

# Paganism: Return of the Gods

Christ Bible Church – The Four Horsemen of the Woke Apocalypse Series

*The rules have changed—the trains have gone off the track. In our time, the old canopy of a more or less Christian civilization has been shredded, replaced by a new overarching structure of spiritual beliefs and practices. Many of the traditional plausibility structures that gave life meaning and significance under Christian influence in the West are unrecognizable [e.g., moral relativism, being true to one’s inner self, sexual fluidity, abortion is sacralized, etc.]. The meaning and context of spirituality and religion have undergone a paradigm shift no less fundamental. The notion of God now allows for polytheism (many gods) or pantheism (a god identical with the universe). The average millennial in the United States, for example, no longer defines a vital spiritual life as knowledge of and communion with the infinite-yet-personal Creator and Lord of heaven and earth who is revealed in the Bible. Spirituality has become a do-it-yourself hobby that blends ancient Eastern practices with modern consumer sensibilities.<sup>1</sup>*

## The New Age is Old News – A Brief History of the Movement and its Origins

### GNOSTIC ROOTS

### GNOSTIC TEXTS

The **Nag Hammadi** scrolls were discovered in Egypt in 1945 at the foot of a cliff along the Nile River. They were discovered by an Egyptian peasant who found a large jar that contained the 4<sup>th</sup> century manuscripts.<sup>2</sup>

Sample of writing from the *Trimorphic Protennoia* (found at Nag Hammadi) speaks of a divine feminine power (lesbianism also present in these texts): “I am androgynous. [I am both mother and] Father since I [copulate] with myself. I [copulate] with myself [and with those who love me], [and] it is through me alone that the All [stands firm]. I am the womb [that gives shape] to the All by giving birth

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Jones, *The Other Worldview: Exposing Christianity’s Greatest Threat* (Bellingham, WA: Kirkdale Press, 2015), 4-5.

<sup>2</sup> cf., Marvin Meyer, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures: The Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007).

to the light that [shines in] splendor. I am the Aeon to [come. I am] the fulfillment of the All, that is...the glory of the Mother.”<sup>3</sup>

## **OVERVIEW OF GNOSTICISM**

A human being is a divine spark that originated in the transcendent divine world and, by means of *gnosis*, can be released from the cosmic prison and return to its heavenly origin. The human body, on the other hand, is part of the cosmic prison from which the spirit [the real person] must be redeemed. Mystical experience was an important part of Gnosticism. Religious experience, for the Gnostics, involved joy in the salvation won by *gnosis*, as well as an extreme alienation from, and revolt against, the physical world.

## **CONTRIBUTING FACTORS**

### **19<sup>th</sup> Century Transcendentalism**

### **Revival of the Occult**

### **Anthroposophy**

### **The Arcane School**

### **Spiritism**

### **Astrology**

### **Inadequacy of secular humanism**

### **The counterculture of the 1960's**

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<sup>3</sup> Nag Hammadi text quoted by Peter Jones, *The Gnostic Empire Strikes Back: An Old Heresy for the New Age* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1992), 29.

## UNIFYING IDEAS

**Evolutionary Optimism:** Despite hardships and suffering, the New Age movement (i.e., modern paganism) believes that humanity is evolving from the Age of Pisces to the Age of Aquarius. “The Christian interlude, called in astrological circles ‘the Age of Pisces’ (the fish, the historic symbol of the Christian faith), fueled by masculine, yang energy, is now at an end. It is being superseded by the feminine yin energy of the Age of Aquarius.”<sup>4</sup>

**Monism:** “[Also called Oneism] sees the world as self-creating...and self-explanatory. Everything is made up of the same stuff, whether matter, spirit, or a mixture. There’s one kind of existence, which, in one way or another, we worship as divine...even if that means worshipping ourselves. Though there is apparent differentiation and even hierarchy, all distinctions are, in principle, eliminated, and everything has the same worth. This is a *homocosmology*, a worldview based on sameness. The classic term for this is paganism, worship of nature.”<sup>5</sup>

**Pantheism:** “The great oneness of being is thought to be God. All that is, at metaphysical root, is God...The New Age God is not a moral being worshipped as supreme. Such a God is impersonal and amoral *it*, not a *he*...Furthermore, the deity is democratized: We are all God...Self-deification is now as popular as it is unbiblical and unrealistic. The New Age takes the truth that we are made in God’s image and warps it to mean we are all gods.”<sup>6</sup>

**Elevated Consciousness:** “New Agers are often encouraged to be initiated, not just interested. Many mystical means serve the same exotic end, whether they be non-Christian meditation techniques, drugs, yoga, martial arts, the use of crystals, or spontaneous experiences such as near-death encounters. The end is a feeling of oneness with everything that is, and the realization of one’s own divinity, sometimes called the Higher Self.”<sup>7</sup>

**Moral Relativism:** “The phrase *create your own reality* is often [used] in New Age circles as a basic premise. The idea is that we are not under any objective moral law. Rather, we all have different ways to realize our divine potential. And since all is one (monism), we can’t slice up life into categories like good versus evil...we must move beyond good and evil in order to realize our full potential.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Peter Jones, *The Gnostic Empire Strikes Back: An Old Heresy for the New Age*, 13.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Jones, *The Other Worldview: Exposing Christianity’s Greatest Threat*, 12.

<sup>6</sup> Doug Groothuis, *Confronting the New Age*, 22.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>8</sup> Doug Groothuis, *Confronting the New Age*, 24.

**Unlimited Human Potential:** “If we are all God it is thought that the prerogatives of the deity pulsate within [cf. Kenneth Copeland’s little gods theology]. We are endowed beyond measure. We are miracles waiting to happen. Untethered from such old-age fables as human finitude, depravity and original sin, we are free to explore the luminous horizons of godhood. Ignorance is our only problem...The unlimited ones yearn for mastery of self and cosmos...Knowledge of the God within results in power over all...We are not fettered by an external and objective reality (whether spiritual or physical); rather we create our own reality [*manifesting* is a common term].”<sup>9</sup>

**Channeling:** This can take many forms (e.g., necromancy/seances, contact with ancient spirits, etc.). The medium or channeler is often possessed by the spiritual entity who imparts knowledge, offers guidance or strength, or sometimes contradicts biblical doctrine. This element of New Age practice sometimes includes contact with extraterrestrials, beings who are thought to be servants from other worlds who sometimes reaffirm New Age teachings (e.g., the deification of the self, the dawning of the Age of Aquarius, etc.)<sup>10</sup>

**Religious Syncretism:** New Age spirituality is an undefined blend of Eastern religion, Western occultism, neopaganism, and self-help psychology. Proponents often refer to the *perennial philosophy* to refer to the supposed mystical core that unites every religion: All is one, all is God, we are God, we have infinite potential, we can bring in the New Age.<sup>11</sup>

## **SYNOPSIS OF NEW AGE (MODERN PAGANISM) BELIEFS<sup>12</sup>**

**The Bible Must be Interpreted Esoterically**

**Many Sources of Revelation**

**Pantheism**

**Jesus Attained Christhood**

**Man is Divine**

**Sin is Ignorance; Enlightenment is Salvation**

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 29-30.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>12</sup> Ron Rhoades in *The Challenge of the Cults and New Religions*, 139-144.

# The Work of Peter Jones – A Voice of Biblical Clarity in Confusing Times

## ONEISM VS. TWOISM

“Either the transcendent Creator...is at the origin of everything created and sustains it all, or the universe itself, in all its seeming variety, is all there is...According to the Bible, God’s existence and identity is the proper frame for our own.”<sup>13</sup>

## The Failure of Secular Humanism

### The Perennial Philosophy Continues to be an Issue

[The perennial philosophy/paganism recognizes] a divine reality substantial to the world of things...and finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with, divine reality...Rudiments of the perennial philosophy may be found among the traditional lore of primitive peoples in every religion of the world, and in its fully developed forms it has a place in every one of the higher religions.<sup>14</sup>

## The Ongoing Impact of the 1960’s

John Lennon’s *Imagine* (released 1971) has become an iconic example of Oneist ideology:

Imagine there's no heaven, it's easy if you try. No hell below us, above us only sky. Imagine all the people, living for today...Imagine there's no countries, it isn't hard to do. Nothing to kill or die for, and no religion, too. Imagine all the people, living life in peace...Imagine no possessions, I wonder if you can. No need for greed or hunger, a brotherhood of man. Imagine all the people, sharing all the world... You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one. I hope someday you'll join us, and the world will be as one.<sup>15</sup>

Carl Jung, Freud’s disciple and the father of modern analytical psychology, stated in the 1950’s that “we are only at the threshold of a new spiritual epoch...the end of the Christian [era].”<sup>16</sup> Jones notes that Jung “predicted a reinterpretation of Christianity’s view of God via Hindu

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<sup>13</sup> Peter Jones, *The Other Worldview*, 9.

<sup>14</sup> Aldous Huxley quoted by Peter Jones, *The Other Worldview*, 44.

<sup>15</sup> [John Lennon - Imagine Lyrics | AZLyrics.com](https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/johnlennon/Imagine.html), accessed April 25, 2023.

<sup>16</sup> Jones, *The Other Worldview*, 51.

Vedantic pantheism and the victory of a self-realizing spirituality (which, interestingly enough, included the now-widespread practice of yoga).”<sup>17</sup>

### **Pagan Sexuality**

Androgynous priests were associated with the worship of the goddess Ishtar in the Sumerian age (1800 B.C.). It is recorded of the Canaanite goddess Anat [that] ‘Her priests dressed up and wore make-up like [women].’ At the beginning of the fifth century A.D., the cult of the goddess Cybele continued to have success. Augustine, in his *City of God*, describes firsthand the public display of homosexual priests (*galloi*): ‘They were seen yesterday, their hair moist, their faces covered in make-up, their limbs flaccid, their walk effeminate, wandering through the streets and squares of Carthage, demanding from the public the means to subsidize their shameful life.’<sup>18</sup>

## **The Call to Engage – A Strategy for Sharing the Gospel with Spiritual People Who Hate Religion**

### **REVISIT 1 PETER 3:15**

*Honor Christ the Lord as holy*

*Give a defense...hope*

### **ESTABLISH A TWOIST WORLDVIEW**

Unashamedly submit to God-ordained distinctions (i.e., gender roles, marriage, domestic life, church order, society, etc.). “Such submission is never onerous or humiliating. It is an alignment of the individual in joyful faith before God to the cosmic structures God has created and ordained for the common good.”<sup>19</sup>

### **MAKE CHRIST EXPLICIT**

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 156.