

Transcendence and Immanence

By: Robert L. Withers

This is a continuation of my post on C.S. Lewis and Pantheism. It's been awhile since a post, but I wanted to close the loop on that post before moving on.

As I pondered Lewis's point that the [main] problem with Pantheism is that it lacks the transcendent, it struck me that Christian paradigms are often polarized toward either a God who is transcendent or a God who is immanent. Folks on the transcendent end can't quite fathom the folks on the immanent (Personal Presence) end, and folks on the Personal Presence end don't get the folks on the Magisterial end. One often emphasizes transcendent truth; the other intimate experience.

Perhaps this tug-of-war is more than anything a testimony to our fractured nature, our split minds and affections – for it certainly isn't a testimony to the Scriptures or the Person of Jesus Christ. Who can deny that Christ is the embodiment of both transcendence *and* immanence? Perhaps even the terms transcendence and immanence are themselves a testimony to the innate confusion within us that Christ has come to redeem us from?

I have a product I use for hardware and mechanical repairs by the name of JB Weld. It's an amazing products. It comes in two tubes that you carefully mix together in order to form a bonding agent that is so strong that you can use it on machinery – a part of my snow blower has been held by JB Weld for a number of years.

The material in each tube, in and of itself, will bind nothing – but when those materials are mixed together you get a dynamic substance. My observation is that folks who use either transcendence or immanence as a benchmark for the Christian life, for Christian discipleship, for Christian community, tend to miss something, in part because they tend to be afraid to let the opposite experience/thinking into their lives lest there be a diluting of their thinking/experience.

“Those people need more thinking.” “Those people need more heart.” Isn't that the way it often is? And there is usually no convincing otherwise. I could say that much of this can be traced to our inherent make-ups and temperaments, and despite protestations to the contrary I'd be right to some degree. I could say that much of this is related to our experience with others, including negative experiences, after all, who hasn't had an Aunt Sally who was *affective* and also very unstable, or an Uncle John who insisted on absolute truth yet treated his family like serfs?

Perhaps once again we should return to Jesus Christ and lay our proclivities at His feet? At the end of the day, at the end of our lives, the only place we are going to find holistic unity in thought and heart is the wonderful and glorious Person of Jesus Christ – who alone can teach us to worship God in Spirit and in truth – in a way that acknowledges no fallen dichotomy, but which instead rejoices in both a new heaven and a new earth.