

The Idolatry of "I am!"

The "gods" of Babylon: an old spirituality in this New Age.

"Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me . . ." Yahweh, Isaiah 46:9, KJV

One of my seminary professors stated in a theology class, "God created man in His own likeness and image, and man has been returning the compliment ever since." Again, like one pundit put it, "Man is the ape that wants to be God." In many ways, shapes, and sizes, the "man-is-God" teaching still comes to us.

Though contemporary Mormons now disavow his statement, Lorenzo Snow (1814-1901), the fifth president of *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, once said, "As man is, God once was; as God is, man may become." Pretending to be within the pale of Christendom, some *Word of Faith* teachers boldly tell their followers, "You are gods." [1] Helen Schucman (1909-1981), a New York research psychologist, authored volumes which now comprise *A Course in Miracles* (ACIM). Over a period of seven years, Schucman claimed to have received the contents of the course by a process of "inner dictation," the dictator being Jesus, an "ascended master" and spirit guide. Though using Christian terminology, ACIM is founded upon the fundamental premises of Eastern-metaphysical-mystical religion. In one of the course's lessons, Schucman stated, "The recognition of God is the recognition of yourself." [2] Among a host of other believers, authors and teachers, Schucman-like spirituality is widely being disseminated into American culture by various New Age gurus like Marianne Williamson and Eckhart Tolle, and their publicist, Oprah Winfrey. But I will, in this article, address this question: Does the Bible teach anywhere that man is not God?

Other than the obvious, that God is One and not many (Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Corinthians 8:4; Ephesians 4:6), and that God is the Creator and man is the creature (Romans 1:18-23), there is a revealing prophecy that demonstrates that people are not gods, and that God, and God alone, is God. The passage is interesting in that it occurs in the context of Yahweh's (God's) address to the Babylonians, whose culture was steeped in a new-age-like spirituality of sorcery, astrology, divination, and so on. In Scripture, this system of spirituality is known as, **"BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH"** (Revelation 17:5). It was this religion that God called Abraham, the father of the faithful, to separate from (Genesis 12:1; Joshua 24:2). It was to this "spirituality of idolatry" that God, in His judgment, gave the nation of Israel over to (Jeremiah 25:1-11). It was also this spiritual system which Daniel refused to compromise with (Daniel 1:20; 2:2; 4:18; 5:7; Compare Isaiah 19:3). But as it was for Daniel (he was put in the lions' den and his three friends were thrown in to the furnace of fire), it should be noted that spiritual Babylonianism is most intolerant of true believers, for John pictures Babylon the Harlot as **"drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus"** (Revelation 17:6). According to the Bible, Babylonianism (i.e., the New Spirituality of the New Age) possesses zero tolerance for any Christian fully committed to Christ! But to understand a core belief of Babylonianism, the belief that man is, or can become, god, an understanding of Isaiah, chapters 41-48, will prove helpful.

Singularly, Yahweh is "the" Lord. To Israel, He declares, "**Remember the former things long past, / For I am God, and there is no other; / I am God, and there is no one like Me**" (Isaiah 46:9). Earlier He spoke, "**I am the Lord, that is My name; / I will not give My glory to another, / Nor My praise to graven images**" (Isaiah 42:8). Again, again, again, again, and again, Yahweh says through the prophet, "**I am the first and I am the last, / And there is no God besides Me**" (Isaiah 44:6; See 45:5a, 6b, 18b, 22b; 48:12b). This is Isaiah's point: From the beginning unto the end, there is one God, and only One: *Yahweh*. No divine essence resides in humanity, and even in the climate of the New Spirituality, it is self-idolatry to believe otherwise.

Enter old-age Babylonism. Yahweh addresses them: "**Now, then, hear this, you sensual one, / Who dwells securely, / Who says in your heart, 'I am, and there is no one besides me'**" (Emphasis mine, Isaiah 47:8). And again, "**Your wisdom and your knowledge, they have deluded you; / For you have said in your heart, 'I am, and there is no one besides me'**" (Isaiah 47:10b). Who is this sensual and deluded one who dares to assume the divine name (i.e., "**I am**") of Yahweh? Why, it's the Babylonians! About Isaiah's address to the Babylonians, one commentator observed, "There is even an assumption of divine supremacy in these words, when compared with the frequent use of the pronoun I, in the solemn declarations of Jehovah . . ." [3] Another notes that Babylon was, "frivolously deifying herself." [4] Like devotees to Eastern-pantheist-mystical religion, and the Schucman-like spirituality being infused into the American consciousness by Marianne Williamson and Oprah Winfrey, the Babylonians thought they were gods. [5]

Incurably, some people are "wannabe" gods. Satan has implanted this desire deep within the human psyche. It was, and continues to be, Lucifer's intent to want to be God (Isaiah 14:12-14; "**I will . . . I will . . .**"). It was he who tempted Eve and promised her, that if she ate the forbidden fruit, "**you will be like God . . .**" (Genesis 3:5). So why should it surprise us that Lucifer would plant this hubris, this "I willing," in the hearts of people? If Satan desires to be God, then we can assume he will dupe his followers into thinking they either are or can become "gods." Of themselves, and like ancient Babylon, the new spiritualists will declare, *I am . . . I am . . .* But one day, like the devil and his Babylonian lackeys, those who claim to be God will be judged and forced to bow down before the Throne Sitter. In response to all of their *I aming*, the Lord will declare, *You aren't*, and they will be forced to confess, *I ain't!* For of Himself He has said, "**I am the Lord . . . I will not give My glory to another**" (Isaiah 42:8).

ENDNOTES

[1] See Walter Martin, "Ye Shall Be As Gods," *The Agony of Deceit: What Some TV Preachers are Really Teaching*, Michael Horton, Editor (Chicago: Moody Press, 1990) 89-105.

[2] Quoted by Warren Smith, *Reinventing Jesus Christ: The New Gospel* (Ravenna, Ohio: Conscience Press, 2002) 11.

[3] Joseph Addison Alexander, *Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, Volume II (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1847) 201.

[4] Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, Volume III (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans

Publishing Company, 1972) 237.

[5] A student of *The Scriptures* can note the spirit of anti-christ ingrained within this Babylonianism that has repackaged itself for consumption in western culture (i.e., by calling itself "The New Spirituality"). From *The Septuagint*, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, we note that no less than five times, Yahweh declares His singular Deity in the phrase "**I am**" (Greek, *ego eimi*, Isaiah 41:4; 43:10; 43:25; 45:22; 46:9; Compare Exodus 3:16.) Then abruptly and contradictorily, the prophet records Babylon saying to herself, "**I am**" (Greek, *ego eimi*, Isaiah 47:8, 10), the inference being that Babylon thought she was Yahweh. Yet Jesus declared Himself to be "**I am**" in John's gospel (Greek, *ego eimi*, John 6:35, 41, 48, 51; 8:12, 18, 24, 58; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1, 5; 18:5, 6, 8). In continuity with Babylonism, Shirley MacLaine, (and there are growing numbers of persons like her), standing before the Pacific Ocean with arms spread out, repeatedly declared in mantra-like fashion, "I am God . . . I am God . . . I am God" (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ccb2GsnOoBM&feature=related>).