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| **ST. JOSEPH’S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), BANGALORE-27** | | | | | | |
| **B.Sc - GENERAL ENGLISH – IV SEMESTER** | | | | | | |
| **SEMESTER EXAMINATION: APRIL 2017** | | | | | | |
| **PSA 315 – General English (Special paper for PSA)** | | | | | | |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Time- 2 1/2 hrs** | |  | **Max Marks-70** | | |  |
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| **This paper contains 6 printed pages and three parts** | | | | | | |
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**INSTRUCTIONS**

1. This paper is meant for **B.Sc students** who have opted for the **PSA Special Course**
2. The paper contains **THREE** sections and **SIX** printed pages
3. Answer **all** sections
4. You will lose marks for **exceeding** the suggested word-limits
5. You are allowed to use **a dictionary** during the examination
6. Please **indicate PSA-SPL COURSE** clearly on your **answer-booklet**

**I. Read the following essays and answer the questions that follow.**

*The following two articles display mutually opposed perspectives on whether it is possible to reconcile the theory of evolution with religious faith. The first piece, by Michael Dowd, argues that it is possible to profess an ‘evolutionary spirituality.’ The second, by Carl Wieland, an Evangelical Christian, argues against Dowd’s position. Read both and answer the questions that follow***.**

**Evolutionary Spirituality – Coming Home to Reality**

By Michael Dowd, author of *Thank God for Evolution*

The present moment is highly overrated.From an evolutionary perspective, the past and the future are where it's at. Any aardvark, antelope, cat, or cockroach can effortlessly reside in the present moment. Only human beings can engage deeply with the past and consciously co-create the future.By doing so, by looking outward with aims of bettering our world, big or small, we also walk a path that leads to inner fulfillment.

For millennia, in every tradition, "spirituality" has been about how individuals and communities can thrive in light of three givens of the human condition: chaos, death, and mismatched instincts. The spiritual path has thus been largely about cultivating qualities such as gratitude, compassion, love, trust, generosity, humility, authenticity, responsibility, and service. Why? Because these are precisely the character traits that lead to peace, joy, thriving relationships, and healthy communities. They end our estrangement from Reality. To use traditional religious language, they allow us to abide in God.

*Why HUMILITY?*  Because the Universe is primary and you are derivative.

Said another way, you are not the center of the Universe. Your ego, your small self, does not run the show. We were not thrust *into* the Universe; we were born of it. You could not survive without the Universe, whereas the Universe would do just fine without you. Humility and its twin sister, trust, are thus essential because only when you're coming from a place of humility are you in touch with reality as it actually is.

*Why AUTHENTICITY?*  Because, it is only by striving for authentic presence that you will be aligned with reality.

Honesty, transparency, and other manifestations of authenticity enable the feedback necessary for individuals and groups to evolve in healthy ways. We may sometimes be tempted to lie or present ourselves in false ways because of a concern for safety or ease—or the promise of a cheap thrill. Deception never, however, provides lasting joy, and it can set in motion conditions that ramify into major misunderstandings, even crises.

*Why RESPONSIBILITY?*  Because there is only one person responsible for the quality of your life, and that person is you.

As Jack Canfield advises in his book *The Success Principles*,

If you want to be successful, you have to take 100 percent responsibility for everything that you experience in your life. This includes the level of your achievements, the results you produce, the quality of your relationships, the state of your health and physical fitness, your income, your debts, your feelings—everything! This is not easy. In fact, most of us have been conditioned to blame something outside of ourselves for the parts of our life we don't like. We blame our parents, our bosses, our friends, the media, our co-workers, our clients, our spouse, the weather, the economy, our astrological chart, our lack of money—anyone or anything we can pin the blame on. We never want to look at where the real problem is—ourselves.

Only by taking full responsibility for our lives, and the wake we've left, can we know heaven on Earth—or enlightenment.

*Why SERVICE?*  Because the communities within which we reside (from family to the entire Cosmos) are everything to us.

These communities are our source and sustenance, our Alpha and Omega, beginning and end. Whatever we may choose to call the Wholeness of Reality, and whatever metaphors or analogies we use to describe it, the undeniable fact is that this Reality rules. To the degree that we fight against reality, or deny it, we suffer and we cause suffering to others.

Guilt, fear, and resentment are three of the most paralyzing emotions. Gratitude, trust, and love are three of the most empowering emotions. If your spiritual practice is not measurably lessening your guilt, fear, and resentment, and increasing your gratitude, trust, and love—if it's not helping you fulfill your evolutionary mission—then I would argue that it is not Evolutionary Spirituality.

Forcefully said,

• You can meditate until your legs won't move, but if one or more of your significant relationships suck, or if you don't *get* that the quality of your life is largely determined by your habits of interpretation and ability to value the interpretations of others, you'll never be free of suffering.

• You can pray or chant until you're blue in the face, but if you're not growing in trust, authenticity, responsibility, and service, you're missing the power and purpose of the spiritual path.

• You can fast until you're skinny as a rail, but if you're burdened by resentments and secrets, or have unfinished business, you'll never enjoy real freedom—the peace that passes all understanding.

Finally, as individuals, each one of us is mortal. From the perspective of the communities you leave behind, here is the take-home message of any form of Evolutionary Spirituality that merits the name: Your meditation, prayer, or other spiritual practices matter only to the extent that they help you grow in ways that bless others or inspire positive actions in the world. These will be actions that serve your larger self: the Great Self within whom you live and move and have your being.

**Beware of Evolution’s Evangelist!**

By Carl Wieland

The internet address of the Rev. Michael Dowd’s website (www.ThankGodForEvolution.com) speaks loudly of what his ‘ministry’ is all about. The blurbs on his book of the same title promise us, for example, that: ‘If you love God, if you love the animals, if you love Jesus, if you love the flowers and Sun and Moon, here’s the book that will help you gather all these loves together.’ It will show you the way ‘toward a deeper Christianity’. It offers ‘a new, all inclusive, science-based, spirit-infused way for us to move together as co-evolutionary participants in the process of creation.’

Claiming to have once been a ‘fundamentalist evangelical’, Michael Dowd had, it seems, already ‘converted’ to a mystical view that one could label ‘evolutionary Christianity’ before he met and married an atheistic science writer devoted to evolution. This couple are now itinerant preachers, continually traveling ‘on the road’ to show people how the ‘sacred story’ of evolution can ‘enrich their faith’.

Dowd is nothing if not enthusiastic about his mission. His is supposed to be the way to ‘look for overarching understandings that can be celebrated by all peoples, including devout religious believers of every tradition and ardent nonbelievers, too’. Imagine something that can enrich not just the faith of Christians, but also Hindus, Buddhists, atheists, you name it—one big love-fest. Evolution is supposed to do all that, if only we could all understand things the way he does.

Of course, by being free to reinterpret something beyond recognition, and then to pick and choose which passages will disappear, and so forth, one can make any ‘sacred text’ say almost anything, causing it to become effectively irrelevant. He says that ‘Apostles of evolution must strive for an Evolutionary Christianity, an Evolutionary Hinduism, an Evolutionary Islam, an Evolutionary Judaism, and more.’ But none of those categories mean much anymore, if each is ‘revamped’ into an evolutionary syncretism wherein all their competing truth-claims disappear.

One of the items of bait on the Dowdian ‘hook’ is the assurance that at last, here is a religion that squares with facts. He says, ‘Evolutionary religion’s alternative to reliance on ancient scriptures is empirical data. In a way, the data are our scriptures—and to these we submit.’ Of course, the implication is that ‘the facts’ are on the side of evolution, and opposed to a straightforward understanding of Genesis history, which is not the case at all. ‘Facts’ or ‘data’ are always interpreted, and modern creationism has overwhelmingly shown that these facts make more sense when seen through the lens of the Bible’s history.

Random mutation plus natural selection (those organisms which just happen to survive in whatever environment just happens to be there) are of course simply chance plus chance, despite all the efforts to gloss over this and pretend that evolution is ‘not chance’, as one of Dowd’s chapters does. Seemingly to get around the difficulty of extracting meaning from randomness, Dowd approvingly quotes Stuart Kauffman, one of the ‘emerging complexity theorists’ who acknowledges that neo-Darwinism could not really account for the upwards, information-increasing evolutionary story. Kauffman thinks there must be some inherent property in matter/nature to become more complex. At least that makes the universe somehow creative, which is great when you’re trying to encourage people to see it as a sort of God-substitute.

Although he appears friendly to Christian thought, in reality Dowd very arrogantly insists that, unlike the Bible-believer, his religion is driven by empirical facts. There is somewhat more than a little irony in his approval of Kauffman—because it’s the empirical data of the real world of physics and chemistry that tells us that there is no such tendency to self-organisation, but rather that there is a relentless tendency in the opposite direction. Unguided and unforced by any programmed mechanism (as happens when an organism grows up from a fertilized egg, for instance), all systems of matter and energy tend to run down to greater simplicity. We can rely on this for the same reason that we can know that there are no such things as perpetual motion or ‘free energy’ machines.

In this age of deep green environmentalism substituting for biblical faith, it’s not surprising to read, also, the following comment by Dowd: ‘Planet Earth comes first. The health and wellbeing of the body of Life must take precedence over the health and wellbeing of any single species, including our own.’

For those whose Christianity is based primarily on their experience, e.g. how they felt after making a commitment to Christ, why, Dowd has something to offer them, too. He says, ‘No matter your religion or philosophy, making a commitment to grow in deep integrity will offer you much the same experience as those who have repented of their sins and asked Jesus to be their personal Lord and Saviour.’

It’s been said before that those who are most passionate about defending so-called ‘Christian evolution’ are generally those who really would like the freedom to do away with parts of the Bible that are, to them, unpalatable. These are the bits that involve what Paul called ‘the offense of the Cross’—including the reality of judgment for man’s sin. The ‘give-away’ of this in Dowd’s case is the following paragraph describing the implications of the ‘evolution revolution’: ‘Given what we now know about deep-time creativity and grace, we can no longer in good conscience continue interpreting the story of Jesus’ birth, life, teachings, passion, death, and resurrection as primarily having to do with saving a select group of human beings from the fires of a literal hell when they die.’ It’s easy to see what this man is trying to do: charming people away from God’s Word!

Nevertheless, Dowd’s book is a tragically misguided and misguiding work, and ultimately deadly to truth. No matter how we might fancy ourselves as heirs of a progressive culture, the bottom line is that God is unchanging, and so are the foundational truths in His Word [The Bible], including the history of how we inherited our sin nature, and thus why we need a Saviour. And of how sin and death—the very heart of the Gospel message—entered the world.

**I. A. Answer the following questions in about 250 words each: (4x15 = 60)**

1. What according to the author of the first piece are the grounds for combining the science of evolution with a deeply spiritual outlook? Do you think such an approach is: a) meaningful b) practicable?
2. How does Dowd’s proposal for an evolutionary spirituality differ from the doctrines of traditional religions? What, on the other hand, are the similarities? ,
3. What assumptions of faith and truth do you find undergirding the argument of the second article? To what extent do you find yourself in agreement with them?
4. Does Carl Wieland, in your view, succeed in refuting Michael Dowd’s arguments in support of Evolutionary Spirituality? Give reasons for your assessment.

**II. Use the following cartoons as points of reference for a reflective essay of about 150 words on the theme of this paper: (10 marks)**



