

# The First and Final Lie: Self-deification

McMahon, T.A. The Berean Call

*How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart,*

*I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. --Isaiah:14:12-14*



*And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die.... --Genesis:3:4*

*Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. --2 Thessalonians:2:3-4*

*They received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe [the] lie. --2 Thessalonians:2:10-11*

Incredibly, the first sin of those whom God created took place in a perfectly holy environment: heaven. That would seem to be incomprehensible, given what Scripture tells us about heaven, the dwelling place of God. Just as astonishing, Adam and Eve, who were also in a perfect environment and had yet to know sin, were seduced by the same sin as Lucifer ("light bearer"), later called Satan ("adversary") and "that old serpent" (**Revelation:12:9; 20:2**).

Scripture doesn't tell us specifically what was in the hearts and minds of Lucifer and Adam that prompted them to sin; regarding Eve, however, we get a little more insight. She "saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise" (**Genesis:3:6**). One thing, however, becomes obvious concerning all three of these created beings: they chose *self* over God. That is the bottom line of all sin.

Again, it all began in Heaven with Lucifer. His "I will's" are all about self--from self-improvement to self-esteem to self-exaltation to self-deification. That progression inevitably leads to two other selfisms: self-delusion and self-destruction. Satan, being completely self-deceived, and perhaps looking for more support to prove his "I will be like the most High" thesis, brought his lie to earth, where he seduced Eve with the offer that she also could be "as gods."

Godhood as a goal for humanity is the Adversary's religion, and it will culminate with a man who is possessed by Satan himself. As we see in **2 Thessalonians:2:4**, the Antichrist "opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." This may be the only way the Devil can achieve his ultimate objective of having the whole world worship him. The very thought that he could entice the Lord, his Creator, to "fall down and worship" him (**Matthew:4:9**) demonstrates not only his egotistic ambition but also just how self-absorbed and self-deceived he is. This is a major trait of humanity as well.

Scripture indicates that following Adam and Eve's sin, their first response to God was to defend themselves. After their futile attempt to hide from God, each one shifted the blame: Adam accused Eve, and Eve blamed the Serpent for their disobedience. As a consequence, a self-serving bias (the tragic result of their sin) had impregnated the hearts of humanity. As we can see from its beginning to our present day, this bias has moved through the entire human race like an unstoppable plague.

Self rules in the heart of every person, even at times among new creatures in Christ. Satan has not missed any opportunity to entice the world into seeking his delusionary prize of godhood. The idea that man could become a god, or part of God, or that he is a god but doesn't yet realize his divinity, may seem farfetched to some people, but that's because they are simply unaware of how prevalent this belief is. Furthermore, from a biblical perspective, the criterion for being a god is rather simple. Everyone who has not submitted to Jesus Christ and has not been reconciled to God through faith in Christ's finished sacrifice as payment for his sins qualifies as a god--that is, an autonomous, or self-governing, being who has *elevated self over his Creator*. As Dave Hunt has noted, "The basic cause of the many problems in the world today is not that man fails to recognize his godhood but rather that there are about seven billion gods on this planet, each one doing his or her own thing."

Satan has long sold godhood, in some form, as religion, or as some facet of a particular religion. Nearly one billion Hindus believe they are gods--and so is everyone else--because, in their view, *everything* is God. Their godhood is achieved, or realized, through yoga and self-realization in the attempt to reach the ultimate spiritual state: *union* with Brahman (God). Five-hundred million Buddhists reject a transcendent Creator God but seek the equivalent of godhood (known as Buddhahood), which is attained as enlightenment, or perfect wisdom, by following the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. Tibetan Buddhism is promoted throughout the Western world by the Dalai Lama, who has inducted

hundreds of thousands (including thousands in U.S. cities) into the Kalachakra Tantra Initiation. Kalachakra is both a Tantric deity and a meditation practice. The former is a manifestation of Buddha, who is called upon to lead the initiate into becoming a *bodhisattva*, or enlightened god, a status claimed by the Dalai Lama himself.

Eastern Mysticism, with its goal of godhood, has come to the West like a tsunami, depositing its blasphemous debris throughout Christendom. Yoga (yoking oneself with Brahman), which decades ago became a staple offering at YMCAs (Young Men's Christian Association), is now offered and practiced in numerous Christian churches, including many that profess to be evangelical. Hindu gurus, such as Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, Swami Muktananda, and Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, helped spawn the New Age Movement, a homogenized hodgepodge of Eastern mystical beliefs and practices refashioned in order to make them readily acceptable to the culture of the West. Muktananda speaks for all gurus and New Age advocates alike: "Honor your self, worship your self, meditate on your self, God dwells within you as you."

The late Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, guru to the Beatles, revised his Spiritual (read "Hinduism") Regeneration Movement into the more acceptable, incredibly profitable, and allegedly scientific technique of Transcendental Meditation. TMers have all but taken over the town of Fairfield, Iowa, site of the Maharishi University. The school claims to have transformed the community through the Maharishi Effect, a TM-Sidhis program begun in the early 1980s, claiming to reduce crime by the positive effect of collective meditation. Statistics for Fairfield/Jefferson County during the decade of the nineties, however, belie the claim, showing a constant increase in crime ([http://www.behind-the-tm-facade.org/maharishi\\_effect-mdefect-fairfield.htm](http://www.behind-the-tm-facade.org/maharishi_effect-mdefect-fairfield.htm)).

The lie of godhood is always followed by the deceit of the so-called god-men. Rajneesh was deported back to India after his chief disciples were arrested in Oregon on attempted murder charges. Maharishi took in hundreds of thousands of dollars selling the fraudulent ability to levitate through TM. Muktananda, the guru to many Hollywood celebrities in the 1980s, though preaching celibacy, was accused by top leaders in his cult of a history of seducing young women. Ironically, his successor is a woman, Gurumayi Chidvilasananda. Gurumayi, who teaches the mantra, "Om Namah Shivaya" ("I honor the divinity that resides within me") is guru to Elizabeth Gilbert, author of the best-selling, *Eat, Pray, Love*. The Oprah Winfrey-endorsed book documents Gilbert's time at Gurumayi's ashram in India and is now being made into a theatrical film produced by Brad Pitt and starring Julia Roberts.

Deifying self is hardly exclusive to Eastern religions. Where the leaven of mysticism is found, it inevitably spreads to some form of union with God, meaning *becoming* God. Consider Mormonism, Islam, and Roman Catholicism, for example. All three are quite legalistic while at the same time very experiential. Mormon males are taught that they can become gods through closely following LDS teachings: "As man is, God once was; as God is, man may become." Most Mormons claim that the veracity of the doctrine of godhood (and for women, a goddesshood of eternal pregnancies) is affirmed through prayer, followed by a "burning in the bosom" sensation from "God." In contrast to its Sharia legal system, Islam's mysticism is found in Sufism, where devotees whirl themselves into altered states of consciousness in order to reach union with Allah.

The ancient Roman Catholic mystics known as the Desert Fathers (who have become spiritual icons for the "evangelical" Emerging Church Movement) developed beliefs and practices little different from the yogis, gurus, and priests of Hinduism and Buddhism. That's one reason why modern Catholic mystics such as Trappist monk Thomas Merton and priests Henri Nouwen and Thomas Keating have such large followings among the Church's priests and nuns (as well as among many evangelicals). One need not go to their writings to find the Church of Rome's position regarding godhood. It's spelled out quite clearly in paragraph 460 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

For the Son of God became man so that we might become God. The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods.

Godhood as a doctrine plays a large part in the methodology of the Word/Faith, Positive Confession teachings. Kenneth Copeland's version of "the lie" was similar to what most of his fellow Prosperity teachers were promoting:

And you impart humanity into a child that's born of you....Because you are a human, you have imparted the nature of humanity into that child.

God is God. He is a Spirit....And He imparted in you when you were born again. Peter said it just as plain, he said, "We are partakers of the Divine Nature." That Nature is alive-eternal in absolute perfection, and that was imparted into you by God just the same as you imparted into your child the nature of humanity.

That child wasn't born a whale. It was born a human....Well, now, you don't *have* a human, do you? No, you *are* one. You don't *have* a God in you. You *are* one.

Another leader of the Word/Faith Movement declares the practical necessity of godhood: "Until we comprehend that we are little gods and we begin to act like little gods, we cannot manifest the Kingdom of God." The modern roots of this heresy can be traced back to the religious science cults such as Christian Science and Unity School of Christianity, which gleaned many of their basic beliefs from Hinduism (see *The Seduction of Christianity: Spiritual Discernment in the Last*

Days by Dave Hunt and T. A. McMahon for details, promoters, and many other connections related to this article).

Fulfilled biblical prophecy is irrefutable proof that God's Word is exactly that, and we can easily recognize what He said would come to pass when it does. The Lord will have raptured us out of this world before the Antichrist declares himself to be God, so we won't be around for that event. However, there is a verse related to self-deification that has so much evidence, no reasonable person can deny its present-day fulfillment. In **2 Timothy:3:1-2** the Apostle Paul writes, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves...." Although humans have been enamored with themselves since the Garden of Eden, there is no generation in history that has been so preoccupied with self, even to the point of making self the key to solving all of mankind's problems. Here is a litany of popular selfist concepts and activities: self-esteem, self-image, self-confidence, self-acceptance, self-forgiveness, self-assertion, self-improvement, positive self-regard, positive self-talk, positive affirmation, positive mental attitude, positive thinking, possibility thinking, human potential, etc., etc. The prerequisite for all of these is *self-love*, the cornerstone of humanistic psychology and, consequently, because of the overwhelming influence of so-called Christian psychology, a false but popular doctrine among evangelicals.

The connection between psychology and Eastern mysticism, with their necessary emphasis on self, is clear, as American philosopher and historian Jacob Needleman observes:

A large and growing number of psychotherapists are now convinced that the Eastern religions offer an understanding of the mind far more complete than anything yet envisaged by Western science. At the same time, the leaders of the new religions themselves--the numerous gurus and spiritual teachers now in the West--are reformulating and adapting the traditional systems according to the language and atmosphere of modern psychology.

With all these disparate movements, it is no wonder that thousands of troubled men and women throughout America no longer know whether they need psychological or spiritual help. The line is blurred that divides the therapist from the spiritual guide (Martin & Deidre Bobgan, *Psychoheresy*, EastGate Pub., 1987, 22-23).

The Antichrist, empowered with lying signs and wonders and seeking worship, will be the ultimate therapist and spiritual guide. Although claiming to be God, he will offer the potential of godhood, including the demonically enabled powers he exhibits, to all those who will follow him in deifying self. The lie from the beginning is the lie at the end.

The leaven of *the lie* seems to have worked its way through the entire world, including much of the church, which has looked more to the world than to the Word. What is God's response? He will send strong delusion upon those who have not a love for the truth, that they should believe the lie (**2 Thessalonians:2:10-11**). Yet the Lord has not left believers without a defense against being seduced by the lie. To the Father, Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (**John:17:17**). His exhortation in **John:8:31-32**, if obeyed, will free us from the stronghold of self: "If ye continue in My word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."




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Quotable
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Question: I've been astonished at how some are predicting 2012 as the end of this era...
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