

6 ISSUE 5: I AM GOD

ANGELA'S STORY CONTINUED

The last big belief system I became ensnared in was A Course in Miracles, which could aptly be renamed Lost Souls 101. I studied it intensely for four years. All the while, I felt God was drawing me closer and closer to Jesus. Deep down, I thought I was not good enough for Jesus, that I had done too many bad things for Him ever to love me. That is exactly where Satan wanted to keep me—uninformed and in doubt.

One night as I was reading the “Course,” I felt I was getting the strong message from my reading that I should kill myself in order to be one with “the Jesus.” Something inside me cried out against that self-destructive message. I suddenly realized I ought to go in search of my parents’ belief, back to my Christian roots. Maybe there was something to it after all. I began to cry out for God to lead me and show me the truth.

TOPICS

New Age Concepts of God

Implications of New Age Concepts of God

What the Bible Reveals About God

DESCRIBING YOUR WORLDVIEW . . .

WHAT ARE YOUR BELIEFS CONCERNING GOD?

In conjunction with Lesson 6, consider the following questions which will help you to identify and describe your beliefs concerning God, another of the five components of a well-rounded worldview. Use your notebook to write your impressions in answer to each of these questions, and explain your answers.

1. What does your worldview say about God?
2. Does God exist?
3. Is there one God? many gods?
4. What is God's nature: personal and loving? an impersonal force?

NEW AGE CONCEPTS OF GOD

ALL IS ONE; ALL IS GOD

Groothuis explains that *monism*, the belief that “all is one,” is “foundational for the New Age; it permeates the [New Age worldview] in all its various manifestations—from holistic health to the new physics, from politics to transpersonal psychology, from Eastern religions to the occult.”³² This belief, he goes on to say, leads us but a short step to *pantheism*, the belief that *all is God*. God is not transcendent to the universe; rather, a pantheistic god *is* the universe, or the universe *is* God. It is evident, then, that human beings, as part of the universe, are God. However, according to the New Age worldview, we suffer under the illusion that we are imperfect mortal human beings with limitations and flaws. We need a transformation which will enable us to recognize not only that *all* is God, but that *we* are God.

I AM GOD

The term *New Age* implies transformation, and the transformation of the self is the major theme and goal of the New Age worldview. The purpose of this transformation has been described in a variety of terms by New Agers. Terms such as *Christ-consciousness*, getting in touch with one's *Higher Self*, *oneness with the One*, and even such biblical terms as

I Am that I Am are used to describe the pantheistic belief that all is God; therefore, I am God. An example of this is Shirley MacLaine's statement in the Epilogue to her book, *Dancing in the Light*. She asserts:

The total understanding and realization of my self might require eons for me to accomplish. But when that awareness is achieved, I will be aligned completely with that unseen Divine Force that we call God.

For me to deny that Divine Force now would be tantamount to denying that I exist.

I *know* that I exist, therefore *I AM*.

I *know* that the God-source exists. Therefore *IT IS*.

Since I am part of that force, then *I AM* that *I AM*. . . .

As far as my own life is concerned, my higher self is with me every moment. When I get in trouble, I consult with it. When I have a question, I direct my inquiry to it. It is my teacher. It is the master of my soul. It is *me*.³³

Nash indicates that the New Age experience or transformation is primarily religious or spiritual in nature. He further states: "An experience of this type is the one common element that all New Agers share."³⁴ The quest to achieve this experience of total understanding and realization of one's Higher Self is pursued through many avenues including yoga, meditation, mystical astral experiences, psychic experiences, courses or seminars that teach New Age pantheistic concepts, mind-altering exercises, and the use of crystals, to name a few. One such avenue that we have already mentioned in this study is *A Course in Miracles*, which describes itself as follows:

Although Christian in statement, the Course deals with universal spiritual themes. It emphasizes that it is but one version of the universal curriculum. There are many others, this one differing from them only in form. They all lead to God in the end.³⁵

This point of view that "all paths lead to God" (which, by the way, is definitely *not* Christian in statement) characterizes the pantheistic nature of the New Age view. All paths lead to God because all is God, and it is only our ignorance of our Higher Self that keeps us from recognizing our own divinity. According to New Age author Shakti Gawain, it is only through the process of creative visualization of some sort that we come to this understanding:

Creative visualization is not just a technique, but ultimately a state of consciousness. It is a consciousness in which we deeply realize that we are the continuous creators of our universe and we take responsibility for that at all moments. There is no separation between us and God Creative visualization is the process of realizing and making visible on the physical plane our divine potential.³⁶

IMPLICATIONS OF THESE CONCEPTS

Let's look now at some of the critical implications of the New Age concept of God:

Concept: God is an impersonal Force or a divine Energy. This conclusion has several implications. First, because God is an impersonal Entity, a loving personal relationship with God or accountability to God is impossible. Second, because sin does not exist, neither can moral requirements. Third, since sin does not exist, forgiveness is not needed. We are accountable only to our Higher Self in our effort to escape the illusions of our present existence and achieve the utter perfection which will make us one with the Divine Force.

Concept: Jesus is no more or less God than I am. Jesus is the perfect example of a person who achieved "Christ-consciousness" and "oneness with the One" by getting in touch with His "Higher Self," but He was a man like all other men and had no special claim to divinity that we do not have. This implies that He did not have to atone for the sins of others because sin doesn't exist. There is only karmic justice, which each person must work out for himself or herself. "All physical suffering, all happiness, all despair, and all joy happens in relation to the Karmic Laws of Justice."³⁷ *At-one-ment* simply means identification with the original creation, being in perfect harmony with or at one with the God-force, realizing we are God. Jesus' death and resurrection are not the means of our salvation; we can save ourselves (from the karmic cycle) and be one with God.

Concept: Humans are limited only by their ignorance of their true nature. This implies that we suffer from a lack of understanding of our true nature and potential and continue on in the cycles of existence until we realize "there is no separation between us and God" and all we need to do is to "[make] visible on the physical plane our divine potential."³⁸

WHAT THE BIBLE REVEALS ABOUT GOD

Is there anything about the New Age concepts of God that seems to you to be less than adequate when one is talking about the most Supreme Being (or—using a New Age term—Entity) in the universe? Now that we have looked at some of the concepts that make up the New Age view of God, let's contrast this view with the Christian view.

Briefly, the Bible reveals that God is eternal and self-existent; He is the uncreated Creator of all else that is. He is infinite or limitless in all He is and does. He is unchanging, all-powerful, all-knowing, and everywhere present. We have also seen that God is a personal being who reasons, has emotions, and has a will.

While there is inadequate space here to develop all the Bible discloses about this One who is higher than all others, we do want to focus on some specific attributes of God. First, the Bible tells us He is a God of *love*. A. W. Tozer describes the love of God in these moving words:

From God's other attributes we may learn much about His love. We can know, for instance, that because God is self-existent, His love had no beginning; because He is eternal, His love can have no end; because He is infinite, it has no limit; because He is holy, it is the quintessence of all spotless purity; because He is immense, His love is an incomprehensibly vast, bottomless, shoreless sea before which we kneel in joyful silence and from which the loftiest eloquence retreats confused and abashed.³⁹

One of my favorite passages of Scripture is in the book of Exodus where God describes himself and His immeasurable love to Moses:

The Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the Lord. And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. (Exodus 34:6,7)

This passage gives us a revelation of God's great love for those whom He has created to be like Him. He offers us His unsurpassing love, and He desires our love in return. His love is unconditional. The Bible says He loved us even when we rebelled against Him (Romans 5:8). His

love is a patient love. He is compassionate and gracious and slow to anger, even when we stubbornly continue in our sinful ways. His love is a forgiving love. When we come to him, repenting of our sin, He is “faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Second, He is a *holy* God. Holiness is the characteristic which expresses the perfection of all that God is. It means that everything He does is right and good; He is incapable of immoral acts. Holiness also implies *separation* from that which is not holy. A holy God cannot look upon sin. He separates himself from sin and condemns evil.

God’s holiness is expressed in justice and righteousness. In Exodus 34:7, God adds a chilling note of warning to His description of himself: “He does not leave the guilty unpunished.” But we do not have to remain in our guilty state. God’s love for us is so great He provided a perfect sacrifice to pay the penalty for our sin—His only Son, Jesus Christ our Lord (John 3:16,17). We do not have to rely on our own merit to be found acceptable by Him. We could never achieve a level of holiness by our own efforts which would make us acceptable in God’s sight because we have inherited a sinful nature. It is only through the righteousness of Christ that we can find favor with God the Father. When we come to the Father through the Son, we receive forgiveness for our sin and become part of the family of God. As Tozer so eloquently expressed it:

No honest man can say “I am holy.” . . . Caught in this dilemma, what are we Christians to do? . . . We must hide our unholiness in the wounds of Christ as Moses hid himself in the cleft of the rock while the glory of God passed by. We must take refuge from God in God. Above all we must believe that God sees us perfect in His Son while He disciplines and chastens and purges us that we may be partakers of His holiness.⁴⁰

I do not know how this affects you, but when I read Tozer’s words, “We must take refuge *from* God *in* God,” my heart swells with gratitude to know that Jesus, the Son of God, is himself the covering for my sin. Thus, I stand before God the Father not in unholiness as a guilty sinner but as one redeemed, clothed in the righteousness of Christ (Philippians 3:7–9; Titus 3:5; Galatians 3:26,27). My heart responds with the songwriter, “Oh, what a Savior! Oh, hallelujah! He gave His life’s blood for even me.”

Third, He is a *miracle-working* God. He is a God who acts in history. The Old Testament records the history of God's involvement with the nation of Israel. It is a story replete with miracles as God intervenes in the natural processes of life from time to time and performs mighty works on behalf of His people. The New Testament, also, gives an account of many miracles wrought by Jesus and His disciples. We do not have space here to review all of the many miracles recorded in Scripture, but we do want to mention briefly the three greatest miracles in the biblical account: the Incarnation of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, and the new birth experience of the repentant sinner.

The Incarnation of Christ. The virgin birth of Jesus Christ is the first of the three greatest miracles recorded in history. In chapter 1 of the Gospel of John is a description of the birth of Christ that focuses on His eternal nature:

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. . . . The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth . . . From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but God the only Son, who is at the Father's side, has made him known. (John 1:1-5,14,16-18)

The details of this miracle of the virgin birth of Christ are recounted more fully in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. The Bible teaches that Jesus was fully God and fully man. This is a mystery that can only be explained as a divine miracle. Because of His human birth, He is able to identify completely with the trials and tribulations we face in life as He now intercedes with the Father on our behalf (see Hebrews chapters 1 and 2).

The Resurrection of Christ. This is the second greatest miracle. The apostle Paul wrote, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. . . . But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead" (1 Corinthians 15:17,20). The resurrection of Christ, three days after He was crucified, is one of the best-documented miracles in the

Bible. It is described in great detail in the concluding chapters of all four Gospel accounts. The apostle Paul explains that Christ's resurrection was "the firstfruits" of the resurrection of those who belong to Him (15:20–28). The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the believer's assurance that he, too, will be raised to eternal life in the presence of God. (For a more complete discussion of the validity of these two great miracles, consult the book *Worldviews in Conflict* by Ronald H. Nash.)⁴¹

The New Birth. The third greatest miracle is *the new birth*. When the repentant sinner confesses his sin and asks Jesus Christ to be his Lord and Savior, a marvelous miracle takes place. The sinner is "born again" (John 3:3); he becomes a new creature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). Paul wrote, "God made him who had no sin [Jesus] to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). The result is a transformed life. We no longer walk in darkness, but the light of the gospel has entered our soul and changed us forever. We belong to Him. We are not god; *we are God's!*

What a mighty God we serve! He is not an impersonal Entity, unfeeling and uncaring. He is holy and just, unchanging and eternal, and loves us with an everlasting love. No wonder Moses sang this song to the Lord:

Who among the gods is like you, O Lord?

Who is like you—
majestic in holiness,
awesome in glory,
working wonders? . . .

In your unfailing love you will lead
the people you have redeemed.

In your strength you will guide them
to your holy dwelling.

—Exodus 15:11,13

The God of the Bible is majestic in holiness. What a thought! He is the one who called to Moses from the burning bush and told him, "Do not come any closer. . . . Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5). When Moses asked His name, the Lord said: "I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you'" (3:14). This name of God, I AM, is a most holy name.

The Jews asked Jesus, “Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?” (John 8:53). At the conclusion of Jesus’ response to this question, He declared: “I tell you the truth . . . before Abraham was born, I am!” (v. 58). Here Jesus identified himself as God with the holy name, I AM.

Is it any wonder, then, that Christians consider it an affront and blasphemous when an ordinary human being assumes the holy name by which God identified himself and declares to the world, “I AM THAT I AM”? God is holy. His name is holy. “Our father in heaven, hallowed be your name” (Matthew 6:9). We need to take seriously the glory and honor of His name. Likewise, the name of Jesus is holy and powerful to save. Paul the apostle wrote:

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:
Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be
grasped,
but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!
Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

—Philippians 2:5–11