

# THE TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD

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Chad W. Hussey

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## Introduction

Is God in all of us? Are all of us in God? Is there a universal spiritual or quantum force that binds all of existence? Are we all one with each other in the universe? These are the questions that quantum spirituality and Eastern mysticism have introduced to the Western worldview. Popularized by movies like *Star Wars* and *Avatar*, and brought into the church by books like *The Shack*, some Christians are now attempting – consciously or not – to mingle these ideas with the teachings of Scripture. The question is, “Do these views align with the revealed God of the Bible?”

God is omnipresent within creation, but metaphysically beyond His creation. Simply stated, God is a being separate in substance from the universe. Created entities are not forged from the substance of God, nor is God Himself comprised of creation. That said, transcendence for the purpose of this paper, should not be understood as meaning God is not actively present in the world. Quite the contrary, “Judeo-Christian religion does not picture the universe as a spatial box with God overflowing it or standing outside it.”<sup>1</sup> Transcendence here is intended only to mean that God is substantively different from His creation, not that He is absent from creation.

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<sup>1</sup>William E. Horden, *Speaking of God: The Nature and Purpose of Theological Language* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2002), 121.

This paper will seek to explain and defend the position that, while immanent, God remains concurrently transcendent. While permanently pervading and sustaining the universe, God is ontologically distinct from His creation. God is not in any way dependent on the created order, neither is God the sum of all creation, nor is God present within every created entity or being. Citing modern philosophers, theologians, and Scripture this paper will outline the prominent examples of, and reasons for, the diminishing of transcendence as an attribute of God. This paper will address the traditions of monism, in their primary forms, where they most directly interact with the Christian faith. Using a logical, theological, and exegetical defense of the church's orthodox position on the transcendence of God – held in balance with God's immanence, this paper will affirm the necessity of upholding the historic view of transcendence, and will outline the ramifications of views which nullifying the transcendent nature of God.

### **Positions on the Issue**

Philosophies that champion a God who has a diminished transcendence result in what is referred to as immanentism. Immanentism is manifest in a broad array of philosophical and religious ideologies qualifying as monism. The simple definition of monism is: any belief or philosophy that sees all things connected or unified in universal one-ness. For the purposes of this theological discussion, this paper will focus only on the two forms of monism that most commonly interact within Christianity. These more specific variants of monism are pantheism and panentheism.

Monism in its most straightforward form is pantheism. “The word pantheism derives from the Greek word pan (=‘all’) and theos (=‘god’). Thus, pantheism means all is God. In essence, pantheism holds that the universe as a whole is worthy of the deepest reverence ... ‘nature is my god.’”<sup>2</sup> By eliminating transcendence entirely, pantheism holds that God is fully immanent and encompasses all. Pantheism holds that all people are connected to one another, to

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<sup>2</sup>Paul Harrison, *Elements of Pantheism: A Spirituality of Nature and the Universe*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Coral Springs, FL: Llumina Press, 2004), 1.

nature, and to God, whose physical body is the universe. President of the World Pantheist Movement, Paul Harrison, puts forth the following: “God is said to be the creator: overwhelmingly powerful, all-knowing, omnipresent, infinite, and eternal. Indeed [the universe] is indeed the only thing we know to possess these qualities.”<sup>3</sup> The very elements that compose our bodies are the same elements found in nature, and the universe has the ability to end our lives, at which point, those elements return to nature. This is the pantheist’s “circle of life,” which is an existence that is easily observable, congruent with science, and does not depend on any transcendent “mythical” place or being. In pantheism, life the universe, and the interactions between the two can all very clearly be perceived and experienced.

A person indoctrinated in orthodoxy might not quickly pinpoint the locus where the worlds of pantheism and Christian doctrine mingle, but the rallying point in scripture clearly falls at Acts 17:28 where the Apostle Paul proclaims, “For in Him we live and move and have our being.” Paul Tillich, a 20<sup>th</sup> century German Lutheran Theologian, managed to propose a formidable case for God being, “not a being” but “being itself.” Tillich wrote in his *Systematic Theology*, “The being of God cannot be understood as the existence of a being alongside others or above others. Whenever infinite or unconditional power and meaning are attributed to the highest being, it has ceased to be a being and has become being itself.”<sup>4</sup> Tillich goes on to say that entities themselves are the manifestation of God as the “power of being.” The power to resist non-being, which is inherent in everything that exists, is that being’s acknowledgement that God is the power of being within it allowing it to be. From this one can conclude that in Tillich’s philosophy, God is the “universal essence” within all things, which makes up being itself.

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 36.

<sup>4</sup>Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 235.

As quoted previously, Tillich states, “The being of God is being itself.” Tillich argued that what he referred to in saying this is not pantheism as it is understood to mean, “God is everything,” but rather that God is the “ground and unity of everything.”

This idea [that God is the static divine ground of the world] was founded on the principle of identity over against the principle of detachment and depths of everything. [God] is not *everything*, as this much abused term “pantheism” says. Nobody has ever said that. It is absolute nonsense to say such a thing. It is better to avoid the term itself, but if it means anything at all, it means that the power of the divine is present in everything, that He is the ground and unity of everything, not that He is the sum of all particulars. I do not know any philosopher in the whole history of philosophy who has ever said that. Therefore, the word “pantheism,” which you can translate as “God is everything,” is down-right misleading. I would wish that those who accuse ... [me] of using it would define the term before using it. Whenever some people hear about the principle of identity, they say this is pantheism, which supposedly holds that God is this desk. Now, of course, [Martin] Luther would say that God is nearer to everything than it is to itself. He would say this even about the desk. You cannot deny that God is the creative ground of the desk, but to say that God is the combination of all desks and in addition all pens and men—this is absolute nonsense. The principle of identity means that God is the creative ground of everything. What I dislike is the easy way in which these phrases are used: theism is so wonderful and pantheism so horrible. This makes the understanding of the whole history of theology impossible.<sup>5</sup>

Whether Tillich would consider himself a proper pantheist, he makes an intriguing case for the essence of God in all things. Interestingly, William Paul Young, #1 New York Times Best Selling author, borrows Tillich’s exact terms to define God. In Young’s most acclaimed work, *The Shack*, the Jesus character, referring to the Father, explains, “God, who is the ground of all being, dwells in, around, and through all things ... and any appearances that mask that reality will fall away.”<sup>6</sup>

Arriving at similar conclusions, yet coming from a different approach, is leading Emergent Church theologian (and former Rick Warren colleague) Leonard Sweet. Sweet, along with other quantum mystics, proclaims that, in a world where science and religion are increasingly at odds, quantum spirituality bridges the gap between science and God. Quantum

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<sup>5</sup>Paul Tillich and Carl E. Braaten, *Perspectives on 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> Century Protestant Theology* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1967), 94-95.

<sup>6</sup>William P. Young, *The Shack* (Newbury Park, CA: Windblown Media, 2007), 112.

physics is the viable scientific basis for innovations in technology such as lasers, computer chips, and nuclear power,<sup>7</sup> and many hold the view that discoveries in quantum physics “provide a mandate to reevaluate the traditional understanding of God and reality.”<sup>8</sup>

Quantum physics has taught scientists that particles at the subatomic level communicate with one another at speeds faster than light. Whatever is done to one particle has an immediate effect on another remotely located particle.<sup>9</sup> This transfer of information from one particle to another, at a speed faster than light, is seen by some as proof that all things are indeed connected. This leads to a theory that the universe is somehow one, an undivided whole.

Scripture has also been used to qualify such a thought. The Apostle Paul uses variations of the expression “in Christ” over 160 times in His epistles. The most notable scripture used to support a quantum spirituality is Colossians 1:17 which says, “In Him all things hold together.” On the basis of these unfolding discoveries in quantum theory, Leonard Sweet, speaks directly to postmodern Christian thinkers saying, “Quantum spirituality is nothing more than your ‘new account of everything old’—your part of the ‘I Am’ that *we are*.”<sup>10</sup> Sweet ties this quantum spirituality, also termed New Light, directly to pantheism when he says:

Quantum spirituality bonds us to all creation as well as to other members of the human family. New Light pastors are ... earth ministers who can relate the realm of nature to God, who can help nurture a brother-sister relationship with the living organism called Planet Earth. This entails a radical doctrine of embodiment of God in the very substance of creation. New Light spirituality does more than settle for the created order, as many forms of New Age pantheism do. But a spirituality that is not in some way entheistic (whether pan- or trans-) that does not extend to the spirit-matter of the cosmos, is not Christian.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>William E. Brown, “Quantum Theology: Christianity and the New Physics,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 33, 4 (December 1990): 480.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 477.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 480.

<sup>10</sup>Leonard Sweet, *Quantum Spirituality: A Postmodern Apologetic* (Dayton, OH: Whaleprints for SpiritVenture Ministries, Inc., 1991), 261

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 125

Another form of monism, which espouses God's presence in all, is panentheism. This view has long been present in the literature of the monastic Catholic mystics and has increasingly found its way into Evangelical streams via the Emergent Church movement. Where pantheism defines God as the comprisal of all, panentheism asserts "the belief in a personal creator God who transcends the world, but is intimately and actively present in the world and within each [person]." <sup>12</sup> In panentheism, God interpenetrates every created entity, while also timelessly and spatially extending beyond creation. The Trappist monk, Thomas Merton, for which Thomas Merton Square in Louisville, KY is named, is famous for the story of his standing at that very corner when he came to this realization:

I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I was theirs. ... Then it was as if I suddenly saw the secret beauty of their heart ... where neither sin nor desire nor self-knowledge can reach, the core of their reality, the person that each one is in God's eyes. ... If only we could see each other that way all the time. ... I suppose the big problem would be that we would fall down and worship each other. At the center of our being is a point of nothingness that is untouched by sin and by illusion, a point of pure truth, a point or spark which belongs entirely to God. ... This little point of nothingness and of absolute poverty is the pure glory of god in us. ... It is in everybody. ... The gate of heaven is everywhere. <sup>13</sup>

Similarly, another Trappist monk, an architect of centering prayer, Fr. Thomas Keating said, "The second commandment of Jesus is to love our neighbor as ourselves, and it is rooted in the recognition and acceptance by faith that the Divine Presence dwells within every human being." <sup>14</sup> The Catholic mystic movement maintains that God is present in all creation, sustaining every creature. They believe this is what Jesus referred to specifically when he prayed, "that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they may also be in us" (John 17:21). Emergent Church leaders within Evangelicalism, embracing (in varying degrees)

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<sup>12</sup>Harrison, *Elements of Pantheism*, 2.

<sup>13</sup>Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 140-142.

<sup>14</sup>Thomas Keating, *Fruits and Gifts of the Spirit* (New York: Lantern Books, 2000), 14.

the theology of Leonard Sweet, have also been identified as teaching mystic practices and panentheistic views, similar to the Catholic mystics.

### **Theological Support for Transcendence**

The transcendence of God is most readily evidenced in Scripture by God's immaterial "spirit" nature, His authorship in creation, His perfect holiness, and the unique dual divine-human nature of His Son. There is no better place to launch the theological case for the transcendence of God than in the study of the words of His son, the God-Man Himself, Jesus Christ.

In the Gospel of John, in a discourse with the woman at the well, Jesus makes clear, "God is spirit" (John 4:24). Here Jesus affirms what other biblical authors say, which is that God is not finite, nor material, but "immortal" (1 Tim 1:17), "invisible" (Col 1:15), living "in unapproachable light," and not capable of being beheld by man (1 Tim 6:16). God further warns His people that viewing or portraying Him as anything in material creation is an egregious sin, and a violation of His second commandment. In Exodus 20:4-5 God instructs that man shall not worship anything that is in heaven above, on earth, or in the waters below. Any such thing is not God, but an idol. "God forbids His people to think of His being as similar to anything else in the physical creation. The creation language of [the second] commandment ... is a reminder that God's being, His essential mode of existence, is different from everything that he has created ... To picture God as existing in a form or mode of being that is like anything else in creation is to think of God in a horribly misleading and dishonoring way."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 187.

The Bible is also clear that God existed before all things, was the creator of all things, and brought all things into existence from nothing. Jesus Christ Himself affirms the biblical creation account by directly referencing the opening chapters of Genesis 7 times in Scripture. The most notable reference being, “Have you not read ... at the beginning the Creator made them male and female?” (Matthew 19:4) If a person believes Christ is God, they must also agree with Christ’s view of Scripture and the creation. The Bible begins in Genesis 1:1 by saying, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” The statement, “God created the heavens and the earth,” makes clear that before heaven and earth existed, there was God. Hebrews 11:3 goes a step further and says, “By faith we understand that the universe was created by the Word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.” Even more directly, the faithful Jewish adherent writing in the second temple period instructed, “Look at the sky and the earth. Consider everything you see there, and realize that God made it all from nothing” (2 Maccabees 7:28). These verses identify creation as the finite work, of the infinite God, brought into existence from nothing, and certainly not from any material contained within His preexistent self.

At this point it is important to note the distinction between the Bible’s telling of God’s involvement in creation and the monistic idea. C. S. Lewis poignantly clarified this difference when he wrote the following:

Pantheists usually believe that God, so to speak, animates the universe as you animate your body: that the universe almost is God ... [Christians] think God invented and made the universe-like a man making a picture or composing a tune. A painter is not a picture, and he does not die if his picture is destroyed ... If you do not take the distinction between good and bad very seriously, then it is easy to say that anything you find in this world is a part of God. But, of course ... some of the things we see in [the world] are contrary to [God’s] will. Confronted with a cancer or a slum the Pantheist can say, "If you could only see it



from the divine point of view, you would realise that this also is God." The Christian replies, "Don't talk damned nonsense."<sup>16</sup>

In returning to the words of Jesus, it is made clear that God cannot be the sum of both good and evil. Being accused, by the Pharisees, of operating under the authority of evil, Jesus quips, "A Kingdom divided against itself cannot stand" (Mark 3:24). This is to say good and evil cannot successfully cohabitate. One will always overrun the other, and they will never be harmonized. Jesus also instructs His followers, "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt 5:48). In this it is clear that the omniscient, omnipresent, immanent, and transcendent God of the Bible is a holy God. The word holy specifically means "different from the world," "set apart," and literally, "a cut above." God is perfect, creation is not, and God is therefore different from the world. Conversely a monistic, materialistic, and impersonal God cannot be a holy God because this God is not different from the world. Wayne Grudem explains, "If the whole universe is God, then God has no distinct personality." If all is God, then what is holy? If all is God, what is evil?

The Bible teaches that not only is God holy, He also calls His people to be holy (1 Peter 1:16). God has not called His elect to embrace unity with the fallen world, nor has He promised fellowship with unrepentant sinners who live outside of a consecrated relationship with Jesus Christ. Psalm 4:3 says, "The Lord has set apart the godly for Himself," and 2 Corinthians 6:14 says, "Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers." In John 15:17 Christ informs His hearers that they are to be "not of this world." In Romans 12:2 Christians are instructed to resist conformity to the world. James 1:27 says to "keep oneself unstained from the world," and 2 Corinthians 6:17 says, "Go out from their midst, and be separate from [unbelievers]." The

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<sup>16</sup>C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), 36-37.

Apostle John offers a clear warning to those who have not consecrated their life to Christ when he writes, “Whoever does not believe [in Christ] is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God” (John 3:18).

These scriptures do not suggest in any way that God desires His chosen to seek oneness with people who have not placed their faith in Christ alone. Christ followers are instead to flee from conformity to the world because God cannot have fellowship with darkness (1 John 1:6). God is a just God of wrath toward wickedness (Isaiah 11:4, Revelation 19:5), and promises the future destruction of this fallen world (2 Peter 3:11), and eternal conscious torment for the unrighteous inhabiting it (Matt 25:46). A monistic God who embodies the fallen world and all evil contained therein cannot fulfill His eschatological promises without waging war on Himself.

Further troubling within the monistic belief systems is the difficulty in finding a proper place for the inclusion of Satan. If God is both perfectly good, and the combination of all created beings, a paradox arises when God must be made to be one with the adversary, Satan. In monism, Satan must be considered to be part of God, inhabited by God, or non-existent. A non-existence of Satan would leave God to be the author of all evil. Each of these scenarios is equally blasphemous. Unacceptably, the biblical doctrines of Satan and Hell eventually escape every monistic belief system.

The most damaging blow, however, the neglect of God’s transcendence deals Christian faith ultimately strikes at the heart of Christianity Himself, Jesus Christ. “Monism believes that the real problem [in faith] is lack of knowledge--the knowledge of ourselves as divine.”<sup>17</sup> This

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<sup>17</sup>P. R. Jones, “Sexual Perversion: The Necessary Fruit of Neo-Pagan Spirituality in the Culture at Large,” in *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2002), 261.

assertion does nothing short of rob Christ of His very essence, His unique divinity among men. Monism takes the divinity of Christ and essentially applies it to every person. If all people are in God, or the divine essence of God is in all people, Jesus' dual nature, fully God-fully man, is in no way unique to Him, but exhibited by all. Colossians 1:15 says, "Jesus is the image of the invisible God." God is Spirit, and Jesus is the Spirit of God born into human flesh, the tabernacle of flesh in which the Spirit of God dwelt visibly among the ungodly creation. "The Bible never speaks about God's presence in unbelievers in a direct way. In Christ, God's own nature is present."<sup>18</sup> In the most exclusive verse in the Bible Jesus teaches, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." Jesus states point-blank there is no access to God apart from faith in Him (John 3:17). This makes abundantly clear that Christianity is not a matter of finding a fully immanent God at the center of our being. Christianity is God's saving gift of faith in the Man who lived the sinless life and died on the cross to reconcile the wicked condition of sinners before the righteous, holy, and transcendent God. The Christian's connection to God is not found buried within the self, it is found only in the "one mediator between God and Men," Jesus Christ (1 Tim 2:5).

In the same way immanentism sees a diminished need for a Savior, the person who disregards transcendence also fails to rightly understand the person and work of the third member of the trinity, the Holy Spirit. The pantheists, and panentheists believe the Spirit of God is inherently existent within every human being from birth. This is not the teaching of Christ. Jesus promised His followers, "I will ask the Father and He will give you another Helper (John 14:16). You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" (Acts 1:8), and the

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<sup>18</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 176.

“Spirit of Truth ... the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him” (John 14:17). As has been demonstrated, Monistic mystic and quantum Christians, rejecting a proper necessity for God’s transcendence, misunderstand the nature of the Holy Trinity in each of God’s three persons. This improper view of God nearly unanimously leads to engagement in interfaith practices, the borrowing of elements from other false religions, and the encouraging of members of false religions that they have access to God apart from Jesus Christ.

### **Scientific Support for Transcendence**

While it has been sufficiently demonstrated that disregarding transcendence cannot be reconciled with Christian orthodoxy, it is worth noting that science also fails to support a God who is both eternal and material. Where the Bible calls God “the King eternal” (1 Tim 1:17), the modern cosmological consensus is clear that the universe itself is not eternal. The second law of thermodynamics dictates that, while infinite in space, the universe is finite in time. A large majority of cosmologists agree that the observable data indicates that the universe has a beginning and an end.

Today, few cosmologists doubt that the universe, at least as we know it, did have an origin at a finite moment in the past. The alternative - that the universe has always existed in one form or another—runs into a rather basic paradox. The sun and stars cannot keep burning forever: sooner or later they will run out of fuel and die. The same is true of all irreversible physical processes; the stock of energy available in the universe to drive them is finite, and cannot last for eternity. This is an example of the so-called second law of thermodynamics, which, applied to the entire cosmos, predicts that it is stuck on a one-way slide of degeneration and decay towards a final state of maximum entropy, or disorder.<sup>19</sup>

God cannot be both eternal, and comprised of the natural entropic universe. “According to the second law the whole universe must eventually reach a state of maximum entropy. This supposed

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<sup>19</sup>Paul Davies, “The Big Bang – And Before,” *The Thomas Aquinas College Lecture Series* (Thomas Aquinas College, Santa Paula, CA: March 2002), cited in William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*: third ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 144.

future state of the universe, which will also be its last state, is called the heat death of the universe.”<sup>20</sup> Thus, the second law of thermodynamics implies that the universe faces an inevitable extinction. Where monism cannot reconcile Christianity and science, interestingly the orthodox Christian view of the eternal transcendent God and His finite creation are compatible with modern cosmology. In the Bible, the earth is described as having a creation point (Genesis 1), and a final heat death (2 Peter 3:10). Therefore, a striving to use monism to reconcile Christianity and science is an unnecessary failure.

### **Concerns for an Over-emphasis on Transcendence**

It must be stated that, while this paper refutes immanentism and champions for transcendence, a hyper emphasis on transcendence is equally dangerous to its neglect. Transcendence and immanence must not be understood or applied apart from one another. As attributes of God, transcendence and immanence must be held in proper balance. Where an over-emphasis on immanence leads to monism, the juxtaposed over emphasis on transcendence results in deism. Deism is the belief that “God ... created the world, but does not interfere with it by means of providence, miracle, incarnation, or any other Christian affirmation.”<sup>21</sup> Deists believe that creation provides evidence to affirm that God created the universe, but that God limits His activity only to the maintenance of the general laws of nature. A. H. Strong, writing in 1907, states that deism reached its prominence in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, but has since fallen out of favor because it “regards the universe as a ‘perpetual motion,’” and “modern views of the dissipation of energy have served to discredit it.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>P. J. Zwart, *About Time: A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin and Nature of Time* (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1976), 136.

<sup>21</sup>G. DeMar, *Pushing the Antithesis: The Apologetic Methodology of Greg L. Bahnsen* (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision, 2007), 274.

<sup>22</sup>A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1907), 415.

## **Conclusion**

Proper regard for God's transcendence is essential to proper knowledge of God. A failure to acknowledge God's transcendence leads to a misunderstanding of the nature of the Holy Trinity in each of God's three persons. The inclusive one-ness of monism leaves man with no recognition of his need for reconciliation to his Creator. In monism there is ultimately no need of a Savior; no need for a Spirit induced conversion; no need for Spirit wrought sanctification; and no need for a God-Man intercessor. In monism, humans lack the autonomous agency to fear culpability for wicked actions, and have no fear of the righteous judgment from a god who is also comprised of evil. Monism leaves man with no fear of judgment for sins and eternal separation from God. Monistic beliefs exalt man as divine, and deny the unique divinity, and necessary work of Jesus Christ.

It is important that monism's influence on the church not be underestimated. Peter Jones of Westminster Seminary states that, "In general terms, pantheism is at the root of all non-biblical religions, which worship creation rather than the Creator." It would seem that if there is a tangible threat of a false religion that could unite the world it is monism. Romans 1 teaches that there is one place in which the entire fallen human race continually meets in unity to worship, at the throne of the idolatry of creation. Whether monists believe all people are in God, or God is in all people, what monists are really positing is a worship of self. "They exchange the truth about God for a lie, and worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator" (Romans 1:25). The monistic view of God can neither be held in tandem with Christian orthodoxy, nor can science support the notion of the temporal created order being the eternal God. Thus it must be concluded that an excessively immanent, monistic God is not consistent with the God of the Bible, and God therefore must be transcendent.

The monistic view of God has been consistent among Eastern religions for several millennia, and has ventured in and out of vogue in the West since the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. The most recent group to propagate the monistic teaching among the Evangelical church is the 21<sup>st</sup> century Emergent Church movement. One leader of the Emergent Church recently said, "Some people

say the Emerging Church is dead, other people say the Emerging Church has spread so far it's just been absorbed into the fabric of the American church.”<sup>23</sup> While leaders of unbiblical monistic movements are consistently refuted, the hooks of their teachings often land in the hearts of undiscerning churchgoers, and have long lasting effects within the Body. By being educated in the attributes of God, and holding a proper understanding of transcendence, these false teachings can quickly be discerned and dismissed as, what Leonard Sweet appropriately coined, “nothing more than [a] new account of everything old.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Sarah Pulliam Bailey, “Values Voter Summit Session Claims Emergent Church, Satan, and Islam are Bringing Down America,” *Huffington Post* (August 28, 2013).

<sup>24</sup>Sweet, *Quantum Spirituality*, 261.

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