

1 **Neo-paganism**

(. . . and other religious mush)

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2 **Why are you talking about neo-paganism?**

1. What is neo-paganism?
 - Paganism is:
 - Thus Neo-paganism is a modern manifestation (neo) of ancient pagan practice
2. Why this strikes me as a concern
 - It's influencing the next generation, and most Christians in the Church don't realize it—especially parents.
 - The churches are not providing sufficient teaching to help new Christians shake off the pagan beliefs they have imbibed from the culture.

3 **Recent Headlines:**

1. Ghost Hunters: With specter detectors and open minds, it's serious business
2. Millennials shun church but still believe
3. Pagans deserve equal status of legitimate spirituality
4. We are all Hindus now
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4 **What's behind these headlines**

1. Ghost Hunters
2. Millennials shun church but still believe
3. Pagans deserve equal status of legitimate spirituality
4. We are all Hindus now

5 **It's all around us**

- While secularism seems the way of destiny for our country, spirituality is on the rise.
- It's all about being spiritual but not religious.
- Consider the presence and popularity of horoscopes, tarot, ouija, acupuncture, crystals, magnet therapy, feng shui, meditation, yoga, labyrinths, and the 2012 prophecy.
- Even the language of neo-paganism is all around, and accepted as a normal part of discourse.

6 **Peter Jones**

- Background
- His concern is with the rise of neo-paganism as the *de facto* basis of modern spirituality.
- In his book *Gospel Truth / Pagan Lies* he presents five pagan lies and contrasts them with the gospel truth.
- In his book *Pagans in the Pews* he argues that these pagan ideas have thoroughly invaded the mainline churches.

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7 **Five Pagan Lies**

1. All is One and One is All

2. Humanity is One
3. All Religions are One
4. One Problem: Amnesia
5. One Escape: Look Within

8 **All is One and One is All**

- This is the essential idea of monism.
- God is not the creator of the universe, rather the universe is divine.
- The Star Wars movie is a good example of this idea being presented in popular culture.
- The force is the energy that binds the universe together.
- The neo-pagans want to restore paganism to the Bible.

9 **Humanity is One**

- Since all is one, humans are part of that oneness.
- Humans are part of the divine essence and are good. (Original goodness)
- Individuals are the arbiters of truth, and each truth may be different.
- But as all are part of the one reality, we must tolerate all views.
- Indeed, we can find God within ourselves, and bring unity to all humanity.

10 **All Religions are One**

- No religion can have claim to uniqueness, or absolute truth.
- This would be an obstacle to social harmony.
- The goal is to see religions shaped together into one "truth."
- All religions really lead to the same God.
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11 **One Problem: Amnesia**

- Monism argues that the world must wake up from its delusion. "That which separates you from God is mind." –Swami Silvananda, *Divine Bliss*.
- Monism argues we must stop dividing the world into categories.
- Black and white thinking is identified with Western Christian culture.
- Jones says the solution, according to monism, is to "rid the world of distinctions and enter the mystical unity of all things."

12 **One Escape: Look Within**

- The solution is to find inner peace through activities such as meditation and yoga.
- The way to peace is to stop thinking.
- Spirituality is good, religion is bad.
- Since we are all one with the divine, the answers are within us.
- Subjective mystical experience becomes the measure of spirituality.

13 **Neo-liberalism=Neo-paganism**

- Jones observes in *Pagans in the Pews* that "Today's liberals find their spirituality not in orthodoxy, but in revived paganism." (p. 62)
- In particular he finds the roots of neo-paganism in a revived interest in Gnosticism.
- In 1945 a number of Gnostic writings were un-earthed near Nag Hammadi in Egypt.
- Many contemporary scholars view these as other gospels providing reliable information about Jesus and other varieties of early Christianity.

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- One scholar called the ancient Gnostic Marcion "the first Protestant."

- This because Marcion rejected the creator God of the Old Testament – he protested.
- Another called him “a textual critic, philologist and reformer.”
- Again, because he was willing to challenge the make-up of the Bible, particularly the Old Testament law, and three of the Gospels.
- In a similar fashion most progressive Christians today reduce the teaching of Jesus to the Sermon on the Mount.

15 **Threat or Opportunity?**

- Barna showed in 1994 that 71% of Americans and 40% of Evangelicals no longer believe in absolute truth.
- Smith and Denton show that 60% of U.S. teens believe that more than one religion may be true.

16 **More Statistics**

Christians who say “many religions can lead to eternal life”

| | |
|------------------------|-----|
| White Evangelical 2002 | 57% |
| White Evangelical 2008 | 47% |

| | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Black Protestant 2002 | 69% |
| Black Protestant 2008 | 49% |

(Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life)

17 **Yet More Statistics**

Among Evangelicals who affirm that “many religions can lead to eternal life” percent who believe that includes . . .

| | yes | no | don't know |
|---------------|-----|-----|------------|
| Judaism | 64% | 21% | 15% |
| Islam | 35% | 45% | 20% |
| Hijnduism | 33% | 36% | 31% |
| Atheism | 26% | 68% | 6% |
| Non-religious | 35% | 53% | 12% |

(Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life)

18 **And More Statistics**

Not affiliated with a religion

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| Millennials (born 1981+) | 26% |
| Gen X (born 1965-80) | 20% |
| Boomer (born 1946-64) | 13% |
| Silent (born 1928-45) | 8% |
| Greatest (born before 1928) | 5% |

(Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life)

19 **The assessment of Smith and Denton**

“Christianity is either degenerating into a pathetic version of itself or, more significantly, Christianity is actively being colonized and displaced by a quite different religious faith.”

(Smith and Denton, 171)

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21 **Christian College Students**

- Only 15% of Christian students go to Christian colleges
- Of the remaining 85%, between 52 and 70% are lost to the Kingdom.
- That means in general terms approximately half of our children walk away from the Church.
- About 2/3 of the departures occur during the first year of college.
- CONCLUSION: send them to a Christian college for at least the first year!

22 **What does the Bible Say?**

- Genesis 1:1
- Deuteronomy 18:9-14
- Isaiah 45:20-21
- John 14:6
- Romans 1:18-25
- Look at these passages to see what they have to say as a response to neo-paganism

23 **Two More Headlines . . .**

1. Still the way, the truth, and the life
2. The Mind under Grace: Why theology is an essential nutrient for spiritual growth

24 **What to do?**

- Study the Scriptures more intently (II Tim. 2:15; 3:14-16)
- Teach our children clearly (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)
- Speak the truth plainly to those around us (Acts 17:16-33)
- Don't give up (Matt. 16:18; II Tim. 4:1-5)

25 **Bibliography & Resources**

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30 **The End**

31 **Doubts About the Reliability of the Biblical Text**

Mr. Joshua Libby

32 **Paul wrote:**

"But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, your faith also is vain." I Corinthians 15:13-14

33 **Overview:**

- Origins of Biblical Doubts:
 - 1) Denial/removal of the Supernatural
 - Denial of Inspiration
 - Denial of Biblical miracles
 - 2) Scholarly critiques of Scripture
 - Denial of Historical Accuracy

- Denial of Preservation
 - 3) An Overly Skeptical Society
 - Postmodern worldview
 - Information overload
 - Role of the Media
 - Overview of Evidence for Biblical Reliability
- 34 **Denial/Removal of the Supernatural**
- State educational system without faith/religion allowed in the classroom.
 - Historical studies which are defined to never allow for a supernatural interpretation.
 - Separation of faith and academics even in Seminaries!
 - Faith in the supernatural is often mocked in higher education as childish or unintelligent.
- 35 **Bart Ehrman: NT Introduction**
Author of *Misquoting Jesus* and *Jesus Interrupted*
- "Even if miracles are possible, there is no way for the historian who sticks strictly to the canons of historical evidence to show that they have ever happened... I'm saying that even if they did, the historian cannot demonstrate it. I'll call this the "historical" problem of miracle. Let me explain the problem at some length." (p. 241)
- 36 **Historians are Scientists**
- "Historians are bound by their discipline to work within the parameters of a scientific view of reality."
- "Historians cannot establish miracle as the most probable occurrence because miracles, by their very nature are the least probable occurrence." (Ehrman BU debate)
- 37 **Tabor's presuppositions**
Author of *The Jesus Dynasty*
- "Historians are bound by their discipline to work within the parameters of a scientific view of reality. Women do not get pregnant without a male – ever... Dead bodies don't rise – not if one is clinically dead – as Jesus surely was after Roman crucifixion and three days in a tomb. So if the tomb was empty the historical conclusion is simple – Jesus' body was moved by someone and likely reburied in another location."
- 38 **Scholarly Critiques of Scripture**
- Denial of the historicity of Biblical accounts:
 - Lack of external evidence
 - Possible alternative (secular) explanation
 - Differences in accounts
 - Denial of the preservation of Scripture:
 - Gaps from events to extant manuscripts
 - Differences in manuscripts
- 39 **Bart Ehrman**
- "These accounts that we have of Jesus' resurrection are not internally consistent; they're full of discrepancies, including the account of his death and his resurrection."
 - Quotation from *The Lost Gospel of Judas*
- 40 **Denial of the Preservation of Scripture:**
- Statistical Dishonesty:
 - 3-4 generations between 30-70's AD
 - Oldest Bible is 350's AD (gap of 320 years)

- 300,000-400,000 NT variants
- Other books were left out/destroyed by a church conspiracy.

41 **Example of Codex Sinaiticus 2009**

42 **Oldest Known Bible Goes Online**

- The world's oldest known Christian Bible goes online Monday -- but the 1,600-year-old text doesn't match the one you'll find in churches today.
- ...And some familiar -- very important -- passages are missing, including verses dealing with the resurrection of Jesus, they said.
- [Expert listed], said it should be no surprise that the ancient text is not quite the same as the modern one, since the Bible has developed and changed over the years.
- "The Bible as an inspirational text has a history," he told CNN.
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43 **Overview of Biblical Reliability**

- The Supernatural is possible and far more reasonable than a strict "closed universe" worldview.
- It is then reasonable and preferable to include evidence for the supernatural in academia.
- Religious freedom and celebration of diversity does not require suppression of faith.

44 **Miracles are improbable?**

45 **Differences vs. Contradictions**

Contradictions are irreconcilable

Differences include:

- Different Perspectives
- Selected material
- Commentary
- Chronological vs. thematic orientation
- Different vocabulary

46 **3-4 Generations?**

47 **Gaps in General**

- Zondervan Charts of Apologetics and Christian Evidence Chart 43

48 **Differences in Manuscripts?**

- Reinventing Jesus
- Only 1% are both meaningful and viable
- None affect any Christian doctrine

49 **Jesus as Risen Lord and Incarnate God**

The earliest and consistent testimony of the church in the first century is that Jesus is God and was physically raised from the dead.

All four Gospels

Acts – 40 days of post-resurrection

Testimony of Peter and Paul that Jesus

1 Cor. 15:3-8 Creed

appearances

was raised from the dead.

50 **The letters of Paul, written between AD 40 and AD 68, which describe Jesus as:**

God's Son. (Gal. 1:16; 2:20)

The risen Lord (1 Cor. 8:6; 2 Cor. 4:5; Gal. 1:1-3)
 "God over all things"(Romans 9:5)
 Jesus was "in very nature God." (Philippians 2:6)
 Jesus was "the image of the invisible God." (Colossians 1:15, 16)

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A summary of NT verses which state that Jesus rose from the dead (Acts 10:40; 13:30; 13:37; 26:8; Rom 4:24, 25; 6:4, 9, 7:4, 8:11, 34; 10:9; 1 Cor 6:14; 15:4, 12-17, 20, ; 2 Cor. 4:14; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:20; Col. 2:12; 1 Thess. 1:10; 2 Tim 2:8; Heb 11:19; James 5:15; 1 Pet 1:21).

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Consider these statements from the early church fathers:

"Ignatius: 'God Himself was manifested in human form' (A.D. 105)
 Clement: 'It is fitting that you should think of Jesus Christ as of God' (A.D. 150)
 Justin Martyr: 'The Father of the universe has a Son. And He ... is even God' (A.D. 160)."
 (Witherington, p. 94)
 Also Irenaeus, (affirming the true divinity of Christ), Tertullian 160-220 (Used the word Trinity), Origen 185-254, Novation, Cyprian, Methodius (all before 300 A.D.!)

53 54

Megiddo Prison Church

Discovered in 2005
 Dates to about 230 A.D.
 Fish symbols (ichthus)
 Inscription: "The God-loving Akeptous has offered the table to God Jesus Christ as a memorial."

55

Old Testament Prophecies: Overview

It is commonly stated that over 100 OT prophecies are fulfilled in Jesus including:
 When Jesus would arrive (Daniel 9) and where (Micah 5:2-5; Hosea 11:1).
 The virgin birth (Isa 7), miracles (Isa 29:18; Psalm 45:6,7; Isaiah 35:4-6; Joel 2:28-32),
 and crucifixion (Ps. 22; Mic. 5:1; Zech 12:10; Isa 53).

56

Most Recommended: *Reinventing Jesus*

- Supernatural Evidence?
 - Dembski's *The Design Revolution*
 - Gonzalez and Richards' *The Privileged Planet*. ALSO DVD!!
 - Strobel's *The Case for a Creator*. 2005.
 - Strobel's. *The Case for Faith*. 2000.
- What about Differences in Manuscripts?
 - Thomas and Gundry's *A Harmony of the Gospels*
 - Strobel's *The Case for Christ*
 - Komoszewski and Sawyer and Wallaces' *Reinventing Jesus*
 - Rose Publishing's *100 Prophecies Fulfilled in Jesus Pamphlet*.

57

- What about Gaps/Differences in Manuscripts?
 - Bruce's *Reliability of the NT*
 - Kaiser's *Old Testament Documents*

- Komoszewski and Sawyer and Wallaces' *Reinventing Jesus*
- House and Holdens' *Charts of Apologetics and Christian Evidences*
- What about other Gospels/Books?
 - F.F. Bruce's *The Canon of Scripture*
 - Peter Jones' *Stolen Identity: The Conspiracy to Reinvent Jesus*
- What's being discovered now?
 - Biblical Archaeology Review and Artifax Journal

58 **This Does Matter**

- Forgiveness of sins
- Freedom and empowerment to do what is right
- Transformation of people
- Eternity with God
- Hope for our loved ones
- Ultimate Justice for all evil

59 **New England Bible College**

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60 **Break**