

# Review of the Religion of Evolutionary Christianity

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## Introduction

We as Bible believing Christians certainly live in difficult times. Everywhere we turn the foundations of God's word are under attack. Whether it is in government, schools or news media, fundamental Christianity is considered archaic or just plain wrong.

Over the years, I have observed numerous dreadfully eccentric belief systems attempting to place themselves within the umbrella of Christianity. Most of them are so far in left field, they are easily recognizable as apostate.

However, there have been a few which are more difficult to recognize. One such religion is called "Evolutionary Christianity." The lead purveyor(s), apostle(s), evangelist(s) or whatever of this proposed religion are a husband / wife team named Michael Dowd and Connie Barlow <sup>1</sup> (A confirmed atheist <sup>2</sup>). Both have been traveling in a van across the U.S. for the last few years attempting to promote this apostate doctrine under the pretext of Christianity. To date, I have only interacted with Mr. Dowd so my comments are primarily directed at his writings and those subsequent discussions.

I came across Mr. Dowd's blog about evolutionary Christianity <sup>3</sup> approximately two months ago. I had a genuine interest in the dialogue because his writings appeared to have some depth and thought. My interest in his blog should not be construed as endorsement or agreement but everyone deserves the benefit of the doubt if they have at least thought and studied before a conclusion is drawn.

My initial discourse with Mr. Dowd was cordial. My posts were intended to challenge him for evidence of this belief system and also demonstrate areas where he was wrong or misinformed. However, his agitation became more pronounced with every response I posted. His frustration with me finally peaked, resulting in several of my posts being deleted.

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## Dowd's Debate Tactics

When Dowd presents his claim for evolutionary Christianity, he relies on some very common debate tactics (some would say distasteful) to frame his argument as an

attempt to convince the uniformed (or curious) his view is the correct one.

Argument from Intimidation or Emotive Language : He relies the argument from emotive language tactic when discussing judgments laid down by God (Old Testament and otherwise) for rebellion. The argument from emotive language tactic depends on the natural human fear of being considered insensitive, uncaring, unloving etc. The person who disagrees with Dowd's worldview will be judged as morally unworthy. Dowd will refer to the God of judgment as a cosmic bully or a terrorist. <sup>4</sup> He says: "it is an easily verifiable fact that many modern and postmodern people find the picture of God painted in parts of the Bible problematic at best, if not repulsive." <sup>5</sup> Dowd's favorite elitist response to those who disagree (as he told me) is: " I will not engage you because you have a closed heart." \_

The response to this tactic is very simple. If this Almighty and All powerful God is real, has a plan for you, and has been explicit as to what should be done on your part to receive his redemptive grace, you might be careful about judging his actions for rebellion as repulsive. The Bible says in 2 Peter 2:9: "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." These statements describe the true God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The same God whose compassion will deliver those who follow and receive him will also judge those who choose a different path. The operative word here is choose. God is not the one who makes the choice.

Appeal to Widespread Authority, Peer Approval of Subjective Opinion, or Argument from Authority: The value of peer approval in hard sciences with objective standards such as chemistry, mathematics, and physics is well known. Peer approval has less value (not necessarily valueless) in historical sciences (such as macro-evolution) because of several unverifiable / non-empirical assumptions required when conclusions are drawn. Dowd continually talks about the large percentage of scientists who believe in evolution and of how science reveals so many facts. He also rejects anyone who does not embrace evolution as fact.

Dowd attempts to manufacture authoritarian credibility for his book, "Thank God for Evolution", by saying it is endorsed by six Nobel Laureates. <sup>6</sup> Conversely, it was Nobel Laureate Richard Feynman who said: "Just because someone held a position of authority, this was not a signifier that they must be correct." <sup>7</sup> Hence, Dowd's remarks are fundamentally flawed because he is using peer approval and authoritarian assumptions for their correctness when there is no higher authority nor majority rules in the sciences. <sup>8</sup>

Fallacy of Equivocation: This approach involves using the same words with different meaning. Dowd enjoys employing fundamental Christian doctrinal terminology such as original sin, the fall of man, God, etc. and then adapts their definition to fit his own worldview. Dowd talks about creationists rejecting evolution when in fact, what they reject are the conclusions of macro-evolution or common ancestry. He will also take words whose definition are repugnant to many religious people such as pantheism and give them a more acceptable name such as creatheism. Creatheism is Universe worship which is nothing more than repackaged pantheism (more on this later).

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Dowd also uses the equivocation tactic by creating grey areas in discussions when the conclusion should be black and white. He states: "I also began to accept that while the Bible was clearly divinely inspired, it was also a human book." <sup>9</sup> Dowd does not want to blatantly reject divine inspiration of the Bible so instead he minimizes it. Divine inspiration is a black and white conclusion. For example, why would an omnipotent and omnipresent God provide His inspiration to writings that He knows humans would impart their own worldview and get wrong? The answer is, God wouldn't. The Bible is penned by humans but it is wrong to say the Bible is a human book.

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## Dowd's Science

Dowd speaks of the "nested emergent nature of God's creativity" as an explanation of how the universe began. He talks of "subatomic particles coalescing into atoms, atoms emerging into molecules, molecules creating cells, cells creating organisms, organisms creating societies, and so on." <sup>10</sup>

However, there is not one credible scientist on Earth who can postulate a viable naturalistic empirical process to result in life from non-life.

What Dowd conveniently forgets is that at some point in this nested hierarchy, life must arise from non-life which is a scientifically unexplainable process! Furthermore, the Big Bang must begin with a singularity which is a violation of all naturalistic laws and is not explained by any "nested emergent nature." While Neo-Darwinists run from these questions (saying evolution does not care), Dowd is required to address it (but to date has not) if he is going to pronounce that "evidence" is the basis for his personification of god (explained later) religion. However, there is not one credible scientist on Earth who can postulate a viable naturalistic empirical process to result in life from non-life.

Dowd's nested emergent nature of God's creativity must further explain the origin of homochirality.<sup>11</sup> The fact that DNA, proteins etc. exhibit homochirality in living organisms is a phenomenon unexplainable by nature or any religious naturalist.<sup>12</sup> Scientists to date, have been able to demonstrate chiral amplification but never homochirality.<sup>13</sup>

Dowd says "we encounter a Universe astonishingly well suited for life and our kind of consciousness." <sup>14</sup> His evidence for this statement is beyond me. We have an Earth that is well suited for life and our kind of consciousness but to date, there has never been evidence of life found in other areas of the Cosmos.

It is difficult to engage Dowd in a scientific discussion about evolution because he skirts it by saying he is not a scientist. So he says that 95% of scientists believing evolution is evidence enough for him (remember the debate tactic, argument from authority). Dowd further states that creationists are science rejecting because they reject conclusions from mainstream science (he has sometimes been specific and say mainstream evolutionary science). He also says that atheists are faith rejecting but rarely misses a chance to quote or promote their books because they also embrace his evolutionary worldview.

Proclaiming someone as science rejecting because they disagree with what is considered mainstream science (or mainstream evolutionary science) is painting a very

wide swath and actually violates the basic auspices of scientific inquiry. There have been numerous scientists who have challenged the thoughts, conclusions etc. of the scientific majority in the past and they were not considered science rejecting. Also, scientific advancements are accomplished by challenging what is judged mainstream, not embracing it. Interestingly, it was considered mainstream science in the 1900's to believe the universe was static and not expanding. Then Einstein and his theory of relativity came along.

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Furthermore, in the nineteenth century, there was a respected scientist named Paul Broca who used Craniometry to scientifically prove that men were more intelligent than women.<sup>15</sup> The conclusion (men are smarter than women) was the mainstream scientific belief of the day. It continues to be true that women in general have smaller brains than men but the conclusion about intelligence relating to brain size (per the 20th century worldview) is not so simple. However, by Dowd's preamble, to challenge the conclusion that men were smarter than women (in the nineteenth century) would be science rejecting.

The second point to make is the difference between evidence and conclusions. The scientific evidence says that men's brains are larger than women's. This is a statistical fact from gathering a tremendous amount of data using the scientific method. However it was Broca's conclusions which were bogus, not the evidence. Both creationists and evolutionists have the same evidence. Hence, it is the conclusions that an evolutionist draw from scientific evidence which a creationist will reject, not the evidence itself.

## Dowd's Religion

Dowd describes himself as a religious naturalist which is basically a spiritual person who does not believe in the supernatural.<sup>16</sup> So every miracle talked about in the Bible he rejects (understand that Dowd will talk about miracles but his definition is not consistent with fundamentalist Christians). Dowd describes God as the personification of Ultimate Reality.<sup>17</sup> Since Dowd does not believe in the supernatural, he also must reject that Jesus was the Son of God who was born of a virgin. However, Dowd talks about receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit evidenced by speaking in tongues <sup>18</sup> (without a belief in the supernatural, I have no idea what this means).

In all honesty, the most ominous aspect of Dowd's belief system is not that he embraces naturalistic macro-evolution as an axiom to base his religion (although it is pretty disturbing). The most sinister characteristic of "evolutionary Christianity" is the complete rejection of the infallibility of scripture, rejecting Jesus Christ as the Son of God, changing God to a personification of Ultimate Reality, rejecting any judgment for sin and then have the audacity to label it Christianity.

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Dowd describes the Gospel as the “Great Story of God’s love and saving grace as revealed in the Bible, on the cross, and throughout the entire 14-billion-year epic of evolution.”<sup>19</sup> His gospel also relegates the singular position that God has placed man on Earth to nothing more than the latest result of natural selection and common ancestry. Conversely, Christianity describes the Gospel as God sending his perfect Son to die on the cross for the sins of man that we may be reconciled with Him through grace. Dowd likes to bemoan the Christian doctrines of judgment, heaven and hell. While Christian doctrine says everyone has the chance to be saved through repentance, holiness and grace, Dowd’s religion guarantees redemption to everyone no matter what. Concerning Jesus, Dowd has said:

“The more I reflect on life within and around me, the more certain I become that the only way to heaven is via the path Jesus walked – the path that might now be called evolutionary integrity.”<sup>20</sup>

Dowd’s definition of evolutionary integrity can be summed up in the following quote:

“For me today, the interpretation of the Gospel that lives most vibrantly is this: ‘Jesus as God’s way, truth, and life’ means that to the extent that I live in evolutionary integrity as Jesus lived, I am living God’s way, manifesting God’s truth, and bringing God’s vitality and life enhancing service to the world. This way of awareness of the Whole, in service to the Whole, as Jesus did, is not something to be merely reconciled with our vastly enlarged Universe and of Time. Rather, it is enriched by it. Simultaneously, the relevance of this core Christian doctrine is universalized: any and all may benefit from its guidance without necessarily converting to Christianity as a belief system.”<sup>21</sup>

Notice how Dowd capitalizes the “Whole” in this quote. This is his pantheistic idiom for God. So Dowd’s view of following Jesus and getting into heaven is living a life which is in service (works based) to the Whole (Universe). Conversely, the Christian view of getting into heaven and following Jesus is accepting Jesus as your Lord and savior, repenting of your sins and living a sinless life with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Concerning Jesus, Dowd has specifically said: “There is little or no evidence that Jesus ever intended us to worship him.”<sup>22</sup> However, the Bible talks several times of the worship of Jesus by people (Matthew 2:2, 2:11,), Disciples (Matthew 14:33, 28:9 ), and Angels (Hebrews 1:6). This behavior is Dowd’s attempt to minimize / negate the Deity of Jesus to justify his personification of God hypothesis.

Dowd relegates the authority of scripture to a secondary position below science’s opinion on the Universe. He states: “Seen through sacred eyes, the entire history of the Universe can now be honored as the **primary** revelation of God. Written scriptures in contrast, are derivative; they are **secondary** revelations (my emphasis).”<sup>23</sup>

Since Dowd does not believe in the supernatural, he also does not believe in any supernatural intervention of God to direct the creation of man (intelligent design) and certainly not a specific “Ex Nihilo” creation as is stated in the book of Genesis.

Dowd relates the original sin and the fall of man to how evolution and common ancestry has given us a “reptilian brain.”<sup>24</sup> Dowd has also said that core Christian doctrines (original sin and fall of man) are “flat earth” forms of Christianity interpreted in ways that predate the discoveries of science.<sup>25</sup> Conversely, the Apostle Paul in Romans 5:12 said: “Wherefore as by one man sin entered the world; and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” Moreover, the original sin concept along

with the fall of man was first witnessed in writings by Irenaeus who was a hearer of Polycarp who was a hearer of the Apostle John who was a hearer of Jesus. So it is difficult to fathom how the elucidation of the original sin by Irenaeus (and Paul for that matter) could be misinterpreted by someone just because they had little understanding of the Universe's magnificence. By redirecting the blame for man's sinful nature to some past evolutionary mutation, the importance of Adam's original sin is thus minimized and the requirement for a Savior (Jesus) is not needed at all. Hence, this is nothing more than a pop psychology attempt to divert blame for man's sinful nature from the need for repentance, redemption and change through grace given by Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. This explains why Dowd's version of Christianity does not need Jesus.

The fundamental flaw in Dowd's argument for embracing this "evidence" based religion is his underpinnings are evidence free. When I asked him to provide literal scientific evidence of his doctrine, he refused. This is because he has none. He can obviously articulate well thought out philosophical opinions and he certainly believes that embracing evolution places him on firm ground but he has done nothing more than create a mythical god to fit his own worldview. This evidence free imaginary god is an attempt to draw in the Oprah Winfrey crowd who say "God is simply love" while rejecting repentance and judgment. [26](#)

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## Dowd's Mentor

Dowd describes Thomas Berry as his mentor [27](#) and much of Dowd's writing parallels this bias. While the late Berry was a Roman Catholic priest, he in no way postulated God in the same way as the Catholic Church. In fact, Berry espoused strong pantheistic views which were considered by many Christian leaders to be heretical such as:

"The world is being called to a new post-denominational even post Christian belief system that sees the Earth as a living being - mythological as Gaia [28](#), Mother Earth - with mankind as her consciousness." [29](#)

Dowd rejects that his own views are pantheistic and feels he has created a new perspective he calls creatheistic. [30](#) He says that creatheism encompasses both the transcendence and immanence of God to assure us that his religion is different from pantheism. [31](#) However, since Dowd refers to himself as a religious naturalist he can't believe in a transcendent (supernatural)

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Creator without equivocating the definition. He further refers to his god as the "largest, all-embracing Whole," "god is the personification of nature" and consistently says the sacred and proper name of god is "Ultimate Reality." [32](#) Pantheism is the view that god is everything and everything is god. While definitions can be repackaged and modified ad nauseum, there is no difference between Dowd's religion and pantheism.

## Dowd's Followers

Evolutionary Christianity appears to be a big tent for select groups of people who have been classically rejected from traditional Christianity because their behaviors were opposed to God's laws. It also attracts the global warming crowd. Dowd gets a great deal of mileage out of homosexuals, radical feminists etc. who have been rejected by traditional Christianity. Sadly, Dowd and his followers have some unchristian ammunition to further their cause.

The antics of the Westboro Baptist Church are a prime example of the literal perversion of a valid Christian doctrine into an unchristian behavior which appears to get significant media headlines. God does NOT hate f\*gs as the Westboro Baptist Church posits. God hates the sin and not the sinner. Anyone (this means ANYONE) who has sin will not be in the presence of God. Homosexuality only has a special nature because it is a sexual sin (no different than adultery, pedophilia or fornication) which is a sin against oneself (I Corinthians 6:18). God treats these sins the same and the magnitude of judgment is no different either.

Dowd has stated:

“What Darwin called “natural selection” is nothing more than the sum of Nature’s sorting processes. Random mutations that are *functional*, that help an organism survive or **Reproduce**, will tend to be passed on to the next generation—not all the time, but often enough to serve as a shaping force (my emphasis).” [33](#)

I then asked Dowd a question (which he refused to answer) inquiring how someone who embraced evolution and natural selection as an axiom to their faith, could with the same breath, embrace homosexuality as something good? For evolution via natural selection to progress (as Dowd has stated), there must be a fertile breeding pair to further the preferred trait. Homosexuality, due to the very nature of the behavior, does not result in a breeding pair which can reproduce and pass on the trait. Hence, from Dowd's evolutionary perspective, homosexuality should be considered a bad mutation / trait and rejected by his personification of god.

## Conclusion

Dowd sees his evolutionary Christianity as an evolving religion that continually reinvents god as new evidence is uncovered. If your god is invented, then there is no problem. Conversely, if your God is real (e.g. the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob), you might want to be careful about these types of statements. Dowd says the Bible is “divinely inspired” but not in the same way true Christians understand the phrase. Dowd sees the Bible only as a collection of stories by men who used their own perspective and had little knowledge of the universe as a whole. If there is a conclusion in science which is seemingly opposed to Biblical scripture, it is science that is the higher authority in Dowd's worldview.

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Romans 1:22-25 says, "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man,...Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever." The Bible says Almighty God created the heavens and the Earth while Evolutionary Christianity says god IS the heavens and the Earth. Earth directed (or Universe directed) worship is nothing more than worship of the creation over the Creator. It is irrelevant that you refer to the creation as some type of god, it is irrelevant that several scientists / theologians accept it, and it is irrelevant that you call it Christianity.

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Psalms 33: 8 says, "Let all the Earth fear the Lord; let all the people of the world revere him." Fear of the Lord is one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 11:2-3). The Catholic Priest, Thomas Aquinas interpreted fear of the Lord as "filial fear" which is essentially a child's reverence for his Father and never desiring to be separated or to offend Him.<sup>34</sup> Filial fear is not servile fear, which is the fear a prisoner would have from an executioner.<sup>35</sup> Dowd's use of terms such as cosmic bully and global terrorist in reference to God is his attempt to equivocate the Christian doctrine of "Fear of the Lord" from its just interpretation of filial fear to the incorrect servile fear. The issue that Dowd (his cohorts and followers) need to rectify, is their personal repulsion to the fear, reverence and judgmental nature of a God who requires repentance as part of His saving grace. Hence, evolutionary Christianity is nothing more than an effort to repackage the God of the Bible into something more humanistically palatable which allows access by every mystical belief system under the sun (more accurately Universe). They refuse to embrace that a loving God can also be a God of judgment and repentance, especially a God who judges the wicked. So they conveniently forget about the God of judgment and create a mythical god more to their liking. However, it is NOT Christianity. Christianity believes in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the perfect Son of God who died for our sins; not some personification of Gaia.

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