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## False Ideas about God

By Wayne Jackson

When Paul was in Athens, he declared to certain philosophers (who had gathered together to hear new ideas) that they were ignorant of the true God (Acts 17:23). In our current society, many feel that modern man has intellectually advanced beyond the primitive Greeks. The truth is, a significant segment of our own populous is about as crude in its concept of God as were those ancient citizens of Greece.

### **Atheism**

Atheism adamantly argues that there is no God. No atheist, though, can consistently affirm emphatically that there is no God, unless he asserts both his omniscience and his omnipresence. Once he concedes that he does not know everything, he opens the door for the possibility that what he does not know may be the evidence for God's existence. And if the atheist is not everywhere present, it logically must follow that where he is not might be the very place where proof of Deity is to be found! Thus, it is not reasonable to declare: "I know that God does not exist." Atheism is merely a crude, irrational faith-system. There is—from the principle of cause and effect, universe design, the awareness of morality, the Scriptures, etc. —more than adequate evidence, for the thinking person, that God exists.

### **Pantheism**

Pantheism is the notion that the essence of Deity permeates everything. The whole universe is God. This concept has had a recent resurgence with the popularity of the so-called "new age" movement. One of the advocates of this philosophy expresses it like this: "In a sense there is no such thing as God, God does not exist. And in another sense, there is nothing else but God—only God exists. . . All is God. And because all is God, there is no God" (CrA□me, p. 110). There is no sense to this statement, and utterly no truth to the dogma of pantheism as a whole. God is eternal (Psalm 90:2). He is the Creator of the universe, and thus He is separate. One of the advocates of this philosophy expresses it like this: "In a sense there is no such thing as God, God does not exist. And in another sense, there is nothing else but God—only God exists. . . All is God. And because all is God, there is no God" (CrA□me, p. 110). There is no sense to this statement, and utterly no truth to the dogma of pantheism as a whole. God is eternal (Psalm 90:2). He is the Creator of the universe, and thus He is separate from it and transcendent to it. It is a grievous evil to confuse the Creator with his creation (see Romans 1:22-25), yet this is the very error of the "new age" zealots. This is an ideology that seeks to dethrone God and enthrone man as his own deity.

### **Polytheism**

Polytheism is belief in many gods. At Athens, Paul's spirit was provoked when he observed the city full of idols (Acts 17:16). But polytheism is not merely a religion of ancient history; it thrives in today's world. As the technology of transportation and communication accelerates, the Christian will have increasing occasions to encounter this false system of belief. Hinduism, for example, with its numerous gods, is making its presence significantly felt in America. "For even if there are so-called gods. . . yet for us there is but one God" (1 Corinthians 8:5-6 NASB). Even the demons know that there is but one God (James 2:19).

## **Deism**

Deism acknowledges the existence of a Supreme Being, but denies the biblical concept that God is interested in, and intervenes in, the lives of men. Joseph Joubert, a French deist, proclaimed, “God has withdrawn within Himself and hidden within the bosom of His own being.” The gentleman mastered the art of nonsense. The deist repudiates the Bible as a revelation from God and asserts that man must walk by the light of reason and experience. Someone has said that a deist is a person who has not had time to become an atheist. A good example of a deist was Voltaire, the famous French philosopher. Voltaire conceded: “I shall always be convinced that a watch proves a watchmaker and that a universe proves a God” (Brown, p. 85). In spite of this concession, Voltaire was a rabid opponent of the Christian religion.

## **Agnosticism**

T.H. Huxley, who suggested that the concept of “existence” is “insoluble”, coined the term “agnostic”. The agnostic does not deny the existence of God; he merely affirms that the evidence is not sufficient to warrant that conclusion. He says that one simply cannot know whether or not there is a Supreme Being. Sometimes the agnostic expresses a cynicism about knowledge generally. Jean-Paul Sartre, the French existentialist, reveals his own viewpoint when he has a character in one of his novels say: “I am beginning to believe that nothing can ever be proved” (Sartre, p. 26). Some Christian writers, who argue that we cannot “prove” the existence of God, do not help in the battle against agnosticism. In discussing God’s existence, one writer (who ought to have known better) asserted, “. . . there is really no such thing as absolute truth or proof from a purely logical standpoint” (Clayton, p. 5). That statement does not reflect the truth.

## **Islam**

Islam’s idea of God is wholly inconsistent with the teaching of the Bible. Muslims contend that God is a solitary personality “who has no son nor partner, and that none has the right to be worshipped but Him alone. He is the true God, and every other deity is false” (Ibrahim, p. 45). The followers of Mohammed thus deny the divine nature of both Christ (John 1:1-3, 14; 10:30; 20:28), and that of the Holy Spirit as well (Acts 5:3-4).

Other movements, e.g., the Watchtower cult (“Jehovah’s Witnesses”) also deny the deity of Christ and the Spirit—this latter group repudiating even the personality of the Holy Spirit.

## **Mormonism**

The religion of Joseph Smith, Jr. has its own bizarre concept of God. First, Mormonism denies the eternal God. Joseph Smith said, “We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea and take away the veil, so that you may see” (Lundwell, p. 17). The Mormons assert that God the Father “has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s” (D&C 130:22). The Scriptures clearly teach, however, that God has been God from eternity (Psalm 90:2). Moreover, He is not a man (Hosea 11:9) who possesses flesh and blood (Matthew 16:17); rather, He is a spirit Being (John 4:24; Luke 24:39). The Mormon view of God is false.

### **United Pentecostalism**

The “Oneness Holiness” heresy alleges that “the Father,” “the Son,” and “the Holy Spirit” all represent the same divine Person. They make no distinction between the personalities within the sacred Godhead. Their doctrine is erroneous, though, for the Bible makes a clear case that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are separate in identity. The Father is not the Son as evidenced by the fact that the Father knew when the end of time would be, but the Son did not (Matthew 24:36). The Son is not the Spirit for one could blaspheme the Son and obtain forgiveness, but such was not the case with reference to the Spirit (Matthew 12:32). The fact is, one partakes of the nature of anti-Christ when he refuses to acknowledge the difference between “the Father and the Son” (see 1 John 2:22).

### **Religious Modernism**

Religious modernism presents a very distorted concept of God. Modernists have been significantly influenced by the theory of evolution. Those of the liberal persuasion have therefore, applied the principle of evolutionary development to the Bible. Harry Emerson Fosdick expressed the concept like this: “We know that every idea in the Bible started from primitive and childlike origins and grew in scope and height toward the culmination of Christ’s Gospel” (Fosdick, p. 11).

The theory, as such pertains to Jehovah, is this. In the Old Testament, the picture of God is one of a fierce, vengeful Deity. This concept resulted from primitive man’s personification of the hostile forces of nature that he could not understand. By the time of the New Testament era, it is alleged, a benevolent God had developed. Hence, the God of Jesus is one of love, and not wrath.

This view of God is totally at variance with the truth. Of course, there are examples of the Lord’s strict judgment in the Old Testament as He was grooming humankind toward a higher level of spiritual responsibility. However, has the critic never read of the beauty of Jehovah’s benevolence in the 23rd Psalm? That is Old Testament! Moreover, though Heaven’s love is dramatically revealed in the New Testament (particularly in the gift of Jesus Christ), there is still evidence aplenty that God will judge the disobedient (cf. Acts 5:1-11; 12:23; Romans 11:22). The modernistic view of God is erroneous.

### **Calvinism**

John Calvin (1509-1564) was one of the most influential men of the Protestant Reformation movement. Perhaps the fundamental premise of Calvin’s doctrine was his belief in the sovereignty of God. In connection with this concept, and borrowing ideas from earlier theologians, Calvin assumed that Jehovah had predetermined some to be lost and others to be saved. In his Institutes of the Christian Religion, the scholar of Geneva expressed it like this: “No one who wishes to be thought religious dares outright to deny predestination, by which God chooses some for the hope of life, and condemns others to eternal death” (see Bettenson, p. 302). To Calvin, man’s destiny was solely in the hand of God. This doctrine is without biblical foundation for the following reasons.

The scope of the gospel is universal. God gave His Son for the world (John 3:16), hence, the good news regarding Christ is for all people (Luke 2:10; John 12:32).

The Bible clearly teaches that the lost can be saved (Luke 19:10); the sick can be made whole (Luke 5:31-32); the spiritually dead can live (Ephesians 2:1f).

Tragically, it is possible for the saved to become lost again. The believer can cease believing (Hebrews 3:12); those who have been in grace may fall there from (Galatians 5:4). Calvinism, therefore, reflects upon the righteous nature of the Creator.

### **Conclusion**

It is very important that those who teach about God do so in a way that is consistent with the revelation of His Word. The Lord must not be misrepresented.

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