

# Neopaganism—Part 2

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## Evaluation.

**Irrationality.** Neopagans claim we should discard reason as normative in life. But if this is done, then opposites could both be true. This violates the fundamental laws of thought. The person who claims that opposites can both be true does not really believe that the opposite of that statement also is true.

**Relativism.** Neopagans are relativists. But all truth cannot be relative. That very claim is presented as a nonrelative truth claim. There cannot be one and only one God (monotheism) and more than one god (polytheism) at the same time and in the same sense.

**Pluralism.** The pluralistic desire to embrace all forms of religion runs into the same problem. Everything cannot be true, including opposites. This violates the Law of Noncontradiction. Either polytheism is true or monotheism is true. Both cannot be true. Neopagans cannot use either-or statements to affirm both-and thinking. Polytheists have to deny pluralism in order to affirm it, for they do not believe the opposite of pluralism is true. But if opposites are not true, pluralism is false.

**Inclusivism.** The claim that we must be inclusive, holding all religions to be true, is also self-defeating. It is a non-inclusive (exclusivist) claim to assert that only inclusivism is true and all exclusivism is false. While they claim to allow total diversity of expression, the neopagan practice is quite restrictive. The very existence of *secret* covens reveals the exclusivistic nature of the group. Some refer to Wicca as *the* religion. Even proponents believe in a universal element in neopaganism, insisting on universality of content but not of form (Adler, 116, 145). The existence of an initiation rite is an earmark of exclusivism. Witches claim their rite is a way to protect the institution from those who are insincere, evil, or who would give the craft a bad name (*ibid.*, 98). But if they must protect their institution from evil or the insincere, there must be a genuine form to preserve. Adler claims that witchcraft was once the *universal religion*, which has been driven underground (*ibid.*, 66). This is a claim to universality and implicit exclusivism to be *the* religion.

One controversy, in which Wiccans condemned a couple who were charging money for lessons in witchcraft, further shows exclusivity. Those who voiced disapproval insisted that “this violates Craft Law,” indicating that there is a universal craft law that defines right and wrong. If it does not, witchcraft can be done in any way one wishes. Even the “Principles of Wiccan Belief” adopted by the Council of American Witches on April 11-14, 1974, has a strong statement excluding the belief that Christianity is “the only way. They frankly acknowledged this as part of “our animosity toward Christianity” (*ibid.*, 103).

All-inclusive groups fail to realize that every truth claim is exclusive. If Christianity is true, then of necessity all non-Christian beliefs are false. If witchcraft is true, all non-witchcraft beliefs are false. Neopaganism is just as exclusivistic as any other religion that claims to have discovered truth about reality.

Neopagans admit that “polytheism always includes monotheism. The reverse is not true” (*ibid.*, viii). *Includes* is not the proper word here. Polytheism is willing to *absorb* or *swallow*

monotheistic beliefs, but polytheism must be extremely exclusive of all orthodox forms of monotheism. These worldviews cannot share the same belief system. Under a cloak of inclusive language, neopaganism believes that the only way is to deny that there is an only way.

**Failure to Explain Origins.** Some pagan religions speak of origins, but few ask ultimate questions about them. There are gods acting, but how did they get us to this point? What caused it all to be? C. S. Lewis remarked that to bring God and nature into relation also separates them. What makes and what is made are two, not one. "Thus the doctrine of Creation in one sense empties nature of divinity" (Lewis, 79-80). That destroys paganism.

**Failure to Explain Unity.** If the pagan realized that nature and God are distinct, that the one made the other; one ruled and the other obeyed, gods would not be worshiped, but rather the Creator God. C. S. Lewis observed, "The difference between believing in God and in many gods is not one of arithmetic.... God has no plural" (Lewis, 78, 82). Herein is revealed the depravity of polytheism, for they prefer to worship a god they make, rather than the God who made them. One neopagan concluded, "I realized it wasn't so outrageous, and that we could choose what deities to follow.... [for] the element of Christianity that bothered [me].... was its requirement to be submissive to the deity." He adds that his gods have human characteristics. They are flawed and so more approachable (*Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 16 December 1985, 2A). In biblical language this is a vivid confession of the fact that pagans "suppress the truth in unrighteousness ... and change the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man" (Rom. 1:18, 23).

**Anticreedalism.** Their protest notwithstanding, neopaganism has its own creeds and dogmas. Adler admits: "I've seen a lot of people in the Craft get hung up on fragments of ritual and myth. Some people accept these fragments as a dogma." While protesting creeds, Adler lays down a set of "basic beliefs" she claims "most people in this book share" (Adler, 88, ix). She seems unaware that she is thereby defining a creed.

The creed she confesses is informative: "The world is holy. Nature is holy. The body is holy. Sexuality is holy. The mind is holy. The imagination is holy. You are holy.... Thou art Goddess. Thou art God. Divinity is immanent in all Nature. It is as much within you as without" (ibid.). There are several standard doctrines of neopaganism in this creed, including pantheism, polytheism, animism, self-deification, and, covertly, free sexual expression. In the creed they called "Principles of Wiccan Belief," the Council of American Witches listed thirteen basic principles. These beliefs include moon worship, harmony with nature, the creative power in the universe manifest in male and female polarities, and sex as pleasure. Interestingly, they disavowed Devil worship and the belief that Christianity is "the only way" (ibid., 101-3).

**Mission.** Neopagans claim to seek no converts. "You don't *become* a Pagan," they insist; "You *are* a Pagan." They claim that no one converts to Wicca. Yet they admit that people are drawn into paganism by "word of mouth, a discussion between friends, a lecture, a book, or an article." Regardless of their purpose, what are these but means of evangelism? To claim that these people were always pagan and that they just "came home" (ibid., x, 14, 121) is like Christian missionaries denying that they evangelize, since those who believe have simply "come back to God." Like anyone else who believes he or she has found truth or reality, the neopagans cannot resist the urge to propagate their faith. Why else does the experience of enlightenment lead new Wiccans to proclaim with the zeal of a new convert: "I was turned on to the Goddess. It was the religion" (ibid., 116)?

## Sources

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