

*This article examines one major snare in today's spiritual landscape that is often mistaken for true revival.*

## **Quenching the Spirit's Fire— *The Second Gnostic Assault***

by  
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in Church History

**Indiana Jones... Joseph Campbell... M. Scott Peck... What do they all have in common? And what do they have to do with revival? Read on!**

Studying the long and sometimes sordid history of the Christian Church can yield rich wisdom for 20th-century Christians.

Take the Gnostic assault on the early church, for instance. Applying its subtle but vital lessons can safeguard revival in our own age.

### **What is Gnosticism?**

Common in Christianity's first centuries, Gnosticism (*NOS-ti-cism*) was an occult amalgamation of pagan philosophy and eastern mystery religions. It encompassed many forms and religions, but basically it taught that the path to God was by **secret knowledge** from an enlightened teacher, not by faith in Jesus Christ. It denied Christ's incarnation, resurrection, atonement, and deity, and its "god" was much like "The Force" of *Star Wars*—an impersonal energy.

Colossians and I John both warn against and refute it. An early Church leader, Irenaeus, wrote a book on this heresy.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of these warnings, Gnosticism made great inroads into the Church because of its appeal to elitism. It taught that Christians could go to a higher level through secret knowledge ("*Gnostic*" comes from the Greek word for knowledge). This teaching created artificial separations in the Church and encouraged pride, asceticism, and at the same time immorality and occult practices.

### **A Deadly Assault**

*Spiritual and philosophical ideas can destroy the soul.*

While the ancient Church repudiated Gnosticism's spiritual aspect (i.e., angel worship), it overlooked some of its harmful ideas—i.e., that the body and its functions were evil and therefore being celibate was "higher" Christian life and being married with a family was "lower".

Although contrary to both the Old and New Testaments, this teaching was so common among the early Greco-Roman culture that even wise, godly leaders

like St. Augustine accepted it. *Neo-Platonism*, as it was called, appeared so close to some Christian teaching that it flourished within and damaged the Church for over 1,500 years.

"Well," you might be saying to yourself, "that's a nice bit of ancient history, but we don't have trouble with Gnosticism in the church today!"

**So let's look at the second major Gnostic assault. It's vital to recognize it if we hope to have a pure revival.**

### **Psychological Gnosticism**

Someone once remarked that if a medicine man dressed in feathers and beads walked into a modern church, he'd be rejected (*debatable these days*), but dressed in scientist's garb, he would be warmly received. This deception is at work today.

Gnosticism continued for centuries, but in our day it was given a tremendous boost by **Sigmund Freud** and his heirs.

Although Freud was an atheist who opposed all religion, his methods and philosophy are actually based on a Jewish Gnostic mysticism rooted in the Cabala.<sup>2</sup>

Through these methods, he unleashed in a "scientific" dress the old heretical idea of **special hidden knowledge**. This time, however, the knowledge is supposedly hidden **inside the unconscious mind and available only to those who, like the initiates of first century mystery religions, pursue a special initiation**—i.e., the convoluted path of psychoanalysis and other such therapies.

Freud's influence on the contemporary Church has been very powerful. But a veritable tidal wave is flooding it through the work of **Carl G. Jung**.<sup>3</sup>

A Swiss psychiatrist, early disciple of Freud, and practicing occultist, Jung was more than willing to talk about religion—but he brought all religions, *including Christianity*, into his **Gnostic system**. In fact, Jung knew and admitted that his psychology was an "*essentially Gnostic discipline of transformation in contemporary guise*."<sup>4</sup>

Jung's careful camouflage of religious and philosophical ideas as psychological science is also a major root of modern New Age thought.

Popular Jungian concepts in today's church include typology (big in psychological testing, i.e., Meyers-Briggs Inventory), the *inner child*, and the technique of guided imagery or visualization. The Jungian idea that spiritual experience can be separated from religious truth is often seen in Alcoholics Anonymous and other recovery groups.

### **Other Modern Gnostics**

Jung's ideas also live on in public figures like **Joseph Campbell**, whose mini-series with **Bill Moyer** on National Public Television was the most popular in its history; **M. Scott Peck** who teaches that *our unconscious is God* in his book, *The Road Less Traveled*; and inner healing teachers like **Agnes Sanford**.

Though Freud and Jung are obvious Gnostic teachers, their varied descendents in the mental health field, both outside and inside the church, have created a psychological society steeped in the idea that all people (both unsaved and born again) are controlled and enslaved by an "all-powerful" unconscious mind, shaped by early childhood traumas and experiences. They preach transformation by special knowledge—not by Jesus Christ and Scripture. Compare Romans 6 and Galatians 5 with pop psychology—they don't fit.

### **Gnosticism and True Revival**

*How does this Gnostic "Trojan Horse" in the Church affect God's people? And how is revival shaped and hindered by these teachings?*

Like the Christians of the early Church, we are saturated with the thinking of our age. It shapes our daily lives and the way we view our life, the world—and revival.

Past great Protestant revivals have always been based on common acceptance of Biblical truth. When doctrines become Biblical—that is, based in truth—the Holy Spirit poured out becomes oil in the lamp of the Church, oil that can be ignited by the Spirit's fire. False ideas, however, quench that fire.

Gnostic teachings pervade today's Church like a hidden virus, both *preventing* revival and *distorting* its effects.

**Let us pray to become good workmen of God's Word written, able to look afresh on its liberating power, to cut through this age's thinking with its wisdom, and measure all teaching by it. Pray for the renewal of Christian minds, especially those in leadership, and for the Word's dividing power to expose and cut false teachings from our midst.**

***"But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ."  
2 Corinthians 11:3***

***"Do not be conformed to the world but be transformed by the***

***renewing of your minds."***  
***Romans 12:1***

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**FOOTNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Irenaeus of Lyon, On Heresies.

<sup>2</sup> Bakan, David. Sigmund Freud and the Jewish Mystical Tradition (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Co., Inc., 1958), pp. 246-268. The Kabbala is an ancient form of Jewish mysticism.

<sup>3</sup> For an in-depth analysis of Jung's psychology in the Christian Church, as well as his role as the father of today's New Age movement, see **The Glittering Web: A Survey of the Occult/New Age Movement** by Richard and Linda Nathan, pp. 16-21. This booklet may be ordered for \$7 by writing Logos Word Designs, Inc., P.O. Box 735, Maple Falls, WA 98266-0735. The authors spent many years studying and practicing Jungian psychology before becoming Christians.

<sup>4</sup> Hoeller, Steven, The Gnostic Jung and the Seven Sermons to the Dead. (A Quest book, The Theosophical Publishing House, 1982), pp. 25-26.

**NOTE: For an excellent in-depth study of Jung as a Gnostic by a scholarly non-Christian, see The Jung Cult by Richard Noll (New York: Princeton University Press, 1994), Lecturer in the History of Science at Harvard University, where he was formerly a postdoctoral fellow.**

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