

The 'anatomy' of The temptation: How to address the occult among non-Christians and persons who profess Christianity in congregations



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The Christian church in its present formation needs to understand the revealed 'anatomy' of the (original) Temptation (Gn 3) in order to discern this temptation's historical trajectory through biblical and world history. This historical reflection is urgently needed if the Christian church wants to be able to equip Christians and non-Christians in Africa for an appropriate defensive response against occult temptation that is part of this 'new age spirituality'. This article wants to: (1) Teach to understand: The anatomy of 'The temptation' (from God's revelation); (2) Help to discern: Recognise the historical trajectory of 'The temptation'; (3) Prepare to be vigilant: To be defensively prepared for the current offensive.

Keywords: *Imago Dei*; Sicut Deus; Occult; Pagan; Satanic temptation; World Christianity; Southern church; Third church; Gnostic; Gnosticism.

Introduction

Our world is (again) facing a spiritual paradigm shift. Although Christianity has left behind its Christendom phase (Smith 2003:76), it is now establishing a new and rapidly growing presence in the majority world. It is the new formation of global Christianity (Jenkins 2011), or the coming of the 'Third Church' (Bühlmann 1977; 1986) and it is challenged by a 'new age and postmodern spirituality'. This presents the Christian church with a resurgent 'pagan temptation' (Jones 2015), that ultimately sends the church back to the Bible. This article is written from a reformational perspective and takes the Bible as God's revelation as its primary reference. In the third chapter of the Bible – in just a few sentences, God has revealed a Satanic strategy that radically altered the course of creation history. The issue at hand is not what has been written about this throughout history but about what was actually revealed in these verses, at the very beginning of history. Our focus therefore should not be on what others have said and are saying about this, but specifically on what God intended on telling us by revealing this to us. This biblical reference is not just a historical event to speculate about. It was a decisive moment in human history revealed to us in order to inform and warn all people in this world that their eternal destiny is linked to what happened here. The Christian church that is now being formed in our globalising world, should be awakened to the reality of this historical onslaught as it is confronting our present reality. The ultimate goal of this article is to facilitate a critical awareness, about the subtleness and severity of this satanic temptation. This should serve as an impulse directed towards the church to become defensively prepared. Understanding the bad news revealed in these verses, also serves as an introduction to the good news (gospel) that must reach every person, tribe and people group in this world.

Teaching to understand the anatomy of the temptation Creation and the Tree of Life

God not only created man in his image (*imago Dei*),¹ but he also revealed his purpose for man as the 'crown' of his creation when he placed man within a garden of abundance, called the Garden of Eden (Gn 1:28; 2:15). A very deliberate focus is placed on the centre of the garden where an important tree, called the Tree of Life, is identified (Gn 2:9). This tree is according to Calvin (1981:116), 'a symbol and memorial' of the life which man received from God (Calvin 1981:116). This tree was supposed to be the focal and focus point of man's eternal life-receiving relationship with God. Man was assured of eternal life and wellbeing in relationship with God and in God's presence. This narrative

1. Latin for 'image of God' (Gn 1:27).

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suggests that man's immortality is not an inherent human characteristic, but a gift from God, realised as access to the Tree of Life (Longman & Garland 2008:82). Living in the abundance of God's provision and partaking freely of the Tree of Life, was a given privilege for man. In this life-giving relationship with God, man received and shared in the 'goodness' of God's creation (Gn 1:31a).

The Tree of All Knowledge

A second tree at the center of the garden of Eden was also identified (Gn 2:9), but its presence and purpose was only later explained. This tree was called the Tree of All Knowledge.² In identifying this tree, a very definite and strong prohibition was communicated to man. God revealed in no uncertain terms that man should not eat of this tree. It becomes clear that this tree would not sustain man's life, but will destroy the very life that man received from God. Eating of this tree would also be an act of rebellion against God. There is nothing wrong with the tree, but according to Waltke (2001:87), this unique prohibition confronts man with the Creator's rule. Within a garden and an eternal life of abundance, accepting the all-sufficiency of a good life received from God, man should in obedience distance himself from any engagement with this tree and what it symbolises. When the presence and purpose of this tree was clarified, it confirms the reality of the presence of an opposing force in creation (only later in biblical revelation explained), that would destroy God's relationship with man if he ever seeks the fruit of this tree as the source of his life. Man does not need this – he already has everything in abundance. Nothing is kept from man. God is keeping man safe from eternal harm.

The temptation

Without prior announcement, Satan enters the revealed scenario. Other parts of biblical revelation are needed to clarify this unexpected reality. Man's relationship to God was about to be tested. It was the first task of man in the Garden of Eden. He had to defend it against an apostate of the Creator, Satan (Calvin 1981:142). The question at hand was: Will man become wise by obedience to God, or by relying on his own prudence? (Calvin 1981:118). As the drama unfolds within the Garden of Eden, God's Word reveals a very clear shift away from all the abundance of the garden and from the focus on the Tree of Life. The focus of attention deliberately shifts to the other tree that stood at the center of the garden – the Tree of All Knowledge. Satan engages with Eve (not Adam) and lures her into a discussion. The discussion is not about God's abundant provision of what He proclaims to be 'good', or the meaning and purpose of the Tree of Life, but about God's single prohibition. She is conned into a conversation about the Tree of All Knowledge. This is the beginning of Satan's temptation.³ This wrong focus introduces

2. It is also in some translations called: The Tree of Knowledge of good and evil (Gn 2:9).

3. Temptation: A strong desire to have or do something even though you know you should not. <https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/temptation>.

a deceptive discussion between Satan and Eve, wherein Satan employs a 'hermeneutic of suspicion' and uses a narrative full of half-truths to willfully question and create doubt about God's revelation to man. The temptation also facilitates a theological shift from man created in the 'image of God' (*imago Dei*), to man becoming 'like God' (*sicut Deus*).⁴ God's very clear revelation is now exposed to the 'occult'.⁵ In this way, man is lured into the 'world' wherein Satan and his fellow angels committed their apostasy. The 'craftiness' of the serpent (Satan) suggests a certain kind of wisdom. The connection between the fall and the quest of humankind for wisdom should therefore not be depicted as wicket, but rather as foolish (Longman & Garland 2008:84). Man already had everything he needed, and all the necessary 'good', but he was tempted into desiring more. Man wanted to be like God. It is a quest for wisdom, but wisdom apart from God's provision (Longman & Garland 2008:86). Arnold calls this 'self-serving knowledge' (2009:66). They were discontent with what they have – as if it was not enough.

The anatomy⁶ of 'The Temptation'

At the very beginning of biblical revelation, God reveals the very clear strategy of Satan. It not only describes his presence as God's opponent in creation (Jn 8:44; 1 Jn 3:8), but also his *modus operandi* as the tempter in the Garden of Eden and subsequently in the whole tragic history of humanity that followed the Fall. What is revealed?

The main focus of the Temptation is to lure man away from God's creative purpose of man's life, in the image of God, to a life of 'becoming God' (*sicut deus*).⁷ Satan focused on tempting man to know more than is lawful in order to become 'equal' to God (Calvin 1981:153). This was exactly where Satan positioned himself and his followers when he opposed God and became the 'ruler of this world' (Jn 12: 31). He had to convince man to consider life separate from God. He did it by:

- A deliberate refocus of man's attention away from the very clear, and all-sufficient and satisfying revelation of life received from God.
- With a 'hermeneutic of suspicion', Satan not only questions God's very clear revelation, but he also creates doubt about God's intentions.
- This ultimately leads to a satanic twisting (reinterpretation) of God's very clear revelation and his introduction of the 'occult' – some 'secret' knowledge that God is presumably and purposefully (according to Satan) withholding from man.
- The whole narrative and focus are then deliberately shifted away from God and his revelation to man and

4. Latin words meaning: 'becoming like God'.

5. Occult: From the Latin word *occultus*: Clandestine, hidden, secret – knowledge of the hidden. The word *occult* is generally associated with secret knowledge and practices dealing with the supernatural or psychic phenomena, often for the purpose of obtaining personal power (<https://christiananswers.net>).

6. Anatomy: 6: a separating or dividing into parts for detailed examination: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/anatomy>.

7. Man's ambition to become *sicut deus* (Church 1960:8).

his desires. Man's confidence in the word of God is thus weakened (Calvin 1981:147), and man's ambition and desire for 'unnecessary knowledge', a 'mistaken notion of wisdom' (Church 1960:8) is awakened.

- With this the refocusing of man's life and calling as created 'in the image of God', is now fully shifted to man's desire of 'becoming like God'. The lie is introduced and accepted by man.
- Religion as a life-giving eternal relationship with the only true God, becomes as 'spirituality' coming from the inner being of man, seeking to be a god himself. This is the spirituality proceeding from the 'corruption of man' (Nygren 1949:108–109), the source from which all human spirituality in its pagan and occult origin would eventually develop.

It is explained in Romans 1:21–23, 25:

... For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they become fools, and exchange the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things ... they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator ...

The tragic results of the first human's sinful choice are amplified and confirmed in the life of the rest of humanity being born from them. The whole history of sinful humanity from Genesis 4–9 reveals a downward spiral and ends in the tragic events of the Flood when God destroys the whole world and only saves Noah and his family (Gn 7–9). The new beginning that God affords mankind (Gn 10–11), however, ultimately lead to the confirmation of the sin of the first humans, becoming the sin of the whole of humanity at the Tower of Babel. At the Tower of Babel, the whole of humanity gathered there, chose to unite against God (Gn 11). When God dispersed this hostile humanity from the Tower of Babel, the different world cultures, (everyone at heart an enemy of God) are formed and sent to the ends of the earth. The world stage is set for the eternal God's new encounter with humanity that chose to turn their backs on him. The history of fallen humanity, where 'good is no longer rooted in what God says enhances life, but in what people think is desirable to elevate life' (Longman & Garland 2008:92), was set in motion.

Helping to discern: The historical trajectory of 'The Temptation'

In the people movement away from the Tower of Babel, the Bible reveals the beginning of the history of fallen mankind in their cultural formation, their pagan⁸ spiritual demeanor and in their eventual habitation of the known world of that time (Gn 11). It should be noted that all these nations were in their religious inclination enemies of God. The character of

8.Pagan: pagan religious beliefs and customs do not belong to any of the main religions of the world. It may come from a time before these religions. <https://www.ideoonline.com/dictionary/pagan>.

the Egyptian, Canaanite and Babylonian religions was pagan and occult. They are all part of the so-called Indo-European myth (Hiebert 1994:204) that spread in various forms from inner Asia to Europe. This myth formed the basis of the religions of Babylon, Sumer, Canaan, Greece, India and Germany. All these primitive cultures were very religious, but they were definitely not focused on the true God of Creation. That is the reason why God called Abram (Gn 12) from out of this fallen humanity. According to biblical revelation, God wanted to use him and his descendants as a chosen remnant to send them as a missionary people to reach out to the rest of humanity (Gn 12:1–3). God's specific call of Abram and his descendants had a universal (missional) purpose. God's redemptive outreach to fallen humanity would follow the contours of (fallen) human history. The first stages of this outreach are revealed in the Old and the New Testament.

Biblical history

Old Testament

The history recorded in the Bible, is God's revelation about the religious history of the ancient world. It is written from the perspective of God's redemptive focus on the entire humanity. God, however, worked in a very specific way. God chose a specific family, the family of Abram who came from a pagan background. He reveals himself to Abram as the one and only true God. In his revelation he wanted to focus Abram and his descendants exclusively on knowing and serving him alone. Their relationship with him would serve as a testimony to all the other nations of the world that the God of Abraham was the only true God. During the time of the Patriarchs, the family of Abram travelled the whole of the known world of that time and gave testimony as to who God really is.

As human history unfolds (as it is recorded in Old Testament history), the mighty empire of Egypt not only was the cradle for the formation of the people of Israel, but they also took note of who the God of Israel was when He rescued his people from the slavery they were subjected to (The book of Exodus). Israel's eventual life in the Promised Land of Canaan has put them in the very centre of the known world of their time. Everything that happened within the political and social contexts of nations and empires involved the people of Israel (Old Testament history). They were destined to be a light to all the nations (Is 49:6). History records different empires ascending and descending and influencing the people God placed in Palestine.⁹

Against this historic background of the religious diversity of cultures in a fallen world, the temptation of the other pagan religions was a constant thread to the people of Israel and God clearly forbid his chosen people to be enticed by all these false religions. The temptation for Israel was very real and time and again Israel as a nation was tempted away from

9.It is interesting to note that the fate of the people of Israel, and the territorial space occupied by them in the Middle East, is still connected even today, with the wellbeing and peace of the whole world.

God. The anatomy of the original Temptation in the Garden of Eden again became clearly visible:

- Israel was tempted to not focus on God's very clear revelation and commands to be their only source of life. He gave them his Law as the only true source of life.
- They were constantly refocusing their life away from God's will to their own needs of temporal and earthly desires. The 'occult' and pagan religious practices of the heathen peoples around them were a constant temptation.
- The focus of their life's discontent was that they did not accept the sufficiency of God's provision but that they desired more for themselves. They were not only inclined to it (in their fallen state), but also tempted to it by Satan.

They were not satisfied with living in a relationship with God alone, but they desired to make their own way. While they, as God's people, was supposed to influence the other nations, they were in turn influenced by them. The Bible reveals a constant spiritual battle – something that God has already alluded to in Genesis 3:15. The tragedy that happened in the Garden of Eden also became the tragedy of the people of Israel. Through his temptation, Satan succeeded to influence and seduce not only the nations, but even the chosen people of Israel. The deterioration of the corporate religion of the people of Israel eventually resulted in the exile. God would continue with his covenant, but by using a remnant. God's redemptive work always continues, not because of his people, but despite his people. It seems that God's way is not the way of worldly success, but the way of sacrifice – the way of the cross.

New Testament

When the New Testament opens in the so-called 'fullness of time' (Eph 1:10), we find the people of Israel confused and the leadership being addressed by Jesus Christ as children of Satan (Mt 23). Not only the world and all its people, but also the people of Israel were blinded by the temptation of Satan. This historic reality should also inform our present predicament. But everything was about to change. The central focus of God's New Testament revelation is to introduce the 'second Adam' (Rm 5; 1 Cor 15:45) and to bring the whole history of humanity to a very definite end, climax and crossroad. Jesus Christ, as his people's representative would vicariously render the obedience which Adam, as mankind's original representative failed to render (Hendriksen 1973:235). To understand the importance of what was happening, we need to focus our attention to the 'Temptation of Jesus Christ' (Mt 4; Mk 1; Lk 4). The historic enmity between the 'seed of the woman' and the 'seed of Satan' (Gn 3:15) was about to culminate in the final battle for humanity. Satan as the 'tempter' (Mt 3:4), engages Jesus Christ. Satan is focused primarily, as he was since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, on keeping Jesus Christ from accomplishing his task as Messiah and Saviour. At the very beginning of Jesus Christ's ministry as the Messiah, just after He was baptised, Jesus was led to the desert to be tempted by Satan. The beginning of God's

recreation in Jesus Christ, takes us back to the very beginning of creation. The anatomy of the original Temptation is once again visible. This time the temptation is not within a garden of abundance, but in a desolate desert:

- As he did with the first humans in Genesis, Satan tries to distract Jesus' focus from God's purpose and provision for his life. He tries to focus Jesus' attention to his dire hunger after spending 40 days in the desert without food. Jesus is tempted by Satan not to focus on God, but to focus on his own needs and desires.
- Satan starts a very deceptive discussion employing a 'hermeneutic of suspicion' to try and cast doubt on the revelation of God's providence and intentions. Satan is (again) misquoting Scripture to distort God's clearly revealed plan and promises.
- Jesus is then encouraged by Satan to take matters in his own hand (Hendriksen 1973:226) and accomplish his mission,¹⁰ by choosing a much easier path of self-determination to receive all the kingdoms of the world¹¹ in another way. This path, however, would entail bowing before Satan himself.

Jesus' response to this satanic attack was to focus on God alone, to be true to God's revelation in everything and to rely on God alone and not be deceived in any way to focus on his own desires and will (Heb 2:18). Jesus Christ not only overcame the temptation, but He also became the second Adam, as well as the 'Tree of Life'. The first Adam must be considered as the head of fallen humanity. Christ became the head of redeemed humanity (Hendriksen 1980:190). He clearly showed that the only true way is the way of the cross. (Ac 17:30–31). He became the only way back to God, through his all-sufficient and obedient sacrifice to God. In Him alone a new humanity will be recreated. The cross of Jesus was the climatic experience of the cosmic conflict (Khathide 2000:87). Everything has now changed. Jesus received all power (Mt 28:19) and the whole world needs to know this. The only true God is still focused on all of humanity with a global redemptive purpose.

The rest of the New Testament reveals the reality of a continued struggle and battle with Satan. Although defeated by Jesus Christ, Satan is now focused on the church of Jesus Christ that is still living in this world (Rv 12; 1 Pt 5:8). He could not keep Jesus Christ from finishing his redemptive work on the cross, but he is determined to keep the church from proclaiming this message of victory to the whole world. Satan is a formidable adversary (Clowney 1988:216) and the Christian church of the last days is now his target. This is the reason why the Christian church, living in these last days, needs to be awoken to the satanic onslaught in all its subtle and severe aggression.

The New Testament is very clear in revealing the reality of the satanic battle focused on the church of Jesus Christ (Eph 6;

10.The Temptation: To try and obtain the crown without enduring the cross (Hendriksen 1973:233).

11.Specifically, the kingdom of the 'occult' is where Satan reigns.

Rv 12–13). There is a vigorous onslaught through active persecution as well as false teaching. The false teaching is the subtler and definitely the more dangerous strategy of Satan. In this onslaught Satan stays true to his ways, through employing the same strategy of temptation he originally started with in the Garden of Eden.

The early church¹²

The first attack of the occult on the church was known as Gnosticism (Ouweneel 1988:366). Until the beginning of the 20th century, Gnosticism was regarded as a Christian heresy. New evidence, however, suggests that it may have existed as an independent pagan religion that did not come out of, but penetrated Christianity. Lasch (1992:27) supports this view, by presenting Gnosticism as a religion in its own right. He also confirms that it is not simply a heretical offshoot of Christianity. There is a multitude of studies that attributes this 'false religion' to the person of Simon Marcus (Ac 8:4–25),¹³ who was challenged by some of the apostles in Samaria. It seems as if he had a considerable presence and impact in the life of the early church. Several of the early church fathers,¹⁴ for instance Irenaeus,¹⁵ specifically warned against the heresies coming from the Gnostics. Johnson (2004) convincingly gives a thorough overview of the challenges that Gnosticism posed to the early church. The very real pagan temptation coming from Gnosticism, corresponds with the anatomy of 'The original Temptation':

- The early church was confronted with so-called 'new revelations' coming from Jesus. These 'new revelations' undermined the authority of the apostolic writings that was already widely used in the churches at that time.
- The 'new revelations' presented to the early church, suggested an alternative version of Christianity and a superior, 'secret', reality based on this new revelation.
- Gnosticism was negative towards the established construct of Christian identity and employed a 'hermeneutic of suspicion' that proposed an 'inward spirituality', or 'higher wisdom', a 'divine spark from within' that would lead the 'enlightened' to true salvation (Johnson 2004:30).
- It is also very interesting to note the role of a female figure (Sophia),¹⁶ that would play a significant role in the Gnostic teachings and the occult.

Gnosticism presented a formidable challenge to the early church. The early church, by way of the early church fathers, responded and was successful in countering this occult attack

12. The most serious dogmatic and political conflicts of the early history of Christianity, took place in this period. Heresy preceded orthodoxy (Wackernagel 1999:137).

13. Simon of Samaria – probably a prophet of the Samaritans. He is also called the father of simony (Simony is a sin of attempting to profit from the selling of sacred objects, benefices).

14. Simon Marcus may have left behind a Gnostic school that was still active when the book of Acts was written. Hippoleetus (100–65 a.d.) compares him to the 'grave Heraclitus', and Eusebius of Caesarea (265–340 a.d.) also sees him as the first fomenter of every heresy (Wackernagel 1999:134).

15. Irenaeus of Lyons, in his *Adversus haereses* ('Against heretics') calls Simon Marcus the 'father of all heresies'.

16. Feature of Gnosticism – Sacred feminine.

by emphasising the Creed, the Scriptural Canon and the authority of the Apostles. Johnson identifies this defensive strategic response of Christian self-definition as the correct defense against the occult onslaught from the second to the 20th century (Johnson 2004:28).

Human history

Indo-European history

From the decline of the Roman Empire to the rise of Christianity, various pagan religions flourished throughout Europe. The Vandals, Goths and Huns were the so-called barbarian tribes that eventually overran the Roman Empire and destroyed their well-developed culture. Little attention is given to the culture of these people, or the primitive religions which, like those of the Greeks and Romans, included magical acts performed by priestesses (Campbell 1978:60). It is clearly stated by Campbell that European Christianity existed for centuries side by side with paganism (Campbell 1978:61). These Indo-European religions never went away, but was an unknown and hardly verified pagan backdrop and reality for the historical development of Christianity during the Middle Ages.

Middle Ages (also called the Dark Ages)

The Middle Ages presents a full 1000 years of European history, and is sometimes also called the Dark Ages. For many years, this medieval cultural period of world history was also optimistically referred to as the 'golden age of Christianity'. This romantic image is, however, now being challenged by prominent scholars. Gabriel de Bras (Van Engen 1986:521) studied the origins and pace of Europe's 'de-Christianisation' and concluded that medieval Europe was in reality never all that thoroughly Christianised as previously anticipated. Other renowned scholars are now also speaking about the 'myth of the Christian Middle Ages' and is now, according to Van Engen (1986:531), referring to this period as a great 'age of folklore'. Although the Roman church succeeded to overpower pagans who conformed outwardly to the norms of Christianity, many pagans continued to practice their own religion secretly (Campbell 1978:62). Within the seemingly Christian world, the 'Old Religion' was still very much alive. It was during this time that the Roman Catholic church, because of the reality of pagan religions with men and women involved in occult practices, engaged in a systematic persecution of 'witches'. Witchcraft was viewed as a competing alternative to the dominant religious belief of Catholicism (Racaneli 2014). The Roman Inquisition was established in order to eliminate acts of heresy and rising Counter-Catholic influences, such as Protestantism as well as mystic (pagan and occult) movements. It can be concluded that Christianity was not so strong during these ages as was previously anticipated, and that pagan religions survived and even flourished during this time. It seems as if it was only a nominal Christianity that was visible during these years. This would explain the rapid de-Christianisation of Europe experienced in the time following the Middle Ages.

Enlightenment

During the 17th and 18th century, the entire outlook of the seemingly 'Christian world' transformed rapidly. With the rise of nationalistic movements which focused on individual rights, personal freedom was propagated. It was a time of change – a Renaissance.¹⁷ It was also a time of exploration that led to the discovery of new worlds and previously unknown cultures. It was a time of new scientific discoveries and inventions. It was also a time of the intelligent mind wherein nature and the world were explored in an objective and rational manner. The Enlightenment was an intellectual movement wherein the use of reason, the scientific method, and progress gained momentum. Enlightenment thinkers believed they could help create better societies and better people. This freedom of thought led to the disenchantment with the old civilisation and it also posed a challenge to the established order. A new European culture and civilisation struck root wherein rational thought and openness to other ideas and new perspectives surfaced. It had a very big impact on the Christian religion. Religion was privatised to the individual's personal sphere and critical notes were written about the biblical texts. The authority of biblical revelation was questioned. It was a time of significant changes within the European culture – a paradigm shift. The world was in a grip of radical changes and the Christian church was (again) challenged to its core.

Regarding Christianity and specifically theology, Pocock (2008:84) endeavours to define the term Enlightenment in order to describe how the religious narrative changed during this time. He wanted to understand the paradigm shift that happened. According to him, a moral philosophy eventually became a political economy. He describes the process wherein theology and revelation were replaced and converted into its own history as a 'human endeavour' through a history of theology in a language world. In this way, Christ and his nature were reduced to the history of thought, or rather discourse about him. It had a very profound influence on the Christian faith.

Why did it have such a tremendous influence on the Christian faith? It is here where the Gnostic assault on Christianity again (re)surfaced. The Enlightenment philosophy motivated every individual believer to discover what really is 'inside themselves'. They taught that all persons are in effect more important than they thought they are. It was a very appealing myth that was also worked out extensively by Jung and Freud.¹⁸ The Enlightenment philosophy was adamant that people should forget about God and any idea of revelation. This philosophy encouraged people to actively seek and find their inner spiritual reality. This Gnostic resurgence was not about religion or redemption, but all about self-discovery. It was not focusing on forgiveness of sin, but on self-help – to

17.The activity, spirit, or time of the great revival of art, literature and learning in Europe beginning in the 14th century and extending to the 17th century, marked the transition from the medieval to the modern world. <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/renaissance>.

18.Carl Jung was an early supporter of Freud because of their shared interest in the unconscious. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/carl-jung.html>.

discover the 'divinity' in yourself. Note again the anatomy of the original Temptation.

The dominance of Western culture and the death of Christendom

At this stage, the Christian church had a very privileged position within the developing Western culture. For centuries, Western civilisation considered itself formally and officially Christian and Christendom was the dominant force within the unfolding Western culture for about 1500 years. It was, however, the beginning of the end of an era. The culture that nurtured the Christian faith for many centuries, started to suffocate it. Christianity was pushed to the margins of culture, and no longer had a place of prominence in the nations and societies that made up Western culture. The Renaissance distorted the Reformation worldview by reintroducing a Neoplatonic dualism into Western thought (Hiebert 1994:219). By the 20th century, there was little room for God in the Western worldview. According to Hiebert, personal wealth, comfort and prosperity became the central goals of Western culture, and science was regarded as the means to achieve it (Hiebert 1994:221). The individual 'self' became god and self-fulfillment their salvation (Hiebert 1994:222). Christendom was dying because the modernist worldview replaced God. The Indo-European cosmic myth started to resurface (Hiebert 1994:207), and it was hailed as the coming of the New Age. According to Ouweneel (1988:397), it was in reality only ancient Gnosticism in a new jacket.

The dawn of the 'New Age'

Western culture was prone for an occult and Gnostic invasion,¹⁹ because the spirit world is, according to Khathide (2000:79), the one area that has been regrettably overlooked by traditional Christian theology. It was part and parcel of the influence of the Enlightenment and what this philosophy did to the Christian church. The cognitive, analytical and critical approach to reality that came with the Enlightenment, has resulted in theological impotence within the Western culture (Mbiti 1976). According to Pomerville, Western theologians failed to provide a biblical worldview regarding the spirit world (Khathide 2000:81). The age of Pisces,²⁰ (traditionally associated with Christianity) was passing. According to Jones (2015), the following was happening:

The age wherein manhood dominated was about to be replaced by the age of Aquarius. This is the new age that will be feminine, and holistic. It is the age wherein a culture that was against spirituality is now driving it. This culture is not prone to limit spirituality, but to change (destroy) religion.

The world is again set up for the clash of two opposing cosmologies. It is the same clash of the original cosmologies that was represented at the original Temptation in the Garden of Eden.

19.Discovery of Nag Hammadi text, 1945; Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code*; New interest in the occult coming into Western culture; Also see the book by Peter Jones (1992).

20.A pagan description of a certain age. According to Woods (1993:186), it was Jung's observation that the astrological 'Age of Pisces' will give way to the 'Age of Aquarius' – a wholly pre-Christian notion based on the discovery of the precession of the Equinoxes by Hipparchus in 127 b.c.

Hiebert (1994:203) is of the opinion that this new spiritual awakening must be both welcomed and tested. It must be welcomed, because the Christendom church too often in the past has bought into the worldview of a secular science that denies the reality of sin and spiritual realities. This new spiritual awakening must also be tested because we are again in danger of returning to the views of our pagan past. He also confirms the fact of the church's ignorance that these values that are now dominating our culture, have their roots in ancient Indo-European beliefs, and that they now form the dominant religion of our society (Hiebert 1994:214). The Christian church is (again) confronted with a pagan temptation.

Preparation to become vigilant during its current onslaught

Our need today

The Christian church need to be defensively prepared for the current satanic onslaught. We urgently need biblical teachings – not the reinforcement of a pagan religious worldview.²¹ Bauer (2016:1) fear, that our unwillingness to talk about witchcraft issues, our ignorance concerning the protecting power of God, our embrace of a powerless (nominal IWF) Christianity, the church's weak grounding in the Word of God, permitted witchcraft and occult practices to exist within our world. He is asking a very important question and presupposes a negative answer: *What has the church done to prepare its members for this onslaught?* (Bauer 2016:9). The church should learn from history. Satan stays true to his own ways of manipulating the people of the world. This must be the focus of the newly formed global Christian church's research, mutual discussions and training.

Globalisation has intermingled people from traditionally animistic societies and those of modern and postmodern societies (Doss 2015:112). Doss is convinced and states it as a fact, that when missionaries, having a strictly scientific worldview, encounter peoples with an animistic worldview, they are ineffective in addressing issues of spiritual warfare (Doss 2015:111). The situation must be urgently rectified.

The realities of Africa today

Witchcraft and the occult were previously, because of a lack of a clear and well-defined theological framework, described by Western missionaries as only superstition that would eventually be dispelled by modernity (Onyinab 1937:331). A dramatic rise in the occurrence of occult activity and witchcraft violence in South Africa (Kohnert 2003:28), added more social stress on communities and it was eventually declared a national priority crime in South Africa in 1999. The occult is now so ingrained into the life of communities, that there is even some reference made to 'occult economies'.²² It is an integral part of the daily life in most African societies and even

21. We are today confronted with Gnosticism, that Dillon calls 'religious fiction' (Dillon 2016:35).

22. ... The deployment, real or imagined of magical means for material ends ...' (Comaroff quoted Kohnert 2003:28).

influences people's daily decision making. Onyinab (1937:332) states that it is domesticated in personal violence and even involved in the political arena. There is a general consensus among people from all levels of society, who are convinced that witchcraft constitutes a real threat to society in Africa (Kohnert 2003:28). A suggestion coming from new charismatic churches, of describing the phenomenon as 'witchdemonology'²³ (Onyinab 1937:335), focuses on the themes of 'ancestral curses', 'territorial spirits' and 'spiritual warfare'. Kohnert (2003:345) is convinced that it is unable to bring the African out of fear of witchcraft and other supernatural powers, because it is labelled as an 'incomplete ministry'. A very timely warning is also brought by Musopule. In the process of urgent and needed theological contextualisation, the Christian church must be very careful for an 'extreme theological syncretism', that he calls 'Christo-Paganism' (Musopule 1993:348).

This highlights the urgent need for real biblical training and teaching on this subject. Kohnert (2003:30) is, however, of the opinion that the current 'witch craze' coming from new charismatic churches, are not only confusing, but that there are competing witchcraft theories being propagated (Kohnert 2003:40), and this situation does not bring calm to societies but increases the social stress experienced.

Conclusion

In her book, *The great emergence* (Tickle 2012), author and religion professor Phyllis Tickle used the analogy of 'The 500-year rummage sale' to describe religious change over the years. Tickle said that historically, the church 'cleans house' roughly every 500 years, holding, what she calls a 'giant rummage sale', deciding what to dispose and what to keep, making room for new things. It seems that the so-called new age spirituality resurfaces every time that the world faces a paradigm shift. It must be concluded that it is happening again.

Woods (1993:185) confirms this when he states that the belief in the coming of a 'New Age' appears at 'particular moments of crisis, certain turning points in religious consciousness, as well as at the end of centuries and millennia'. Christianity has now left behind its Christendom phase (Smith 2003:76) and Christendom is dead. The Christian church is now growing outside of the Western world and we are seeing a new Christian resurgence within the Third (majority) World. It is called the formation of World Christianity – the growth of the Third Church. The relevant question of our time is: How can Christianity be saved from the suffocating grip of Western culture, as well as be vigilant in defending itself against this pagan onslaught that is coming from Western culture?

There is an urgent need for an appropriate response. What is needed is biblical teachings, not the reinforcement of a pagan religious worldview (Hiebert 1994:215). Can it

23. It is used to describe the beliefs and practices of deliverance ministry. It assumes a synthesis of the practices and beliefs of both African traditional religion and Christianity (Kohnert 2003:336).

perhaps come from Africa? Yes, it should! We should take note that what the early church fathers learned about Gnosticism, was largely from African sources (Oden 2007:47). It is also very clear that the reflections of the early church father Irenaeus, on the gospel in a multicultural world, prove particularly relevant to the current situation of the global church (Rodriguez 2016:133). Blyden demands that Africa is in need of Christianity, but a Christianity without the European distortions of it: He calls for a Bible without note or comment (Bediako 1995:12). Africa (again) needs a biblical response to this (re)surging gnostic and pagan temptation.

The contemporary confidence in the secular destiny of the West as an elevated stage of human civilization is matched by the contrasting evidence of the resurgence of Christianity as a world religion: they are like two streams flowing in opposite directions. (Sanneh 2003:3)

In this regard, the Western church does not have a lot to share with the Southern church. The Western church, still trying to get to grips with the death of Christendom, is itself in need of (re)discovering the biblical cosmology that is needed to face this (new) Gnostic and pagan attack. The remnant of the Western church needs to urgently engage the Southern church in this urgent endeavor.

The Christian church in its new global formation, needs to be reminded of the original biblical cosmology that was distorted at the time of the original Temptation.

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