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Androgyny: The Pagan Sexual Ideal

September 1, 2000 by [Dr. Peter Jones](#) — [3 Comments](#)

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...being a gay man or lesbian entails far more than sexual behavior alone...[it entails] a whole mode of being-in-the-world.

Paiens unt tort e Chrestianes unt dreit
-Chanson de Roland



Introduction

Like the ancient pagan Sodomites pounding on the door of Lot's house millennia ago, the modern gay movement is gathering at the doors of our churches, our academies and our once traditionally "Christian" culture, demanding entrance and full recognition. Notable scholar, David A. J. Clines, professor of Old Testament at Sheffield University, for one, appears ready to lay down the welcome mat. He wrote in 1998:

“ ...[though] queer theory has yet to show its face at the SBL [Society of Biblical Literature], gayness is challenging...all that we hold dear. When we begin to redraw the alterity map, the boundaries between same and different...we find ourselves having to think through everything, and not just sexuality, from scratch.

Clines, who not long ago was known for his conservative theological position, illustrates how far acceptance of the gay movement has come in recent years, even among those from strongly biblical backgrounds.

This movement has come a long way fast. It will not go away soon, I believe, because it is so intimately tied to deep changes in modern society, in particular, those associated with philosophical Postmodernism. Because in the Postmodern hermeneutic all meaning is socially generated, queer commentary has little methodological difficulty finding a place in the contemporary religious and theological debate. In cooperation with feminist biblical interpretation, which has "destabilized normative heterosexuality" by alleging "sexist" bias, queer readings merely seek to take one more step in the hermeneutics of suspicion and expose the "heterosexist bias" of the Bible and Bible interpreters. Identifying exegesis as an exercise in social power, queer theorists reject the oppressive narrowness of the Bible's male/female binary vision, and boldly generate textual meaning on the basis of the "inner erotic power" of the gay interpreter. What could be more Postmodern? Employing such a widely accepted methodology, and with "straight" Bible scholars now ready "to redraw the alterity map," gay theology appears to have a bright future everywhere.

The theoretical progress is mirrored in popular society where resistance to the gay life-style is more and more impugned as anti-democratic and un-American. But the urgency of the situation for Bible-believing scholars is not merely the pressing need for a scholarly ethical response to an unfortunate moral aberration. The contemporary appearance of a homosexual movement says something about the particular times in which we live, granted both that pagan spirituality is enjoying a popular revival, and that throughout the Bible, Sodom and Gomorrah have always served as the symbol for endtime pagan idolatry, ultimate moral disintegration and eschatological divine judgment. The subject, in its spiritual, religious and even eschatological dimensions, needs to be treated and debated among us, not simply as an unfortunate social deviation or ephemeral social fad, but as a cutting-edge component of a rising, all-encompassing, religious world view that is diametrically opposed to the world view of Christian theism.

One fruitful way to approach this pressing issue is to consider the religious roots of homosexuality. The recent radical changes in our society, include, simultaneously, both the liberation of sex and the rediscovery of pagan mystical spirituality. Is such a pairing pure coincidence or is it the result of a necessary organic relationship? Has there always existed an ineluctable connection between pagan religion and pagan sex? For instance, while radical pagan feminists speak of the need of a “change of [religious] consciousness,” such spiritual transformation is always proposed by way of a radical recalibration of our perceptions of sexuality. In other words, sexuality appears central not peripheral to the spiritual quest. This, I believe, will become more and more evident in the homosexual movement, namely, that this particular sexual life style will be the promoter of a particular kind of religion. Thus, while sexual liberation in its popular, successful, government-financed versions, strategically associates itself with “civil rights,” with pro-choice civic values and with politically-correct tolerance, often studiously avoiding any obvious religious dimension, its ultimate legitimization [since all human beings are religious] proceeds from the age-old dogmas of paganism, which, unlike their modern equivalent, never tried to hide behind a thin veil of temple/state separation. If everything is indeed political, as the radicals often proclaim, everything is also spiritual, and thus the spiritual is also sexual. Charles Pickstone, a pagan believer in Anglican orders, affirms this in his recent book *The Divinity of Sex*: “...sex is the spirituality that reveals the sacramental richness of matter.”

The thesis of this paper is that to understand the contemporary sexual revolution, we need to see the “new sexuality,” [particularly in this paper in its homosexual expression], as an integral expression of age-old religious paganism. In our response, we cannot follow Lot, who would have sacrificed his daughters to placate the aggressors. Nor can we claim personal moral superiority. We must always hear, in the clamor for acceptance and recognition, the cry of divine image-bearers, however marred and broken. However, we must not shrink back from seeking to do justice to the whole Christian, biblical dimension of the problem. In a time of moral confusion and politically correct intimidating “tolerance,” we owe such clarity to our culture, to our sons and daughters, and to God, Creator and Redeemer, for whom all things exist.

The Modern Revival of Paganism

In order to make this connection, some attempt must be made to define paganism. The Lutheran theologian, Carl Braaten defines the contemporary revival of paganism—what he calls “neopaganism”—as:

“ [the belief in] “a divine spark or seed [which] is innate in the individual human soul. Salvation consists in liberating the divine essence from all that prevents true self-expression. The way of salvation is to turn inward and ‘get in touch with oneself.’ ”

In a different but complimentary way I would suggest that the essence of paganism can be usefully described as monism, the belief that one principle defines and unites all of reality. Thus all is one, humanity is one divine reality, and all religions are ultimately many expressions of the one monistic truth. At the heart of this theoretical religious paganism lies a particular and powerful mystical experience of oneness. Indeed it is often claimed in today’s syncretistic age that at the core of all religions, beyond and behind their distinctive doctrines, is the same mystical encounter.

Louis Dupré, T. L. Riggs Professor of the Philosophy of Religion at Yale University, does indeed make such a claim. After noting the universality of the “mystical drive” to union with the divine, Dupré wonders whether “all religions, which meet in this drive, are, at least in their mystical expression, identical.” He seems to have little doubt about the answer: “If different traditions share *a state in which distinctions disappear* [emphasis mine], should we not conclude that in its highest form all mysticism is identical.” This conclusion is affirmed in spite of major outward “doctrinal differences,” since beyond the level of doctrine is the spiritual *unio mystica*. Dupré determines that “...to the extent that the state of union is held to consist of an ecstatic, intrinsically transient experience, [then] the conclusion that mysticism is identical in all religions is indeed inescapable.”

A leading history of religions “Christian” scholar, Huston Smith, believes that the present work of the Spirit is producing an “invisible geometry to shape the religions of the world into a single truth.” In a similar vein, the late Joseph Campbell combined Jungian psychology and New Age spirituality in his *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* to express the notion that all human civilizations have the same monomyth with only minor differences in details.

According to pagan esoterism, spiritual understanding through intuition and meditation is the only way to salvation. This comes through a non-rational, mystical experience of seeing oneself as the center of a circle that has no boundaries, where all distinctions are eliminated. As the great modern Gnostic, C. G. Jung said: “The self is a circle whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere.” From the center of one’s own limitless universe the self is sovereign. The unitive experience, essential to this worldview, is engendered through drugs, through time-honored (Hindu) meditation or otherwise induced trance. Meditation, rightly practiced, enables the mind/soul to be disconnected from the limitations of the body and to be in direct contact with cosmic spiritual unity. In the words of a leading neo-pagan mystic:

“ The ultimate metaphysical secret, if we dare to state it so simply, is that there are no boundaries in the universe. Boundaries are illusions, products not of reality but of the way we map and edit reality. And while it is fine to map out the territory, it is fatal to confuse the two [illusion and reality].

This Eastern monism with a Western spin is in direct and total contradiction with Christian theism and the civilization it has engendered. There is here no neutral ground. This is true, as well, of sexuality. Both monism and theism have their particular views of sexuality, and here too there is no neutral ground. As one homosexual activist recently said: "Traditional family values suck."

The vehemence of the above statement indicates how closely theology and sexuality are held, as well as the determination on the part of some to deconstruct heterosexuality as the norm of human society. Not surprisingly, this element of deconstruction, indeed, destruction of "traditional" sexuality, has accompanied the recent appearance of paganism and deconstructive Postmodernism in the West. That can be illustrated in the vertiginous increase in divorce, the phenomenal growth of pornography, the "liberation" of sex from monogamy, and the rising practice and public acceptance of homosexuality. This is all known and well documented. However, within the specific limits of this paper, I wish to describe the religious pagan sexual ideal as androgyny—which seems to be more and more proposed as the reconstructive model for our deconstructed world.

In what follows I will first provide a certain documentation and description of a phenomenon that consistently marks pagan spiritual practice—the association of the androgynous priest with the pagan cultus throughout time and space. I will present this evidence without any claim to complete or exhaustive systemization. In the second place, I will attempt a theological explanation.

The Androgynous Priest/Shaman as the Embodiment of Pagan Spirituality

Throughout time and across space, the pagan cultus consistently, though not exclusively, holds out as its sexual representative the emasculated, androgynous priest. Mircea Eliade, a respected expert in comparative religions, argues that androgyny as a religious universal or archetype appears virtually everywhere and at all times in the world's religions. Much evidence exists to support this judgment.

The clearest textual testimony in ancient times comes from nineteenth century BC Mesopotamia. Androgynous priests were associated with the worship of the goddess Istar from the Sumerian age (1800 BC). Their condition was due to their "devotion to Istar who herself had 'transformed their masculinity into femininity.'" They functioned as occult shamans, who released the sick from the power of the demons just as, according to the cult myth, they had saved Istar from the devil's lair. "...as human beings," says a contemporary scholar, "...they seem to have engendered demonic abhorrence in others; ...the fearful respect they provoked is to be sought in their otherness, their position between myth and reality, and their divine-demonic ability to transgress boundaries."

The pagan religions of ancient Canaan appear to maintain a similar view of spirituality and sexuality. The goddess Anat preserves many of the characteristics of Istar. Like the Syrian goddess Cybele, Anat is headstrong and submits to no one. She is both young and nubile but also a bearded soldier, so that many commentators conclude that she is either androgynous or bi-sexual. She thus symbolizes the mystical

union, which was celebrated by her worshipers as a ritual enactment of the hieros gamos [sacred spiritual marriage]. The Old Testament gives some indication that Canaanite religion included homosexual androgyny, against which Israel was constantly put on guard.

Livy describes initiation into the Bacchanalia of 186 BC as involving homosexual rape, *simillimi feminis* mares. Walter Burkhardt, professor of Classical Philology at the University of Zurich, comments upon this testimony: "Scholars at one time gave advice not to believe in slander of this sort, but we can hardly be sure. Parallels from initiations elsewhere are not difficult to find." In other words, Burkhardt recognizes that there was something going on related to the cultic nature of the event, not simply a frenzied lack of control.

Examples of "religious" androgyny can be found in various forms in Syria and Asia Minor in the third century B.C., but its clearest and closest expression in that area comes from the Roman Empire at the beginning of the Christian era. It is well documented that the Great Mother under the names of Atargatis or Cybele had androgynous priests, called *Galli*, who castrated themselves as a permanent act of devotion to the goddess. A particular version of the goddess is worshipped under the name of Artemis at Ephesus where Paul established a church (Acts 19). In Syria, Cybele is called Rhea, whose effeminized itinerant priests imitated the deeds of the mythological Attis, in trance-like ecstasies. The rites of initiation into the Cybele or Rhea cults included baptism in the blood of a slaughtered bull or ram. This took place in a pit or taurobolium. At the end of the ceremony sometimes certain "powers" of the sacrificial bull, no doubt the animal's genitals, were offered to the Mother of the gods, again a powerful symbol of male emasculation before the female divinity. The obvious intentions and results of such cultic mythology and practice were the feminization and emasculation of men under the occultic power of the goddess. Doubtless, the Cybele myth is reproducing the cult myth of Isis, where Osiris, the brother/lover of Isis, is killed by his brother who cuts his body in many pieces. Isis reassembles the pieces, except the phallus which was eaten by a crab, and magically restores him to life. In other words, even in death the ideal male is emasculated, like the *Galli* in life. Though there is no evidence of a specifically emasculated Isaic priesthood, the yearly festival to Isis included men dressing in women's clothing. In this period, another example can be found in the worshipers of Aphrodite in Scythia. The ennares were hermaphrodite shamans who wore women's clothes and received the gift of divination from the Goddess.

At the beginning of the fifth century AD the cult of the goddess Cybele continued to have success. Augustine in his *City of God* vividly describes the "games" offered in honor of Tanit, the celestial "virgin" and mother of the gods, where obscene actors role-played disgusting acts "in the presence of an immense throng of spectators and listeners of both sexes." He also describes the public display of homosexual priests (*gallo*).

I have taken the time to include some of the more unsavory details of pagan worship in order to show the similarity of the sexual practices common to them. Even though separated by many centuries, a historical and "theological" connection between the Mesopotamian assinnus, the Canaanite qedeshim, the Scythian ennares, and the Syrian *galli* is not difficult to imagine. They took on the same androgynous appearance, engaged in the same ecstatic behavior, including self-mutilation, were associated with occultic spirituality,

and so in many ways occupied a similar liminal relationship to “normal” society. Such parallels suggest a profound and necessary connection growing out of the same ideological pagan root.

Later in the second and third centuries of the Christian church, the Gnostics were credited by their adversaries with mystery celebrations involving carnal knowledge. The charge is credible because “Christian” Gnosticism was the attempt to Christianize pagan spirituality, even to the point of adopting some form of androgyny. Hippolytus (AD 170-236) reports that one particular Gnostic sect, the Naasenes, who worshipped the Serpent (*Naas* in Hebrew) of Genesis, attended the secret ceremonies of the mysteries of the Great Mother in order “to understand the ‘universal mystery.’” Like modern syncretists who are encouraged to cross over into other religions, the Gnostics believed religious truth was one, to be found everywhere, and so they crossed over into pagan spirituality as a matter of religious principle. The most explicit testimony is from Irenaeus who says: “They prepare a bridal chamber and celebrate mysteries.” A homosexual encounter is perhaps insinuated in the *Secret Gospel of Mark*. At the very least, the final logion 114 of the *Gospel of Thomas* appears to be an invitation to spiritual androgyny. All this would justify the judgment of Burkhardt that “certain Gnostic sects seem to have practiced mystery initiations, imitating or rather outdoing the pagans...”

There is good reason to believe that a form of ancient Gnosticism, namely Hermeticism, survived and influenced the Medieval West through the mystical spirituality of Alchemy. This variant Egyptian version of Gnosis saw in Hermes the divine interpreter whose secrets enable Man to pass through various levels of reality, thus making esoteric transmutations possible. The spiritual alchemist became an initiate, one “who knows,” as the ancient Gnostics “knew.” Like Hermes, the alchemical Mercurius was understood as a kind of divine “other” who would intervene by affecting the resolution of opposites. While no explicit sexual perversion is promoted, joining of the opposites or union was frequently imaged as a *hieros gamos*, a holy marriage, the fruit of which is called “the Philosopher’s Stone.” This “fruit” is sometimes called “the child of the work” which is presented as the Hermetic Androgyne, under the rubric “Two-in-One.” At the very least we have to reckon here with a spiritualized form of what Eliade calls “ritual androgynisation.”

In the same “illuminist” tradition, Jacob Böhme (1575-1624) a great mystic and proto-theosophist, believed Adam was androgynous and that the sexes appeared as a result of the fall. For this monistic mystic, the ideal human state was androgyny. According to Eliade, Böhme derived these notions not from the Qaballah but from Alchemy, for he makes use of alchemical terms. One of spiritual successors, Franz von Baader (1765-1841) postulated that the androgyne had existed at the beginning (Adam) and would appear again at the end of time.

One notable inheritor of the esoteric movements of alchemy and hermeticism in the modern world is Theosophy. It is not without interest that Madame Blavatsky, founder of the Theosophical Society towards the end of the nineteenth century, may well have had a dominatrix lesbian relationship with her successor Annie Besant. Besant began public life as the wife of an Anglican minister, became first a birth-control propagandist, and then an occultist. Her possible lesbianism is suggested by the great authority on modern esotericism, James Webb who cites Besant’s “irreplaceable and fully authoritative biographer Arthur Nethercot.” Later theosophists such as Aleister Crowley, promoter of the occultist pagan Hermetic Order of

the Golden Dawn, as well as Charles Leadbeater, whom Blavatsky called her "bishop," were noted homosexual pederasts. There is good reason to think that such activity was not the expression of personal weakness, but the consistent expression of pagan spirituality.

In 1923 Feder Mühle, a businessman who became involved in Spiritualism, founded the Gottesbund Tantra in Görlitz, Silesia-home of Jacob Böhme. Members wore the God's Eye badge and believed that homosexuals "were vocationally mediums." They also, with a certain logical consistency, held that heterosexual intercourse impaired the mediumistic talent. This small detail of Germanic occultic history is significant, in this sense. Since leading contemporary homosexuals make the same claims, without any apparent dependence on the theories of Mühle, such parallel thinking would suggest an organic connection between homosexuality and shamanistic religious activity.

We do see such an organic connection in ancient religions that persists today. The Siberian shamans, known as Chukchi, and the shamans of Central Asia engage in ecstatic rituals and dress as androgynes. Among the Ngadju Dyak, a pagan people-group lost in the dense bush of southern Borneo, the basir, "asexual priest-shamans...true hermaphrodites, dressing and behaving like women," have a priestly function." This behavior also characterizes Amazonian shamans, Celtic priests [ancient and modern], and Indian hijras. The hijras, who go back into the mists of Hinduism, are a religious community of men who "dress and act like women and whose cul-ture centers on the worship of Bahuchara Mata, one of the many versions of the Mother Goddess worshipped throughout India." In another form of Hindu spirituality, Tantric Yoga, androgyny is also the goal, where the two contrary principles of Shiva and Shakti are joined. Eliade explains: "When Shakti, who sleeps in the shape of a serpent (kundalini), at the base of his body, is awoken by certain yogic techniques, she moves...by way of the chakras up to the top of the skull, where Shiva dwells, and unites with him." The yogin, through powerful techniques of sexual-spiritual meditation, is thus transformed "into a kind of 'androgyné." In Buddhism also the true human, the archetype, called a bodhisattva, is androgynous. These yogic practices and mystical teachings concerning androgyny are doubtless as old as the Mesopotamian and Syrian examples discussed above.

In American Indian religious practice homosexual transvestite males-berdaches-have always functioned as shamans. Amongst the Navajo, the nadle, a feminized male serves as reconciler of conflict. According to Navajo myth, the original hermaphrodite went to the underworld to be associated with the dead and the devils of the lower world. Among the Zuñi, Awonawilona ("he-she") is a powerful, positive mythological figure. Similar figures are to be found in African, Australian Aboriginal cultic practice. "Some African societies," observes an ethnographer, "have developed intermediary genders of men-women and women-men who, like their Native American counterparts, are seen as sacred and as spiritually powerful individuals." Other examples of spiritual/physical androgyny include the homosexual priests of the Yoruba religion in Cuba and "young gay witches in Manhattan." In light of the above, one would surely have to agree with the argument of a recent book tracing the history of gay male spirituality: "gender-variant men have fulfilled a sacred role throughout the millennia."

Coming from a different angle, Harold Bloom would nevertheless agree with this judgment. He states: "Central to shamanism are its supposed mysteries: flight, levitation, gender-transformation, bilocation, and

animal and bird incarnations. All these phenomena, however startling, are merely means to the single end of shamanism: restoring the undying self of the dead."

Emily Culpepper, an Ex-Southern Baptist, now a lesbian pagan witch, teaching at the University of Redlands in Southern California, agrees. She sees gays and lesbians, in her words, as "shamans for a future age." She reserves a spiritual role for homosexuals, for a shaman is "...a charged, potent, awe-inspiring, and even fear-inspiring person who takes true risks by crossing over into other worlds." A fuller definition leaves little to the imagination: "The power and effectiveness of shamans-witches, sibyls, Druids-emerges from their ability to communicate with the non-human: extra-terrestrial and subterranean forces, and the spirit-world of the dead." This, the reader will recall, is exactly the claim of the Mesopotamian assinnu/kurgarru and the Syrian galli-that they had contact with the spirit realm of the Underworld and of the Dead.

Culpepper left the Church and repudiated Christianity. Others stay in and say essentially the same thing. In more familiar but strangely comparable terms, Virginia Mollenkott, calling herself "an evangelical lesbian feminist," speaks for gays and lesbians, when she says, "We are God's Ambassadors." Indeed, Mollenkott claims she "was told" by her "guardian angel, a Spirit Guide, the Holy Spirit or Jesus [she is not sure]: "A great shift is occurring in the world, and you are a part of that shift." For Rosemary Radford Ruether, a leading "Christian" feminist theologian, "Androgyny is her model for a human species liberated from "dualistic" gender into "psychic wholeness." Similarly, Judy Westerdorf, a United Methodist clergy-woman, triumphantly declared to the delegates at the pagano-"Christian" feminist RE-Imagining Conference in Minneapolis (1993) that "the Church has always been blessed by gays and lesbians,...witches...[and] shamans."

No doubt without much awareness of these elitist theories and the deep, spiritual stakes involved, the media has shaped the sexual fantasy-world of America's youth. The "gay" and mainstream presses are now documenting a disturbing trend. Young people are declaring themselves "homosexual" at earlier and earlier ages. Others are embracing bi-sexuality, as an expression of personal freedom and autonomy. Observers note "a growing trend [in contemporary youth culture]...to refuse to define their sexuality Youth today want more representations of a fluid sexuality that rejects definitions of 'gay' or 'straight.'" The popular press documents the success of what it calls the "gender blur."

Though promoted as an issue of civil rights, the homosexual/androgynous revival is not merely contemporary civics or chic theory. The close connection between pagan esoteric spirituality and androgynous sexuality, evident across time and space, demands that we not ignore the spiritual dimensions underlying the contemporary scene. Barbara Marx Hubbard's spirit guide says that sexual identity confusion is a good thing; in the new age, "Your adolescence will be a joy. You will be androgynous."

In the light of the above evidence, it should not be surprising to note that the revival of pagan religion in our day is accompanied by a powerful reappearance of pagan sexuality. In other words, homosexuality may be less a modern question of biological destiny or civil rights than a necessary practical outworking of age-old pagan spirituality. It is becoming more and more manifest that a particular religious commitment is always accompanied by a particular sexual theory and practice. But this is not to suggest some scarlet, conspiratorial thread connecting the dots. The connection is logical, theological, and inevitable. A monistic

view of existence will work itself out in all the domains of human life, and especially in the domain of sexuality.

What then is the relationship?

The Religious Significance of Androgyny

Writing during the “student revolution” of the 1960s, the Christian apologist, Francis Schaeffer perceptively sensed the deep religious inspiration fueling the liberation of sexuality. Specifically, he noted:

“ Some forms of homosexuality today...are a philosophic expression...a denial of the antithesis. It has led in this case to an obliteration of the distinction between man and woman. So the male and the female as complimentary partners are finished...In much of modern thinking, all antithesis and all the order of God’s creation is to be fought against-including the male-female distinctions. The pressure towards unisex is largely rooted here. But this is not an isolated problem; it is part of the world-spirit of the generation which surrounds us...the result of the death of absolutes.”

Schaeffer’s passing remark is surely correct. As we discussed above, at the heart of pagan monism is a mystical, unitive experience, a state in which distinctions disappear and opposites are joined. Androgyny, on the sexual level, reflects and confirms such an experience. Not everyone engaging in such activity thinks about the ultimate spiritual stakes. However, the link is explicitly established by influential pagan theorists in both the ancient and the modern world. Their explanations, though separated by vast distances and great periods of time, are strikingly similar and consistent, and thus independently testify to the coherent connection this paper seeks to clarify.

In the ancient Gnostic texts such connections can be detected. The Church Father Hippolytus, documents how and why the “spiritual” Gnostics did not hesitate to imitate pagan spirituality and sexuality in one form or another. He explains the Gnostic Naasene participation in the cult of the Goddess. “Because they claimed that everything is spiritual,” the Naasenes did not become *Galli* physically but rather spiritually: “they only perform the functions of those who are castrated” by abstaining from sexual intercourse. So, concludes Hippolytus, the Naasene Gnostics imitate the *Galli*, the castrated priests of Cybele. “For they urge most severely and carefully that one should abstain, as those men (the *Galli*) do, from intercourse with women; their behavior otherwise...is like that of the castrated.” The mythological story of the castration of Attis thus led the Naasenes to conclude that the image of emasculation was a symbol of salvation. Attis cut off his testicles in order to “break with the baser and material world and gain access to immortal life, where there is no longer either male or female.” These “Christian” Gnostics sought, through a deep form of spiritual androgyny, a close association with paganism’s understanding of salvation.

Of what does such “salvation” consist? The Gnostic Gospel of Truth enunciates the theory: “It is within Unity that each one will attain himself; within knowledge he will purify himself from multiplicity into Unity...” The *Gospel of Thomas* develops the practical consequences: “Simon Peter said to them: “Let Mary go away from us, for women are not worthy of life.” Jesus said: “Lo, I shall lead her, so that I may make her a male, that she too may become a living spirit, resembling you males. For every woman who makes herself a male will enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Though on the surface less radical, and thus promoted as a Gospel on a par with the four canonical Gospels, the *Gospel of Thomas* is similarly driven by the androgynous pagan ideal. This Saying 114, being the last, doubtless represents the goal of the gospel, which is promised in the first-to “not experience death.” Here, apparently, is the road to salvation—the mystical attainment of an androgynous or sexless state. Saying 114 should be understood in the light of Saying 22: “And when you make the male and the female into a single one so that the male shall not be male and the female shall not be female...then you shall enter the kingdom.” Both these sayings suggest the “neutralization” of sexuality so that the ideal for Gnostics is to become, in this life, spiritually and ritually androgynous. Thomas is not a macho attack on women. It is a rejection of creational sexuality, a radical refusal of sexual differentiation, as presented in the Genesis account.

To become a true disciple, Mary must become a liberated Gnostic, untrammelled by the sexual distinctions of the original creation. She must become autonomous, and move beyond the bondage of her sex. As a spiritual androgyne, she attains mystical union with the All.

Having already noted the alchemical goal of a mystical/*unitive hieros gamos*, it is not difficult to follow the logic of a professor at a well-respected Catholic university who lends to the mystical pursuit of the alchemists a sexual twist. Professor Frederica Halligan perceives in the alchemists’ quest for “gold” a blueprint for the planet’s future. Halligan notes that the second of the seven stages of alchemical meditation, called *solutio*, involves both a transformation of sexual energy and the destruction of the individual ego [the self]. This is a powerful mystical experience of pure monistic spirituality. For this Roman Catholic scholar, monism seems to present no problem. But the process is far from over.

The seventh stage, *conjunctio*, [“joining”] is a “new reality,” the final bringing together of all the opposites, producing “gold,” i.e., spiritual gold, i.e., “a tremendously deepened sense of the oneness of all....*Unitive* consciousness is awareness of the essential oneness with the Divine, that is, mystic consciousness....the unification of all the opposites within oneself.” Halligan’s final definition of the *conjunctio* is clear: “Beyond gender differences now, the mystics of both Eastern and Western traditions describe the bliss of abiding love.”

Mircea Eliade, both a remarkable researcher of the phenomena of pagan spirituality, as well as one of the architects of the new spirituality, explains the spiritual meaning of androgyny as “a symbolic restoration of Chaos, of the undifferentiated unity that preceded the Creation.” The androgynous being thus sums up the very goal of the mystical, monistic quest, whether ancient or modern: “in mystical love and at death one completely integrates the spirit world: all contraries are collapsed. The distinctions between the sexes are

erased: the two merge into an androgynous whole. In short, at the center one knows oneself, is known, and knows the nature of reality." Or again, according to Eliade, androgyny in many traditional religions functions as "an archaic and universal formula for the expression of wholeness, the co-existence of the contraries, or *coincidentia oppositorum*.... symboliz[ing]... perfection...[and] ultimate being....

The androgyne is thus the physical symbol of the pagan spiritual goal, which is the merging of two seemingly distinct entities, the self and God, and a mystical return to the state of godhead prior to creation. The joining of the opposites is the dissolution of creational distinctions and thus the destruction of creation's hold upon human identity. Such joining brings a "liberating" recognition that the real self is "uncreated." The solution to our angst, according to a feminist author, is healing through the sacred marriage, the *hieros gamos*. This is the marriage of the ego and the self, which gives birth to "a divine child." "A woman gives birth to herself as a divine androgynous being, autonomous, and in a state of perfection in the unity of the opposites. She is whole."

This sacred marriage expresses what occurs, in particular, on the moral plane. The pagan monist assumes guiltless responsibility for all his actions whether "good" or "evil" and thus, in an exercise of personal, autonomous power, joins the opposites of good and evil. The early American monist, Ralph Waldo Emerson welcomed this spiritual option with enthusiasm. "If I am the Devil's child, I will live then from the Devil.' No law can be sacred to me but that of my nature. Good and bad are but names very readily transferable to this or that." The deliberate act of power which defiantly declares evil good and good evil flies in the face of the Creator's designs and in so doing jumps into the waiting arms of the Tempter. One may well wonder if this joining of the opposites is a possible implication of the Serpent's word, "...knowing good and evil."

The psychoanalyst, C.G. Jung proposed a similar interpretation. Under the influence of Philemon, a familiar spirit, Jung wrote his famous "Seven Sermons to the Dead." Using colorful imagery, Jung disavows Christianity and endorses pagan spirituality. Employing the pseudonym of Basilides, a famous second century Gnostic heretic, Jung addresses the spirits of dead Crusaders who had failed to find salvation in "Jerusalem." He succeeds in converting them to the Gnostic god, Abraxas, who is "both good and evil,...a terrible hidden god that humans cannot perceive. Abraxas is behind the sun and night,...the creator and destroyer of the world, truth and evil, light and darkness,...the 'hermaphrodite of the earliest beginning,'...the operation of all the gods and devils, and is 'the world, its becoming and passing.'" Jung ends his sermon with a call to look to the god within rather than to the Christian God of the Bible. Later, he would represent this experience as a series of concentric circles within a larger circle, and for the rest of his life he "pointed to the Indian mandala (circle) as the best symbolic representation of wholeness or completeness in an individual, or as the supreme God in which all opposites are contained." In this regard, it is appropriate to recall the definition of the mystical goal believed to be in all religions, given by Yale professor, Louis Dupré, –"a state in which all distinctions disappear."

On the sexual plane, the homosexual androgyne, according to Jung, affirms his power by willingly assuming his physical proclivities and thus joining what God has put asunder. Indeed for Jung, spiritual androgyny symbolizes "the integration of the opposites or the state of the individuation of the autonomous individual."

Therefore, homosexuals are (though some unconsciously or only partially) true pagan monists, who have succeeded in translating spiritual theory into physical reality.

Jung himself suggested that homosexuality preserved an archetype of the androgynous original person. That is why homosexuals can propose themselves to society as "shamans." In the monistic tradition, the same religious claim is made for homosexuality as is made for androgyny. Since both androgyny and homosexuality function religiously in traditional paganism, they are clearly related. The same emphasis is found in Karl Heinrichs Ulrichs (1825-1895), often considered the "grandfather" of the modern "gay rights" movement. Ulrichs rejected all psychological and behavioral explanations of homosexuality and adopted a psycho-spiritual one. He believed a homosexual was a man's body inhabited by a woman's soul (vice versa for a lesbian). Notice the "spiritual" terminology. He called homosexuality a "third sex," that is, a true expression of androgyny.

The more theoretical explanation of the phenomenon finds popular expression in our contemporary culture. Recently a gay leader at a Pagan Spirit Gathering in 1985 made the spiritual claim: "We feel there is a power in our sexuality...[a] queer energy that most cultures consider magical. It is practically a requirement for certain kinds of medicine and magic." Another gay pagan confirms the spiritual dynamic: "It is simply easier to blend with a nature spirit, or the spirit of a plant or an animal, if you are not concerned with a gender-specific role." One is clearly not concerned with any of the other creational distinctions either. The separation between humans, animals and plants has been eliminated and, at that point, full-blown, monistic union ensues. "Blending" is another way of speaking of spiritual union with the All.

Eliade, in explaining the religious function of the asexual priest-shaman, true hermaphrodites, who dress and behave like women," notes that is precisely because "they combine the two cosmological planes—earth and sky—and also from the fact that they combine in their own person the feminine element (earth) and the masculine element (sky). We here have ritual androgyny, a well-known archaic formula for the...*coincidentia oppositorum*." This interpretation is confirmed via different terminology and conceptuality in the massive work on the Goddess by the Wiccan scholars, Monica Sjoo and Barbara Moor:

“ Creative women and men in all ages have found rigid heterosexuality in conflict with being fully alive and aware on all levels—sexual, psychic and spiritual [emphasis mine]...It is as if, on all levels of our being, we are split into one half, and forbidden the other. We are split against ourselves, and against the "self" in the other, by this moralistic opposition of natural polarities in the very depth of our souls.”

The physico-theological mechanism seems to function as follows: androgynous persons, whether homosexual or bi-sexual, are able to express within themselves both sexual roles and identities. In the sex act they engage both as male and female, equally as penetrator and penetrated, the "hard" and the "soft" - and thus taste in some form or other both physical and spiritual androgyny. As in classic monistic spirituality, they have, on the physical plane, joined the opposites, proving and experiencing that there are no

distinctions. Just as the distinctions inherent in heterosexuality point to the fundamental theistic notion of the Creator/creature distinction, so androgyny in its various forms eradicates distinction and elevates the spiritual blending of all things, including the idolatrous confusion of the human with the divine. This seems to be the very same logic that brings Paul to a similar conclusion already in Romans 1:18-27.

This seems to make sense theologically and theoretically. It is confirmed by contemporary gay thinkers. "Something in our gay/lesbian being as an all-encompassing existential standpoint," says J. Michael Clark, professor at Emory University and Georgian State University, and a gay spokesman, "...appears to heighten our spiritual capacities." Clark claims gays share the same sentiments as radical feminist theologians whose "religious impulses are being killed by [traditional] Judeo-Christianity..." Clark seems to be saying that the problem lies not with "mean-spirited" or "hateful" Christians, failing to be true, loving Christians. For gays the problem lies rather with the whole biblical worldview and theological paradigm. For this reason, Clark turns to Native American animism for an acceptable spiritual model. As Janie Spahr, the Presbyterian lesbian activist, stated with great candor: "Maybe we're talking about a different God."

Specifically, for Clark, the *berdache*, an androgynous American Indian shaman, born as a male but as an adult, choosing to live as a female, constitutes a desirable gay spiritual model, for the *berdache* achieves "the reunion of the cosmic, sexual and moral polarities," or the "joining of the opposites." How interesting that the *Berdaches* were known as "sacred Balancers," unifying the polarities to "nurture wholeness..." This powerful spirituality involves the denial of distinctions, and the conscious assumption of all one's contradictions and perversions. It turns out that one reigns divinely supreme over creational distortions.

We surely must conclude that sexual perversion and, in particular, the elimination of sexual distinctions, is not an incidental footnote of pagan religious history, of mere passing interest, but represents one of its fundamental ideological commitments. That the pagan priesthood would be so identified, across space and time, with the blurring of sexual identity via homosexual androgyny indicates, beyond a doubt, the enormous priority paganism has given, and continues to give, to the undermining of God-ordained monogamous heterosexuality, and the enthusiastic promotion of androgyny in its varied forms.

Conclusion

" When, during the Sixties, theologians triumphantly declared the "death of God," they fostered a rejection of the theism of the Judeo-Christian scriptures, as well as an abandonment of biblical sexuality. Theologian David Miller declared in 1974:

...the announcement of the death of God was the obituary of a useless single-minded and one-dimensional norm of a civilization that has been predominantly monotheistic, not only in its religion, but also in its politics, its history, its social order, its ethics, and its psychology. When released from the tyrannical imperialism of monotheism by the death of God, man has the opportunity of discovering new dimensions hidden in the depths of reality's history."

In this liberating list, Miller did not mention sexuality, but it is implicitly there—in the announcement, at the funeral of the God, of the rebirth of the gods and goddesses of ancient Greece and Rome. At the time, this connection was not always obvious. The “Death of God” theologians were perceived as super-rationalist liberals intent on demonstrating that twentieth century Man had “come of age,” having outgrown the need of the “God hypothesis.” It took a generation for the implications of this to dawn. Mark C. Taylor, the postmodern philosopher, sees the implications with disarming clarity: “...the death of God [is] the disappearance of self [no predetermined norms] and end of history [no meaningful events]...[it] unleashes the aberrant levity of free play...purposelessness.” He develops the implications of this new freedom: “The lawless land of erring, which is forever beyond good and evil, is the world of Dionysus, the Antichrist, who calls every wander[er] to carnival, comedy and carnality.”

During this same post-death-of-God generation, radical feminism, in an incredible show of power, made sure God would die. In 1979 Naomi Goldenberg, a leading feminist, declared, (with no apparent conscious reference to the Death of God theology, as far as I can tell): “The feminist movement in Western culture is engaged in the slow execution of Christ and Jahweh.” Carol P. Christ announced one death-dealing method to bring about the undoing of God: “...using the titles Goddess and God the Mother is probably the only way to shatter the hold of [the] idolatrous male God on the psyche.” In other words, God and sex were inextricably linked even in death. Of course, in the same way, the resurrection of the pagan gods would give new life to sexual options. Radical feminist theology was read by many unsuspecting Church pluralists as a relatively innocuous religious version of the contemporary agenda of civil rights. On the contrary, it turns out that these theologians were proponents of a deep, pagan spirituality, which had nothing to do with rationalism, and very little to do with civil rights. After *Patriarchy: Feminist Transformations of the World's Religions* looks both like the “lawless land of [pansexual] erring,” and like one more element in the progress of global syncretism. The agenda is captured in the title of a recent book on theology by a Roman Catholic scholar—*When God Becomes Goddess: The Transformation of the American Religion*. God does not have to die: he simply had to undergo a sex change. Unfortunately, he also had to change religion, and take up abode in the pagan pantheon.

At the beginning of a new millennium, we can begin to sense that such apostasy from God and from the biblical notions of gender is pagan to the core, and has produced in one generation, in “Christian” America, a torrential flood of the same spirituality and sexuality that has always characterized occult paganism. Understanding where such radical theology has always taken a society in its sexual practice will help us to see the necessarily close association between theology and sexuality, and the manner in which the one affects the other. In the last thirty years America has abandoned theism and embraced the spirituality of Eastern paganism. These same years that have produced the most radical social engineering in America's history—the deconstruction of normative biblical heterosexuality and the revival and pagan idealization of homosexual androgyny.

There is a spiritual-sexual agenda in our Jungian, post-theistic, postmodern, pro-choice, non-judgmental culture. As we naively crossed the bridge into the third millennium to the tune of Lennon's “Imagine,” full of hope for a new world “order” of unity and love, respect and democracy, we have brought across that bridge the agenda of the ideal, androgynous, sexually unfettered, New Man of pagan spirituality. At the very

moment when the New Age gurus declare the imminent arrival of the Age of Aquarius, the eighteenth century theosophist Baader's prophecy seems to be appearing—the return of the original androgyny. Might we be on the verge of witnessing the construction of an eschatological Sodom and Gomorrah, as the title of a recent pro-gay book, *Reclaiming Sodom*, suggests? The masses are rendered insensate with a constant diet of sexual degradation, while, at the same time, reassured by the spiritual and moral liberation that spiritual paganism offers. Although only the radicals may understand and believe monistic theory in its purest form, the entire society is inevitably affected. While the elite sometimes fail, as did Julian the Apostate in the fourth century A.D., in their success, they can wreak havoc on a culture. The deconstruction of the biblical God and biblical sexuality as a philosophical and ideological program is already deeply embedded in our collective unconscious. Some powerful leaders see the future as the brave new global world of sexual and spiritual pluralism, where liberty of self-expression in these areas is the essence of human progress. One could even imagine a society of pagan religious syncretism where bi-sexuality and homosexual androgyny would be the spiritual and social ideal, the sexuality of choice for those in power, while heterosexuality would be tolerated, considered inferior, and strictly controlled—for it has happened before.

Clearly God is interested in sex, or Satan would not be so passionately committed to its deconstruction. To destroy God's created structures, the Evil One rips from the body politic the sexual distinctions hard-wired into creation to recall the deep truth about existence—the absolute distinction between the Creator and creation. The attack on these structures succeeds in convincing many that they, in themselves, are a detestable oppression, the very cause of social and human dislocation. This is relatively easy to do because such structures are necessarily marred by sin. The result is dramatic. As in ancient Gnosticism, the patriarchal God of Scripture is eliminated from respectable "cutting-edge" theology, and even from polite campus speech in some evangelical schools, all in the name of Christ. Such a trade-off prevents many well-meaning Christians from seeing the essential goal of the sexual revolution as the subtle destruction of a theistic worldview. In the place of sexual differentiation, we are offered monistic, egalitarian androgyny as a physical, social and spiritual ideal. Thus many, espousing gender liberation in the name of Christ and the Gospel, only, too late, discover a culture "liberated" from the God who, in Christ, both created and redeemed the world. What is often not seen in the debate on sexuality is that we are also in the presence of two "Gospels": the one, pagan, preaches redemption as liberation from the Creator and repudiation of creation's structures; the other, Christian, proclaims redemption as reconciliation with the Creator, and the proclamation of creation's goodness. In a pagan world, a truncated Gospel of personal salvation will no longer do. Sexuality within the context of creation must be announced as an essential part of the Christian message of reconciliation with God and glad submission to his good will.

Firmly engaged on a wild path of sexual deconstruction and androgynous experimentation, our self-liberating culture is like a little child alone in a small boat on a big lake. As it giddily strikes out into the uncharted waters of the twenty-first century, lured by irrational hopes of human progress, and ignorant of the costly experiments of the pasts, our youth-obsessed culture is tragically adrift from its Christian roots and cut off from its life-sustaining creational moorings.

The theosophist Eliade, one of most [doughty](#) proponents of the “new humanism,” nevertheless felt obliged to give a serious warning before he died in 1986. In speaking about “ritual androgyny” as both a “source of power,” but also as a fearsome possibility of great loss, Eliade offered this sobering admonition:

“ Every attempt to transcend the opposites carries with it a certain danger. This is why the ideas of a coincidentia oppositorum always arouse ambivalent feelings: on the one side, man is haunted by the desire to escape from his particular situation and regain a transpersonal mode of life; on the other, he is paralyzed by the fear of losing his “identity” and “forgetting” himself.”

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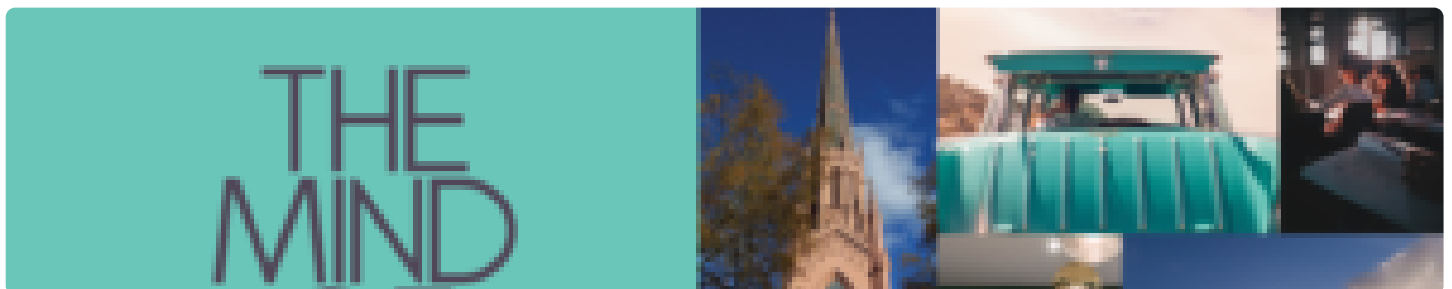
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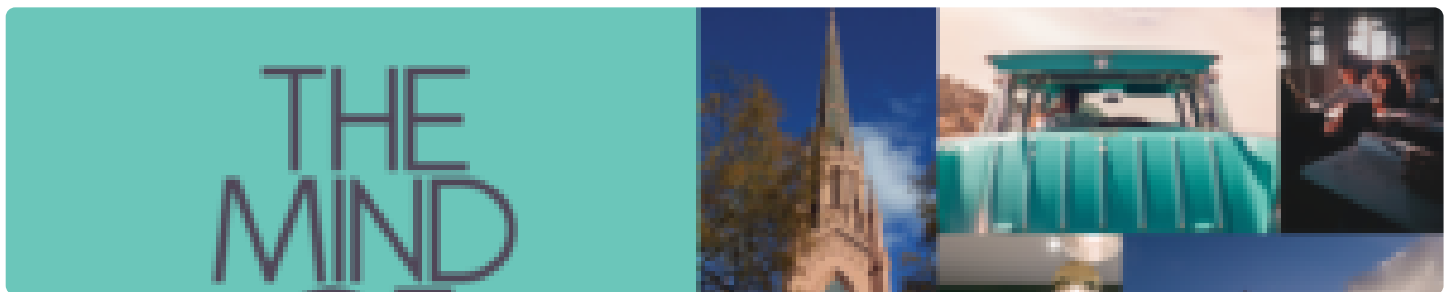
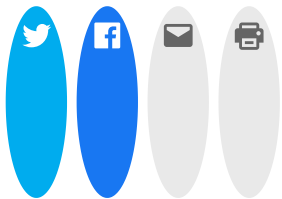


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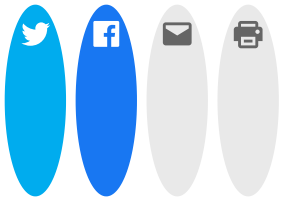


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