

SEPTEMBER 2005 – “God” and God

As biblical faith has waned in Western Europe and America there has been a steady rise in what is called “the new spirituality.” The new spirituality takes many expressions and continues to speak of “God.” However, the God of which they speak is not the personal God of the Bible, who created nature and is present in it but is also separate and distinct from it. Rather, upon careful examination, the God of the new spirituality is the “soul of nature” – the impersonal God of pantheism.

The distinction between the God of Scripture and the God of pantheism is a very important one for believers to grasp today. C.S. Lewis gives us some helpful insight in his book *Miracles*, when he observes,

The Christians are not claiming that simply ‘God’ was incarnate in Jesus. They are claiming that the one true God is He whom the Jews worshipped as Jahweh, and that it is He who has descended. Now the double character of Jahweh is this. On the one hand He is the God of Nature, her glad Creator. It is He who sends rain into the furrows till the valleys stand so thick with corn that they laugh and sing. The trees of the wood rejoice before Him and His voice causes the wild deer to bring forth their young. He is the God of wheat and wine and oil. In that respect He is constantly doing all the things that Nature-Gods do: He is Bacchus, Venus, Ceres all rolled into one. . . . On the other hand, Jahweh is clearly *not* a Nature-God. He does not die and come to life each year as a true Corn-king should. . . . He is not the soul of Nature nor of any part of Nature. He inhabits eternity: He dwells in the high and holy place: heaven is His throne, not His vehicle, earth is His footstool, not His vesture. One day He will dismantle both and make a new heaven and earth. He is not to be identified even with the ‘divine spark’ in man. He is ‘God and not man’ Jahweh is neither the soul of Nature nor her enemy. . . . She is His creature. He is not a nature-God, but the God of Nature – her inventor, maker, owner, and controller. To everyone who reads this book the conception has been familiar from childhood; we therefore easily think it is the most ordinary conception in the world. ‘If people are going to believe in a God at all,’ we ask, ‘what other kind would they believe in?’ But the answer of history is, ‘Almost any other kind’.¹

G.K. Chesterton agrees with Lewis’s conclusion above. He once noted that, “When people stop believing in God, they don’t believe in nothing – they believe in anything.” As our culture continues to decline, we can expect to see a growing momentum in the rebirth of “the gods.” And these Gods will be packaged in ways that can deceive us if we are not alert. Thus our great need to read and study Holy Scripture, and to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal in its pages the true and living God.

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made;
without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men.
The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.*

JOHN 1:1-5 NIV

¹ C.S. Lewis, *Miracles* (New York: Touchstone, a division of Simon & Schuster, 1996), pp. 151-153.