

God in All Things? The Premise of Contemplative Spirituality

by Ray Yungen,
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It was **Alice Bailey** (the famous occult prophetess who coined the term New Age), who made this startling assertion:

It is, of course, easy to find many passages which link the way of the Christian Knower with that of his brother in the East. They bear witness to the same efficacy of method.

What did she mean by the term "Christian Knower"? The answer is unmistakable! ...

[O]ccultism is awakening the mystical faculties to see God in everything. In Hinduism, this is called reaching samadhi or enlightenment. It is the final objective of yoga meditation: God in everything—a force or power flowing through all that exists. William Johnston believes such an experience exists within the context of Christianity. He explains:

What I can safely say, however, is that there is a Christian samadhi that has always occupied an honored place in the spirituality of the West. This, I believe, is the thing that is nearest to Zen. It is this that I have called Christian Zen.

The famous psychologist Carl Jung predicted this system would be the yoga of the west. Christian Zen? Christian yoga? These seem to be oxymorons, like military pacifism or alcoholic sobriety. Christians, conservative ones at least, have always viewed these concepts as heretical and anti-biblical. The word most commonly used for it is pantheism—all is God. But when one looks at the Christian Zen movement one discovers a similar term, which for all practical purposes, means the same thing. This term is called panentheism—God is *in* all things....

The credibility of *A Time of Departing* rests on whether or not panentheism has a legitimate place in orthodox Christianity. This is a vital question because panentheism is the foundational worldview among those who engage in mystical prayer. Ken Kaisch, a Episcopal priest and a teacher of mystical prayer, made this very clear in his book, *Finding God*, where he noted:

Meditation is a process through which we quiet the mind and the emotions and enter directly into the experience of the Divine.... there is a deep connection between us ... God is in each of us.

Here lies the core of panentheism: God is in everything and everything is in God. The only difference between pantheism and panentheism is *how* God is in everything. This position of the panentheist is challenging to understand: Your outer personality is not God, but God is still in you as your true identity. This explains why mystics say, all is one. At the mystical level, they experience this God-force that seems to flow through everything and everybody. All creation has God in it as a living, vital presence. It is just hidden.

The theological implications of this worldview put it at direct odds with biblical Christianity for obvious reasons. Only one true God exists, and His identity is not in everyone. The fullness of God's identity, in bodily form, rests in Jesus Christ and Him only!

Scripture clearly teaches the only deity in man is Jesus Christ who dwells in the heart of the believer. Further, Jesus made it clear not everyone will be born again—having God's Spirit (John 3). Yet the panentheist perceives that all people and everything have the identity of God within them.

William Johnston again emphasizes, "For God is the core of my being and the core of all beings." This fundamentally eliminates faith in the Gospel as the avenue to reconciliation with God, because God is already there. It effectively leaves out the finished work of Christ as the binding agent and is contrary to the following verses:

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (I Corinthians 1:18)

Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. (II John 9)

The Bible does reveal, though, that God upholds all things by His powerful word, but He does not do this by being the substance of all things. The word of God says, "[F]or in Him [Christ] we live and move and have our being ..." (Acts 17:28). But this speaks of Him as separate from us yet remaining present with us. The belief that God indwells everything is heresy. God will not, and cannot share His personal essence with anyone or anything outside of the Trinity. Even Christians are only partakers of the Divine Nature and not possessors of the Divine Nature. 2 Peter 1:3-4 says:

[A]s His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. (emphasis mine)

Here the apostle Peter is writing to Christians, not to the world. He acknowledges the participation of the believer in conjunction with the work of the Holy Spirit. The word partaker is taken from the Greek word *koinonos*, which means a sharer (associate), companion, or fellowship partner. In other words, the Christian shares in the promises of the purifying work of the Holy Spirit, being called out and set apart from the corruption of an evil world. Moreover, a partaker or participant is one who has been born again through faith. A possessor, on the other hand, is one who is already in possession of something. In the case of the panentheist and pantheist, the possession they are claiming is God. They do not believe a fundamental change is needed, just an awareness of what is already there.

This conclusion becomes quite obvious when we examine such passages as Isaiah 42:8: "I am the LORD, that is my name; and My glory I will not give to another." Creation can reflect God's glory (Isaiah 6:3), but it can never possess God's glory. For that to happen would mean God was indeed giving His glory to another.

This concept is made crystal clear in author William Shannon's book, *Silence on Fire*. Shannon, a Roman Catholic priest, relates the account of a theological discussion he once had with an atheist groom for whom he was performing a wedding ceremony. He told the skeptical young man:

You will never find God by looking outside yourself. You will only find God within. It will only be when you have come to experience God in your own heart and let God into the corridors of your heart (or rather found God there) that you will be able to 'know' that there is indeed a God and that you are not separate from God.⁸

This advice is no different from what any New Age teacher would impart to someone who held an atheistic point of view. You want God? Meditate! God is just waiting for you to open up. Based on Shannon's own mystical beliefs, he knew this was the right approach. He alluded to this by explaining that the young man would find enlightenment if he would look in the right place or use the right method.

Those who support this heresy draw the same conclusion of mystical panentheism that author Willigis Jager articulated when he said:

The physical world, human beings, and everything that is are all forms of the Ultimate Reality, all expressions of God, all "one with the Father." He means not all Christians but all people. This is nothing less than Hindu samadhi with Christian spray paint. Those in this movement who are honest have no qualms about acknowledging this—as one adherent did so aptly when he confessed, "The meditation of advanced occultists is identical with the prayer of advanced mystics." (Ray Yungen, **A Time of Departing**, 2nd ed. 2006, pp. 28-32)