

Neo Paganism & Wicca

Why should we as believers learn about cults and religions? (Eph. 4:14-15; Col. 2:8; 2 Tim. 4:2; 1 Peter 3:15)

I. Important Terms

- a. **Polytheism:** the belief that there are many gods
- b. **Pantheism:** the belief that god and the universe are one in the same.
- c. **Animism:** the belief that all natural phenomena is associated with soul or spirit
- d. **Shamanism:** the belief in the unseen world of gods and spirits which can be influenced or manipulated through shamanistic practices (sorcery, witchcraft, occult).
- e. **Relativism:** the belief that knowledge and truth, and therefore morality are not absolute but exist only in relationship to a society's historical and cultural context.

II. Neo Paganism

- a. **Pagan:** Originally the Latin term "pagan" (paganus) meant "villager" or "rustic."
- b. **Neo:** Means new or revived.
- c. **Neo Paganism:** is a family of new religions that find their roots in the extinct pre-Christian religions of Europe, North Africa, and West Asia.
- d. **Heathendom:** this is a synonym to neo-paganism.

III. Norse and Germanic Religions Beliefs

- a. **Polytheism:** Odin, Thor, Frey & Freya, Loki, Hel
- b. **Animism:** Volcanoes, glaciers, and rocks have spirits associated with them. These elements and natural formations could think and act.
- c. **Modern Variations:** Odinism, Wotanism, Asatru, Norse Neo-Paganism
- d. **Shamanism:** There were the "volva" which performed "seidr" (divination) by traveling the spirit realm and foretell the future with a blessing or curse. There were "totemistic warriors" AKA "berserkers" who would consume hallucinogens, strip naked and go into battle. They would become possessed by their totem animal spirit and even shapeshift into animal form.
- e. **Revelation:** The main sources of Norse mythology are the Prose and Poetic Eddas. These literary works were written down in Iceland during the 13th century.
- f. **Creation:** Originally two worlds of fire and ice, fire melted the ice and created a frost giant (Ymir) and a cosmic cow. The cow was thirsty and licked the ice forming the first god. The god and giantess got together and had Odin and his brothers who then ultimately went to war with the giants. The death of the original giant (Ymir) caused a great flood that killed all the other giants but one, who escaped on a boat. Then Odin and the gods created Isengard and created humans out of trees and breathed into them life.
- g. **Sin:** There is no clear idea of sin apart from loose moral codes based on loyalty, honor, hard work, courage, and integrity. They are "loose" because there is no absolute supreme (perfect) being overall.
- h. **Salvation:** Views on the afterlife vary, but in general if you are a warrior and die valiantly in battle you get to go to Valhalla and everyone else goes to Helheim, but in the end Valhalla and Helheim go to war in Ragnarök.

IV. Greek and Roman Religions Beliefs

- a. **Animism:** Primordial Gods like Gaia as Earth, Eros as Love, Tartarus as The Abyss
- b. **Polytheism:** The Titans like Atlas, Prometheus, and Epimetheus; and The Olympians like Zeus, Artemis, and Apollo
- c. **Modern Variation:** Hellenism, Hellenismos, Hellenistic Neo-Paganism
- d. **Priests and Priestesses:** the Greeks and Romans had their share of witches and diviners, but the majority of the religious beliefs and practices were propagated and maintained by the priests dedicated to their god.
- e. **Revelation:** There is no known authoritative revelation from the Gods. What we know about the beliefs and practices of the Ancient Greeks and Romans comes from Homer's "Iliad" and "Odyssey," Hesiod's "Theogony" and "Works and Days," and Pindar's "Odes."
- f. **Creation:** Out of Chaos came Erebus and Nyx. They fell in love (Eros) and gave birth to Aether and Hemera. Then Came Gaia (the earth) and Ouranos (the sky). Then came the Titans, the Olympians, monsters, and minor gods. There was a war between the Titans and the Olympians. Prometheus and Epimetheus betrayed the Titans and joined the Olympians. The Titans lost the war. Prometheus and Epimetheus were rewarded with opportunity to create something for themselves. Epimetheus created all the animals of the world and Prometheus created men from the clay. Prometheus also gave humans the power over fire which made Zeus mad, so he punished mankind with womankind. Womankind, Pandora, was created and unleashed all the evils of the world.
- g. **Sin:** Sin is poorly defined and often associated with offending various gods, which makes it almost impossible to know right from wrong due to the differing opinions or desires of the gods
- h. **Salvation:** Make the gods mad and you could be cast to Tartarus. Go unnoticed and you would end up in The Asphodel Meadows. Do something uncommonly great and pleasing to the gods and you might end up in Elysium.

V. Celtic and Druid Religious Beliefs

- a. **Animism:** They believed in all non-human natural forces like plants, animals, the weather and the elements have supernatural forces at work in them.
- b. **Polytheism:** Dagda: the "good god," Morrigan: the "triple goddess," Cernunnos: "the horned god"
- c. **Modern Variation:** Druidism, Celtic Neo-Paganism
- d. **Druids & Ovates:** The Druids were an elite priestly class of ancient Celtic cultures. They were both religious and legal authorities, they were scribes, doctors, and advisors. Ovates were more like the Shamans, they practiced divination and spoke to the dead, made prophecies of the future.
- e. **Revelation:** There is no sacred text for the Celtic religious traditions. Beliefs and practices were handed down through families and druids. Though they were literate, it was forbidden to write down their knowledge. It took up to 20 years to become a druid according to Julius Caesar. Therefore, all we know about them comes from the historians of ancient external contemporary sources like Roman historians and Catholic Monks.
- f. **Creation:** No creation account. Some modern Druids believe in evolutionary ideas.
- g. **Sin:** There is no standard of right and wrong. Morality is relative to the virtues like honor, loyalty, justice, and courage. Some hold to a view of Karma.
- h. **Salvation:** Through the process of reincarnation and acquiring special knowledge, individuals learn to be united with the ultimate "source" similar to Hindu beliefs.

VI. Wicca

- a. **Atheist** or Agnostic: Some witches see references to god(s) and goddess(es) as mere metaphor or symbols
- b. **Pantheism**: Many witches believe that “the goddess” and the Universe are one, therefore witches see themselves as a manifestation of the goddess.
- c. **Panentheism**: Some witches believe that “the goddess” transcends the universe, but also pervades the universe.
- d. **Polytheism**: Some witches believe that there are many gods and goddesses, or that these gods and goddesses are really a manifold manifestation of “the goddess.”
- e. **Duotheism**: Some witches believe that “the goddess” has a consort, a male god “the horned god”, commonly called the Lord and the Lady.
- f. **Variation of Wicca**: Because Wicca is a “build your own” beliefs and practices type of religion there are endless varieties of witches. There are, however some organized groups of witches called “covens”, the most famous being the Gardnerian Coven.
- g. **Witches and Warlocks**: In general, there is no hierarchy in wicca. Each practitioner has autonomy and authority to do as he or she pleases. They engage in a plethora of occultic practices like: divination, casting spells using potions, incantations, and symbols; they perform rituals.
- h. **Wiccan tools of the craft**: herbs, crystals, candles, essential oils, a dagger, a wand, a cup, and the use of a pentagram or pentacle.
- i. **Revelation**: “The Book of Shadows” is the most famous.
- j. **Creation**: As with the rest of wiccan beliefs and practices, the wiccan view of creation varies. Some adopt pagan view of creation while others may hold to Darwinian Evolution and the Big Bang Theory.
- k. **Sin**: Wiccans believe that each individual is the ultimate rule and authority of their own life and experience. In general, however, witches believe in “polarity” which must stay in balance. Some witches also believe in the rule of 3- essentially Karma.
- l. **Salvation**: Witches see life as cyclical and similar to Hinduism. They believe in a form of reincarnation. For the witch reincarnation is not a cycle to escape, but a gift from the goddess to embrace. Some believe in a place called “Summerland” where the dead are reunited with loved ones in a place of enlightenment. Witches see death as a natural part of life and even an opportunity for personal development given the right frame of mind. There is no threat of punishment or destruction.

VII. The Ties That Bind all Neo-Pagans together

- a. **Autonomy**: Neo-Pagans want to be free from moral constraints and religious authority.
- b. **Power and Control**: Neo-Pagans want to believe that they can control their own destiny and influence the outcomes and events of their lives by harnessing the powers of the natural and supernatural worlds.
- c. **Love for Nature**: Neo-Pagans have a profound love and respect for nature and seek to honor nature with the way they live their lives.
- d. **Distain for Christianity**: Neo-Pagans, like atheist, seem to have a bitterness or distain for what they perceive to be “Christianity”.

VIII. What is the Biblical Response to Neo-Paganism and Wicca? (2 Cor. 6:14-16; 2 Cor 5:20; Phil 4:6-9)

Animism – The belief in animism is a deception because we know that there are really only two forces at work in this world – the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God. That which is good in this world is a reflection of God (Rom 1:20, Ps 104, Ps 19). In contrast, that which is evil in this world is a reflection of the Fall (Gen 3), the judgment of God (Exo 7), and the reality of Satan and his demons at work (Job 1-2).

Polytheism – The belief in polytheism is a doctrine of demons for we know that there is only One True God (Deut 6:4) and that He alone is to be worshiped (Exo 20:3-5). Everything else is the worship of demons. (Duet 32:16-17; Lev 17:7)

Pantheism – The belief in pantheism is a deception because we know that God is the Creator and all else is the created. (Gen 1 & 2)

Shamanism – Condemned in Scripture, (Deut 18:10-11, 2 Chron 33:6, Gal 5:19-21) and remember that we have One Mediator (1 Tim 2:5)

Relativism – The belief that there are no absolutes is absolutely false for we know that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life and that the Word of God is Truth. (Jn 14:6, 17:17,18:37)