbalists. Cabbalism is difficult to understand, but it is pantheistic: it holds that a god-force permeates the universe, and that a direct connection exists between that god-force and everything that exists (thus the doctrine, "as above, so below"). It holds also to an evolutionary process that leads inexorably to a state of perfection—apart from God. And it believes in the unity of all things (Downing, 2011, pp. 108–109).

17 Rather counterintuitively to modern thinking, Maimonides' opponents were called "skeptics," while followers of Maimonides' idea were called "dogmatists."

18 The other six are:

God, that is, a Supreme Being, exists, supremely just and merciful, the exemplar of true life. He who knows not, or does not believe, that God exists, cannot obey Him or know Him as judge.

God is one alone. No one can doubt that this belief is essential for complete devotion, reverence, that is, love towards God; for devotion, reverence and love spring only from the pre-eminence of one above all others.

God is omnipresent, and all things are open to Him. If it were believed that things could be concealed from God, or if it were not realised that He sees everything, one might doubt, or be unaware of the uniformity of the justice wherewith He directs everything.

God has supreme right and dominion over all things. He is under no jurisdiction, but acts by His absolute decree and singular grace. All are required to obey Him absolutely, while He obeys none.

Worship of God and obedience to Him consists solely in justice and charity, or love towards one's neighbour.

All who obey God by following this way of life, and only those, are saved; others, who live at pleasure's behest, are lost. If men did not firmly believe this, there is no reason why they should obey God rather than their desires.

19 The eight definitions defined self-caused, finite, substance, attribute, mode, God, free, and eternity. For example, Definition 6 states, "By God I mean an absolutely infinite being, that is, substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence" (Spinoza, 1677, p. 217). Axiom 1, for example, states, "All things that are, are either in themselves or in something else" (p. 217). From the definitions and axioms he proceeded to prove propositions such as Propositions 14 ("There can be, or be conceived, no other substance but God") and 15 ("Whatever is, is in God, and nothing can be or be conceived without God") (Spinoza, 1677, p. 224).

20 The origin of term pantheism is attributed to Joseph Raphson in 1697. See Thomson, A. (2008). *Bodies of Thought: Science, Religion, and the Soul in the Early Enlightenment*, Oxford University Press, NY, p. 54, cited at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Raphson.

21 See also Moreland, 2018, for a discussion of how this developed.

22 "Descartes, for instance, who is commonly regarded as a representative rationalist

(at least with regard to metaphysics), had clear empiricist leanings (primarily with regard to natural philosophy, where sense experience plays a crucial role)...Conversely, Locke, who is thought to be a paradigmatic empiricist, argued that reason is on an equal footing with experience, when it comes to the knowledge of certain things, most famously of moral truths” (Markie and Folescu, 2021).

23 See, for example, the discussion “The Judeo-Christian Origins of Modern Science” in Meyer, 2021, Chapter 1.

24 Haldane, E.S., and F.H. Simson (translators) 1963. *Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Volume 3. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, England. Cited in Westphal, Merold. 2003. “Hegel Between Spinoza and Derrida.” *Hegel's History of Philosophy: New Interpretations*. Duquette, D.A. (editor). 2003. State University of New York Press, Albany, NY, p. 144.

25 Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1882. *The Gay Science*. Cited in Pearcey, Nancy. 2018. *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality*. Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI.

26 As a particular aspect of the spontaneous, progressive processes of nature, the Hegelian dialectic is an aspect of pantheism. Probably

few evolutionists or science popularizers are aware of it, but Darwinian evolution is classic Hegelianism. It is so obscured by scientific jargon and supposed evolutionary mechanisms that we easily fail to recognize it. But the dialectic is certainly there. Consider: Organisms are in conflict with nature. “Thesis” is the need for organisms to adapt to a new or changed environment. “Antithesis” is mutation acted on by natural selection. “Synthesis” is a new species. An incipient dialectic can be located in Spinoza’s thought. In *Ethics*, Spinoza’s musings on the modes of Deity include the notion of conflict and struggle for existence, and that out of this conflict would arise things and persons. Hegel surely had read Spinoza’s thinking, and one cannot help but wonder if that is where he derived his idea of the dialectic. Hegel was a pantheist; he believed that everything is part of an evolutionary process that eventually leads to perfection (Downing, 2011, p. 192).

27 Mortenson (1997) in a section on the Enlightenment documents the direct connection between Spinoza and higher criticism.

28 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evolution_and_the_Catholic_Church.

29 Mortenson (2020a) examines this common justification of old-Earth compromise.

Besides Gleason Archer, Mortenson mentions other well-known figures in the Biblical inerrancy movement who held old-Earth views: Bill Bright, James Montgomery Boice, W.A. Criswell, Wayne Grudem, Walter Kaiser, J.P. Moreland, J.I. Packer, and R.C. Sproul.

30 For example, Moreland, 2018, p. 189.

31 The list of books espousing some form of theistic evolution is long. Examples include Collins, 2003; Sperry and Noble, 2009; Davidson, 2010; Collins, 2011; Giberson and Collins, 2011; Lennox, 2011; Asher, 2012; Enns, 2012; Miller and Soden, 2012; Applegate and Stump, 2016; Hill et al. 2016; Lamoureux, 2016; Longman, 2016; and Venema and McKnight, 2017. Organizations and websites devoted to promoting some form of evolution and/or billions of years in the Church include BioLogos, the American Scientific Affiliation, Solid Rock Lectures, Reasons to Believe, and the Templeton Foundation.

32 See, for example, Meyer, 2021. Meyer presents a detailed summary of most of the historical steps involved in acceptance of the Big Bang Theory by mainstream scientists and discusses its fundamental presupposition, but does not notice the ideology behind that presupposition.