



Forcing Change

March 2010

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The Rise of the Goddess

By Carl Teichrib (www.forcingchange.org)

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In a recent online article in the *Midwest Conservative Journal*, it was announced that members of the Mother Grove Goddess Temple would celebrate a spring equinox ritual in the parish hall of the Episcopal Cathedral of All Souls, located in Biltmore Village. Byron Ballard, a member of the Goddess Temple, explained the goal of the Goddess Temple.

"Its goal is to create a permanent sanctuary, where people of all faith traditions may openly and safely celebrate the divine feminine, the goddess." (MCJ, March 22, 2010)

According to the MCJ, "The celebration will consist of raising a circle, singing, 'whistling up the wind' and flying prayers written on paper airplanes... a joyful express of the beginning of spring and coming together as a community."

Goddess spirituality is rampant. From the movie *Avatar* to the halls of churches, the rise of goddess spirituality is evident throughout the Western world. And it's amazing how this goddess concept has historically played into our society's framework; just travel across the United States and keep your eyes open. From the Statue of Liberty to the Black Veiled Isis statute at the Herbert Hoover Library in Iowa, statues and images of the goddess dot America's landscape.

Far too long Christians have ignored the influence of goddess spirituality; now, Christians are finding themselves conforming to pagan practices in the name of religious tolerance. Concepts of the goddess are no longer rare in Christian circles. Therefore, it's time we wrestle with the rise of the goddess.

This edition of *Forcing Change* tackles the issue of goddess spirituality.

FC



Carl Teichrib, Chief Editor

Our Father in Heaven or Our Mother the Earth?

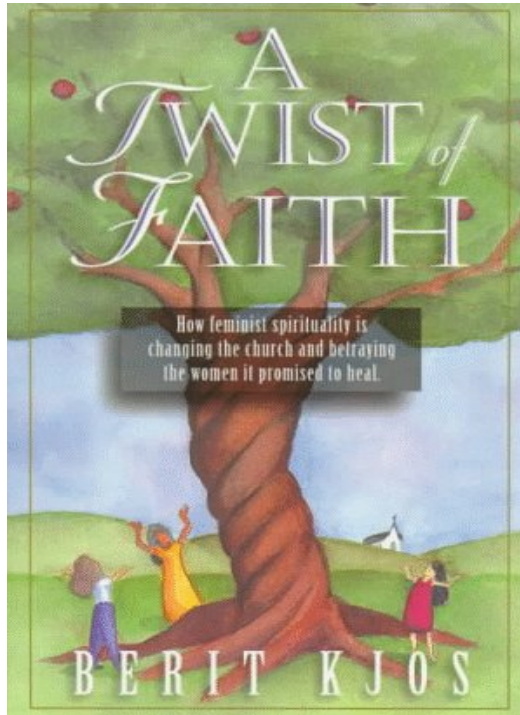
By Berit Kjos (www.crossroad.to)

Editor's Note: The following article is an excerpt from Berit Kjos' excellent book, *A Twist of Faith*. This article, and her book, demonstrates the impact of goddess spirituality on individuals and within society – it's an important window into the thinking and religious motivations behind a powerful and growing spiritual trend.

Peggy's struggles seemed endless. She wanted to be close to God, but she rarely felt His presence. She wanted her teenage son to love Him, but the occult posters in his room became daily reminders of unanswered prayer. She joined a Christian ministry, but satisfying fellowship with God kept eluding her. Eventually she left the ministry to return to college.

She called me a few years later. She had begun to find herself, she said. Her search had led her beyond the familiar voices that had provided "pat answers" to her spiritual questions. The Biblical God no longer seemed either relevant or benevolent, but a college teacher had been helpful in her journey toward self-discovery. This teacher-counselor called herself a witch -- one who believes in the power of magic formulas and rituals to invoke power from spiritual forces.

Some years passed. When Peggy called again, she had left her hus-



band and moved away. "I had to find me," she explained. "My spiritual journey has opened my eyes to a whole new paradigm"

"A new paradigm?"

"Yes. A brand new way of seeing God and myself -- and everything else. It's like being born again."

"Who is Jesus Christ to you now?" I asked.

"He is a symbol of redemption," she answered. "But I haven't rejected the Bible. I'm only trying to make my spiritual experience my own. I have to hear my own voice and not let someone else choose for me. Meanwhile, I'm willing to live with confusion and mystery. I feel like I'm in God's hands whether God is He, She, or It."

Can you identify with Peggy? Or do you have friends on similar journeys? Like millions of other seekers, Peggy longs for practical spirituality,

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a sense of identity, a community of like-minded seekers, and a God she can *feel*. She remembers meaningful Bible verses, but they have lost their appeal as guidelines. Somehow the Bible no longer fits her thinking or her personal wants.

She wonders why God isn't more tolerant and broad-minded. After all, He is the God of love, isn't He? Maybe a feminine deity would be more compassionate, understanding, and relevant to women. Perhaps it's time to move beyond the old boundaries of Biblical truth into the boundless realms of dreams, visions, and self-discovery?

Multitudes have. What used to be sparsely traveled sideroads to New Age experiences have become cultural freeways to self-made spirituality. Masses of church women drift onto these mystical superhighways where they adapt their former beliefs to today's more "inclusive" views. After all, they are told, peace in a pluralistic world demands a more open-minded look at *all* religions and cultures.

Those who agree can find countless paths to self-discovery and personal empowerment through books, magazines, and new kinds of women's group. They meet at the YWCA, in bookstores, in traditional churches, at retreat centers, living rooms . . . anywhere. Here, strange new words and practices such as "enneagrams," labyrinths, Sophia Circles, and "critical mass" -- offer modern formulas for spiritual transformation. Therapists, facilitators and spiritual directors promise "safe places" where seekers can discover *their own* truth, learn new rituals, affirm each other's experiences, and free themselves from old "boxes" and boundaries.

Perhaps you are part of such a group. You may have friends or relatives who are exploring these new paths. Or you may be among those who wonder how those weird, mystical activities could possibly touch *your* life.

Unlike the women seeking truth in pagan circles, you may know your destination and feel no need for spiritual alternatives. You're safe in your family, in your church, and among your personal

friends.

Are you sure? This new spiritual movement is transforming our churches as well as our culture. It touches every family that reads newspapers, watches television, and sends children to community schools. It is fast driving our society beyond Christianity, beyond humanism -- even beyond relativism -- toward new global beliefs and values. No one is immune to its subtle pressures and silent promptings. That it parallels other social changes and global movements only speeds the transformation. Yet, most Christians -- like the proverbial frog -- have barely noticed.

This feminist movement demands new deities or, at least, a rethinking of the old ones. So the search for a "more relevant" religion calls for new visions of God: images that trade holiness for tolerance, the heavenly for the earthly, and the God who is *above us* for a god who is *us*.

The most seductive images are feminine. They may look like postcard angels, fairy godmothers, Greek earth goddesses, radiant New Age priestesses, or even a mythical Mary, but they all promise unconditional love, peace, power and personal transcendence. To many, they seem too good to refuse.

The Seductive Masks of Feminine Gods

You probably wouldn't expect to find goddesses in a conservative farming community in North Dakota. I didn't. But one day when visiting my husband's rural hometown, a neighbor told us that a new bookstore had just opened in the parsonage of the old Lutheran Church. "You should go see it," she urged.

I agreed, so I drove to a stately white church, walked to the parsonage next door, and rang the bell. The pastor's wife opened the door and led me into a large room she had changed into a bookstore, leaving me to browse. Scanning the shelves along the walls, I noticed familiar authors such as Lynn Andrews who freely blends witchcraft with



Native American rituals, New Age self-empowerment, and other occult traditions to form *her own* spirituality.

Among the multicultural books in the children's section, one caught my attention. Called *Many Faces of the Great Goddess*, it was a "coloring book for all ages." Page after page sported voluptuous drawings of famed goddesses. Nude, bare-breasted, pregnant, or draped in serpents, they would surely open the minds of young artists to the lure of "sacred" sex and ancient myths.

Driving home, I pondered today's fast-spreading shift from Christianity to paganism. Apparently, myths and spiritualized sensuality sound good to those who seek new revelations and "higher" truths. Many of the modern myths picture deities that fit somewhere between a feminine version of God and the timeless goddesses pictured in earth-centered stories and cultures. Yet, each can be tailor-made to fit the diverse tastes and demands of today's searching women

- **Angels.** Terry wears an angel pin on her jacket. She believes that today's popular angels offer all kinds of personal help, guidance and encouragement. While God seems distant and impersonal to her, she counts on her personal angel to help and love her. She showed me a set of angel cards on a rack in her gift store. "May this Guardian Angel... give you hope and strength to meet each new tomorrow," suggested a sympathy card, complete with a tiny golden angel pin.

- **Sophia.** "Sophia, Creator God, let your milk and honey flow... Shower us with your love..." chanted more than 2000 women gathered at the 1993 Re-Imagining Conference in Minnesota. "We celebrate sensual life you give us... We celebrate our bodiliness... the sensations of pleasure, our oneness with earth and water," continued one of the leaders. Representing main-line denomination, the women had come from the Presbyterian Church USA (about 400), the United Methodist Church (about 400), the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (313), the United Church of Christ (144), and Baptist, Episcopal, Church of the Brethren churches about (150). About 230 were Roman Catholics. To most of these worshippers, Sophia symbolized inner wisdom and "the feminine image of the Divine." Playful, permissive, and sensuous, she has "become the latest rage among progressive church women."

- **Mother Earth.** Tracy is a regional Girl Scout leader in Santa Clara County, California. To prepare forty young scouts (ages 10-12) for an "Initiation into adulthood" ceremony, she used guided imagery to alter their consciousness and meet their own spirit guide. According to a concerned California scout leader who observed the campfire ceremony, Tracy, dressed as a Native American, invoked the Great Spirit and the spirits of the woods, the North, South, East, and West. After explaining their entrance into womanhood and marking their foreheads with ashes, she led the girls on a meditational journey.

"Imagine a meadow..." intoned her mysterious voice. "See a young woman sitting under a tree. Talk to her." This wise person would be their life-long companion and helper. With such a constant and faithful spirit guide, who would want to fol-

low advice from Mom, Dad, or God? Why invite a contrary opinion when the guide speaks what one wants to hear - at least in the beginning?

- **A goddess.** Sharon grew up in a Christian home. Disappointed with her church's chilly response to her environmental concerns, she turned to witchcraft. Since her coven accepts any pantheistic expression, Sharon simply transferred what she liked about God to her self-made image of the goddess. She describes her feminine substitute for God as a loving, non-judgmental being who fills all of creation with her sacred life. Sometimes this goddess appears to Sharon, bathing her in bright light and a "loving" spiritual presence.

These and countless other women share two radical views: traditional Christianity with its biblical boundaries are *out*, and boundless new vistas of spiritual thrills are *in*. Anything goes – except biblical monotheism, belief in one God.

The broad umbrella of feminist spirituality covers all of the world's pagan religions -- and many of today's popular distortions of Christianity. Most seekers simply pick and mix the "best parts" of several traditions. Someone might start with Buddhist meditation, then add Chinese medicine, Hindu yoga, and a Native American wilderness initiation called "Spirit Quest." Some of these combinations match today's feminist visions better than others, but most involve;

Pantheism: *All is god.* A spirit, force, energy or god(dess) permeates everything, infusing all parts of creation with its spiritual life.

Monism: *All is one.* Since the pantheistic god is everything and in everyone, all things are connected.

Polytheism: *Many gods.* Since the pantheistic force or god(dess) makes everything sacred, anything can be worshipped: the sun, trees, mountains and eagles – even ourselves.

Paganism: *Trusting occult wisdom and powers.* Throughout history, tribal shamans, medicine men, witchdoctors, or priests have contacted the

spirit world using timeless rituals and formulas that are surprisingly similar in all the world's pagan cultures.

Neopaganism: *New idealized blends of old pagan religions.* To make paganism attractive in today's self-focused atmosphere, its promoters idealize tribal cultures and pagan religions. Instead of telling the whole truth and nothing but, they tell us that spiritual forces link each person to every other part of nature. Any woman can now function as priestess, contact the spirit world, manipulate spiritual forces, and help create worldwide peace and oneness.

Gateways to the Goddess

Like most Neopagans, Diane believes that earth-centered spirituality brings peace and personal empowerment. A pretty young woman with long black hair and the slender look of a vegetarian, she is a local hairdresser. She is also married, looking forward to starting a family, and a member of the Bay Area Pagan Assemblies. While cutting my hair one day, she told me how she discovered the goddess who empowers her.

"I always liked to read," she said, "especially books about magic and witchcraft."

"Which was your favorite?" I asked.

"Margot Adler's book, *Drawing Down the Moon*."

"That's almost an encyclopedia on witchcraft. How old were you?"

"A senior in high school."

"How did you find it?"

"Browsing around in the library. But I had already read some other books, like *Medicine Woman* by Lynn Andrews.

My thoughts drifted to another young woman who read *Medicine Woman* some years ago. Lori's high school teacher had encouraged her to explore

various spiritual traditions, even create *her own* religion. Fascinated with Lynn Andrews' blend of Native American shamanism and goddess spirituality, Lori ordered a Native American tipi from a catalog, set it up in her backyard, and used it for candle-lit rituals inspired by Wiccan magic (witchcraft). Like most contemporary pagans, she had learned to mix various traditions into a personal expression that fit her own quest for power and "wisdom from within."

Some months before Diane first cut my hair, I had met a charming Stanford University student who also called herself pagan. Beth, an education and philosophy major, had read my book about environmental spirituality and wanted to discuss it with me. While we ate lunch together at the college cafeteria, she shared her beliefs.

"Who introduced you to witchcraft and lesbianism?" I asked after a while.

"Two of my high school teachers," she answered.

I wasn't surprised. By then I knew that an inordinate number of pagan women have chosen the classroom as their platform for spreading their faith and transforming our culture. Like the rest of us, they want to build a better world – one that reflects *their* beliefs and values.

While Beth talked, I glanced at her jewelry. The golden pentagram and voluptuous little goddess dangling from a chain around her neck spoke volumes about her values. So did her earrings: two large pink triangles pointing down, an ancient symbol of the goddess as well as a modern symbol of lesbianism.

"What about your jewelry?" I asked. "Do people know what the pentagram and triangles symbolize? Do they criticize you for wearing the little goddess?"

She smiled. "No. Everybody here is supposed to be tolerant of each other's lifestyles. Nobody would dare say anything."

I pondered her statement. What does it mean to be tolerant – or intolerant – these days? If intolerance is the self-righteous attitude that despises people with "different" values, it would be wrong. Jesus always demonstrated love and compassion toward the excluded and hurting women of His times. Yet, He never condoned destructive lifestyles or actions that harmed others. What would happen in a culture that tolerates *everything*?

One result is obvious. The last three decades have produced an unprecedented openness to what used to be forbidden realms. Fortune telling, occult board games, and Native American rituals, along with countless other doorways to paganism, have spread from the hidden chambers of professional occultists and tribal shamans to our nation's classrooms, environmental programs, Girl Scout camps, and churches.

Leading "Christian" theologians no longer hide their spiritual preference. "The deconstruction of patriarchal religion – in bland terms, the assisted suicide of God the Father – left many of us bereft of divinity," explains feminist theologian Mary Hunt. "But the human hunger for meaning and value... finds new expression in goddess worship."

This human hunger for meaning was designed to draw people to God. He created us to need *Him*, not man-made counterfeits. As the 17th-century philosopher Blaise Pascal wrote, "There's a God-shaped vacuum in every heart." But an astounding number of seekers try to fill that void with seductive substitutes.

Celebrating the Goddess

On June 2, 1994, that spiritual longing brought hundreds of women to San Francisco's *Renaissance of the Sacred Feminine Conference*. Belying the nearness of Summer Solstice, a chilly wind swept along the stony walls of Grace Cathedral as I waited with the swelling crowd lining the sidewalk – and prayed.



It grew colder. We buttoned our jackets and huddled together. Some of us studied the program. The cover featured a sensual goddess dancing in front of a large circle – perhaps a sacred sun, or a Buddhist wheel of life, or a Sioux medicine wheel... It didn't matter which. Today's goddess is universal enough to encompass all the world's earth-centered religions and female deities.

An introductory paragraph suggested that this pantheistic Goddess would unify people and save the planet:

"This participatory event celebrates and honors the presence of the Divine Mother at the heart of the emerging global civilization. The Sacred Feminine has a central role in the healing of our divided minds and endangered planet... Without spiritual transformation on a massive and unprecedented scale, humankind will not survive..."

No survival without an occult transformation?

I looked at the faces around me. People were growing impatient. The 6:30pm entrance time had come and gone, and their pleas for shelter inside had fallen on unsympathetic ears. "Remember we're on a cyclical path, not linear like the old patriarchal ways," was the only excuse given. I smiled, hoping that goddess-spirituality would continue to prove its true colors.

Twenty-five minutes late the doors flew open and the crowd rushed in, filling the large Episcopal cathedral. While eerie chants to Mother Earth echoed between the gothic pillars, I glanced at a green slip of paper someone handed me at the door. "Failure," it said.

Curious, I turned to a woman next to me and whispered, "What did you get?"

The woman read her green slip and frowned. "Slavery!"

"Ah Ma-ma! Ah Ma-ma! Ah Ma-ma..." chanted the Bay Area Lesbian Chorale Ensemble.

As others joined the chant, a large screen flashed pictures of goddesses from around the world. The images ranged from voluptuous fertility goddesses to gruesome blood-guzzling avengers demanding human sacrifice.

The goddess is supposed to be kind and compassionate, I thought. Yet, in many of her own myths she is cruel beyond words. My mind drifted to the Hindu goddess Kali with her bloody tongue and serpentine necklace.

A voice summoned the presence of the many-faced goddess: "Salutations to the great empress who came out of the fire of pure consciousness..." Silently, I kept praising God. Then Alan Jones,

dean of the cathedral, shared his delight in our “post-traditional” culture and “the new ways and forms to express the spirit.”

A four-step journey toward conscious oneness with this “Sacred feminine” began with collective surrender: “We bow to your sacred power, the holy wisdom of Sophia, our beloved mother who is in heaven and earth...”

“*Our Father in Heaven*,” I prayed silently, shutting out the other sounds. “*Holy is Your Name...*”

The second step, *Chaos and Ordeal*, meant *experiencing* the “ordeals of birth, womb, and transformation.” We were told to imagine the condition written on our green slips of paper, *enter* its darkness, *feel* the pain, *invoke* the dark mother goddess, then groan, weep and wail. As the wailing sounds of imagined pain surged through the room, I kept thanking God for His triumph over darkness.

The third step, *Embracing and Understanding*, offered only pagan myths and hollow affirmations as solutions to life’s pain. A story about the Japanese sun goddess ended with a futile solution to fear: a mirror for gazing at one’s own glory.

Rapture and Transformation, the fourth step in the journey toward “the Sacred feminine, Source of our being,” was led by Andrew Harvey, a guru to Westerners seeking Eastern mystical experience. Like most contemporary pagans, he blends beliefs and practices from many earth-centered traditions to create his own expression. His personal mix of eastern meditation, western witchcraft, Sufi mysteries, and Jungian psychology seemed to have won him the status of a revered master.

Mocking the Ten Commandments, he listed “Ten Rather Firm Suggestions.” The ninth suggestion typifies the sensual focus of contemporary paganism:

Ten rather firm suggestions:

1. Adore me... the Mother. Know that I, the Mother, am immanent and transcendent.

2. Adore every sentient [feeling] being... with my total tenderness.

3. Dare to adore yourself as my divine child.

4. Know... that nature is the sacred body of my sacred life.

5. Know that my love is eternally active...

6. Shine to all four directions.

7. Dissolve all social barriers between sects and religions.

8. Dissolve all barriers between the... sacred and the profane.

9. Discover and cultivate sacred Eros in all its ecstatic connections.

10. Know that I can be contacted anywhere at anytime through one sacred syllable: “Ma.” No intermediary needed.

Since Harvey communicates directly with pagan spirits, he receives the mystical kinds of messages that fuel today’s spiritual rebellion. Recently, the “Divine Mother,” told him that “everything will be transformed when you know and see me... I have willed the end of homophobia. I have willed the end of reason. I have willed the end of denial of the sanctity of the body... I have willed... the end of the exploitation of nature. For I have willed a garden...”

The Sacred Feminine conference would continue for two more days at a local Unitarian church, but I had seen enough. Driving home, I thanked my Lord for *His victory over occult deities and the forces they represent*. He alone can bring a renaissance of truth and light into this spreading darkness.

Looking ahead

Will there be a garden under the reign of the Goddess? Harvey’s “Divine Mother” said there would, but who is she? She whispers mysteries the

world longs to hear, but what makes her myths so believable -- even to church leaders? What happens to women seduced by her promises, and where is she taking our children? What happens to nations that turn to "other gods" and values? What happens to Christians in such cultures?

These and other crucial questions are explored in the rest of this book [Editor's Note: I would recommend purchasing *A Twist of Faith*]. In each chapter we will look at a phrase in the prayer Jesus taught His disciples, then show how it is turned upside-down by the feminist spirituality movement. Following the outline of the prayer below, we will explore the main myths fueling today's pagan revival, and the major truths that lead us back to intimacy with God. Consider the differences.

Praying to God

- Our Father in heaven
- Holy is Your Name
- Your Kingdom Come
- Your will be done
- Give us... daily bread
- Forgive us... as we forgive
- Lead us not into temptation
- Deliver us from evil
- For Yours is the... power
- ...forever!

Affirming the goddess

- Our Mother, the Earth
- Sacred and perfect am I
- My vision come
- My will be done
- Don't give... I own...
- I choose to forgive, or curse
- Temptation? I form my own values
- There is no sin or evil
- Mine is the power
- Nothing is permanent or absolute

To women seeking new directions, feminine faces for God, and a better image of herself, the path to feminist spirituality may look bright with promise. Yet, like Peggy, many find themselves in the depths of spiritual confusion and loneliness

once the initial euphoria fades. Some are trapped in a downward spiritual spiral they can't escape. All too late, they see that its promises bring conflict and confusion instead of love and peace.

A worldwide sisterhood of angry, militant feminists is rising to power. The United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing gave a glimpse of its influence. It left its leaders with marching orders designed to revolutionize our schools, homes, churches and culture. If the feminist movement gains what it demands, no one will escape its global influence. American Christians will face the kind of hatred that drove persecuted masses to our borders, but there would be no place to hide outside of Christ.

As we look at these changes in the light of God's Word, He helps us understand the crisis and prepare for the coming conflict. If we trust Him, He will not only keep us spiritually safe during our journey, He will show us a joy and victory only possible for those who have dared to face reality, refused to compromise, and set their mind to trust the Shepherd. **FC**

Berit Kjos is the author of *Brave New Schools* and *A Twist of Faith*. Her website, www.crossroad.to, is an excellent resource.

Forcing Change

is a monthly online publication dedicated to documenting and analyzing the socio-religious transformations now sweeping our world.

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Goddess Worship

Editor's Note: The following article, used by permission of Probe Ministries, traces goddess spirituality as it relates to Witchcraft, the Feminist movement, and the occult – and how it manifests itself in liberal-based churches.

Probe writes; “Russ Wise, a former associate speaker with Probe Ministries, has been an observer of the occult and cults (both Eastern and Western) for over 20 years. Russ seeks to create an awareness of these non-biblical teachings in the Christian community, thereby helping to prevent Christians from falling victim to these deceptions. Russ serves with Christian Information Ministries.”

Probe Ministries is a Christian-based organization seeking to “assist the church in renewing the minds of believers with a Christian worldview and to equip the church to engage the world for Christ.” You can find out more about Probe by going to www.probe.org. You can also call Probe (972-480-0240).

By Russ Wise

“The goddess, or Great Mother, has existed since the beginning of time... it is out of the primordial depths of her womb that the Universe and all life is born.” – Morwyn, *Secrets of a Witch's Coven*

Reverence for the goddess is becoming prevalent in our day. The goddess is embraced by witchcraft, radical feminism, the occult, and the liberal church. The New Age that is about to dawn upon us will be, according to the occult world, a feminine age. Likewise, those who hold this view believe that this current, masculine age has been an age of destruction and broken relationships among humanity. The New Age with its feminine energies will bring balance to the destructive aspects of the Piscean Age.

Rosemary Radford Ruether, in her book *Woman-guides: Readings Toward a Feminist Theology*, states that

“It is to the women that we look for salvation in the healing and restorative waters of Aquarius. It is



to such a New Age that we look now with hope as the present age of masculism succeeds in destroying itself.”

According to Starhawk, a feminist and a practicing witch, “The symbolism of the Goddess is not a parallel structure to the symbolism of God the Father. The goddess does not rule the world; She is the world.”¹

In order for this feminine age to come into full fruition, a shift in consciousness must take place in the world. This shift in thinking and perception of reality will bring forth the goddess.²

According to those who believe in the Great Goddess, Europe was once inhabited by a matri-

archal, egalitarian society. Europeans, they claim, worshipped a matrifocal, sedentary, peaceful, art-loving goddess 5,000 to 25,000 years before the rise of the first male-oriented religion. They maintain that this egalitarian culture was overrun and destroyed by a semi-nomadic, horse-riding, Indo-European group of invaders who were patrifocal, mobile, warlike, and indifferent to art.³

These Indo-European invaders considered themselves to be superior to the peaceful and art-loving goddess worshippers because of their superior military ability. The matriarchal religion of these early settlers was eventually assimilated into the patriarchal religion of the invaders. As these invaders imposed their patriarchal culture on the conquered peoples, rapes⁴ and myths about male warriors killing serpents (symbols of the goddess worshippers) appeared for the first time. As the assimilation of cultures continued, the Great Goddess fragmented into many lesser goddesses.

According to Merlin Stone, author of *When God Was a Woman*, the disenthronement of the Great Goddess – begun by the Indo-European invaders – was finally accomplished by the Hebrew, Christian, and Moslem religions that arose later.⁵ The male deity took the prominent place. The female goddesses faded into the background, and women in society followed suit.⁶

The Goddess and Witchcraft

In the world of witchcraft the goddess is the giver of life. Jean Shinoda Bolen, M.D., in her book *Goddesses in Everywoman*, has this to say about the goddess,

“The Great Goddess was worshipped as the feminine life force deeply connected to nature and fertility, responsible both for creating life and for destroying life.”⁷

Bolen goes on to say that “the Great Goddess was regarded as immortal, changeless, and omnipotent” prior to the coming of Christianity. For witches, the goddess is the earth itself. Mother Earth, or Gaia, as the goddess is known in occult circles, is an evolving being, as is all of na-



Jean Shinoda Bolen

ture. Starhawk, in her best-selling book *The Spiral Dance*, says that, “the model of the Goddess, who is immanent in nature, fosters respect for the sacredness of all living things. Witchcraft can be seen as a religion of ecology. Its goal is harmony with nature, so that life may not just survive, but thrive.”⁸

The witch views Gaia, or Mother Earth, as a biosystem. She attributes consciousness to the earth and believes it to be spiritual as well. In other words, Gaia is a living and evolving being that has a spiritual destiny.

The environmental movement of our day is greatly influenced by those who practice witchcraft or hold neo-pagan beliefs. Witchcraft is an attempt to reintroduce the sacred aspect of the earth that was, according to its practitioners, destroyed by the Christian world. The goddess is, therefore, a direct affront against the male-dominated religion of the Hebrew God.

Christianity teaches that God is transcendent, is separate from nature, and is represented to hu-

mankind through masculine imagery. Witchcraft holds a pantheistic view of God. God is nature, therefore God is in all things and all things are a part of God. However, this God is in actuality a goddess.

A fundamental belief in witchcraft is the idea that the goddess predates the male God. The goddess is the giver of all life and is found in all of creation.

“The importance of the Goddess symbol for women cannot be overstressed. The image of the Goddess inspires women to see ourselves as divine, our bodies as sacred, the changing phases of our lives as holy, our aggression as healthy, and our anger as purifying. Through the Goddess, we can discover our strength, enlighten our minds, own our bodies, and celebrate our emotions.”⁹

For Betty Sue Flowers, a University of Texas English professor, the women’s spirituality movement is the answer to the male-oriented religion of Christianity. At the International Conference on Women’s Spirituality in Austin, Texas, Flowers stated that,

“The goddess is a metaphor that reminds us of the female side of spirituality. Metaphors are important. You can’t know God directly. You can only know images of God, and each image or metaphor is a door. Some doors are open and others are closed. A door that is only male is only half open.”¹⁰

The Goddess and Feminism

For many in the feminist world, the goddess is an object of worship. Those in the women’s spirituality movement “reject what they call the patriarchal Judeo-Christian tradition, deploring sexist language, predominantly masculine imagery and largely male leadership.”¹¹

According to a *Wall Street Journal* article by Sonia L. Nazario, “women first wanted to apply feminism to political and economic realms, then to their families. Now, they want it in their spiritual lives.”¹²

To understand fully the implications of the women's spirituality movement, one only needs to read the current literature on the subject. The editors of the book *Radical Feminism* state that "political institutions such as religion, because they are based on philosophies of hierarchical orders and reinforce male oppression of females, must be destroyed."

The radical feminist believes that the traditional church must be dismantled. Naomi Goldenberg, in her book *Changing of the Gods*, states that,

"...the feminist movement in Western culture is engaged in the slow execution of Christ and Yahweh... It is likely that as we watch Christ and Yahweh tumble to the ground, we will completely outgrow the need for an external God."¹³

The deity that many in the feminist camp are searching for takes on the form of a goddess. Some in the goddess movement, according to a *Wall Street Journal* article, "pray for the time when science will make men unnecessary for procreation."¹⁴ The radical feminist sees the goddess movement as a spiritual outlet for her long-held beliefs. Mark Muesse, an assistant professor of religious studies at Rhodes College, agrees that,

"...some feminist Christians push for changes ranging from the ordination of women and the generic, non-sexual terms for God and humanity to overhauling the very theology."¹⁵

Perhaps the most descriptive word for the feminist movement is "transformation." Catherine Keller, associate professor of theology at Xavier University says in her essay "Feminism and the New Paradigm" that "the global feminist movement is bringing about the end of patriarchy, the eclipse of the politics of separation, and the beginning of a new era modeled on the dynamic, holistic paradigm. Radical feminists envision that era, and the long process leading toward it, as a comprehensive transformation."

Another aspect of this transformation is the blending of the sexes. The feminist movement seeks a common mold for all of humanity. Jung-

ian psychotherapist John Weir Perry believes that we must find our individuality by discovering androgyny. He states,

"To reach a new consensus, we have to avoid falling back into stereotypes, and that requires truly developing our individuality. It is an ongoing work of self-realization and self-actualization. For men it means growing into their native maleness and balancing it with their femaleness. For women, it's the same – growing into their full womanhood, and that includes their masculine side."¹⁶

This process sounds more like androgyny or sameness than it does individuality. This paradigm-shift is nothing less than the reordering of man's understanding of God, a shift in thinking of God through predominantly masculine imagery to seeing and experiencing God as a goddess, the mother of life.

The Goddess and the Occult

In the world of the occult, also known as the New Age, the goddess is believed to be resident within the individual and simply needs to be awakened. In other words, the individual is inherently divine. Starhawk, a witch who works with the Catholic priest Matthew Fox at his Institute of Creation Spirituality, says that an individual can awaken the goddess by invoking or inviting



Miriam Simos, a.k.a Starhawk

her presence. Starhawk tells us, "...to invoke the Goddess is to awaken the Goddess within, to become... that aspect we invoke. An invocation channels power through a visualized image of Divinity."

Starhawk continues, "We are already one with the Goddess--she has been with us from the beginning, so fulfillment becomes . . . a matter of self-awareness. For women, the Goddess is the symbol of the inmost self. She awakens the mind and spirit and emotions."¹⁷

Jean Shinoda Bolen, a Jungian analyst and clinical professor of psychiatry at the University of California, answered the question, *What ails our society?* by saying, "we suffer from the absence of one half of our spiritual potential – the Goddess."¹⁸

Individuals who follow New Age teaching believe that the male-dominated religion of this present age has done an injustice to humanity and the ecosystem. Therefore there must be a balancing of energies. The male energies must diminish and the feminine energies must increase in order for the goddess to empower the individual.

The New Age of occultism promises to be an age of peace, harmony, and tranquility, whereas the present dark age of brokenness and separation continues to bring war, conflict, and disharmony. So it is the goddess with her feminine aspects of unity, love, and peace that will offer a solution for mankind and circumvent his destruction. For many in our society, this appears to be the answer to man's dilemma. However, an occult solution that denies Christ's atonement for sin cannot fully meet a Holy God's requirement for wholeness.

For the pagan, the goddess represents life and all it has to offer. "The Goddess religion is a conscious attempt to reshape culture."¹⁹ This reshaping is nothing less than viewing man and his understanding of reality from a female-centered perspective, the focus of which is on the Divine as female. Therefore considerable emphasis is placed on feminine attributes, ultimately focusing on eroticism and sexuality.

"Women are clearly the catalyst for the formation of the new spirituality. It is women above all who are in the process of reversing Genesis...by validating and freeing their sexuality."²⁰

A major part of this transformative process is the empowerment of women. The rise of the goddess is a direct assault on the foundation of Christianity. This new spirituality affirms bisexuality, lesbianism, homosexuality, and androgyny through the expression of transvestitism.

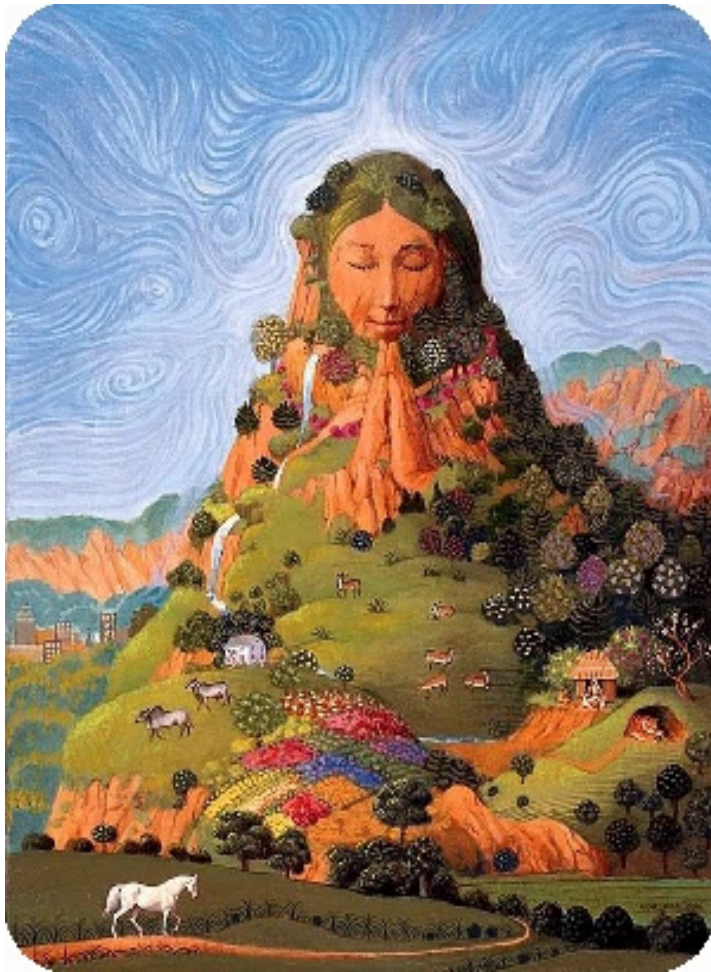
As this revival of the goddess continues, a growing lack of distinction between male and female will become the norm. Jungian psychotherapist John Weir Perry believes that "both current psychology and ancient history point to an emerging transformation in our sense of both society and self, a transformation that includes redefining the notion of what it means to be men and women."²¹

The Bible clearly indicates that men and women were created as distinctive beings, male and female. The rising occult influence in our society seeks to undermine the biblical absolute that gives our culture stability. Once again the Bible rings true as it states, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables."²²

The Goddess and the Liberal Church

The message of the goddess has gained a hearing in the church as well. The philosophy of the goddess is currently being taught in the classrooms of many seminaries. Mary Daly, who considers herself to be a Christian feminist, says this about traditional Christianity: "To put it bluntly, I propose that Christianity itself should be castrated."²³

The primary aim of this kind of "Christian" feminist is to bring an end to what she perceives as male-dominated religion by castrating the male influence from the religion. Daly continues by saying, "I am suggesting that the idea of salvation



uniquely by a male savior perpetuates the problem of patriarchal oppression.”²⁴

Rev. Susan Cady, co-author of *Sophia: the Future of Feminist Spirituality* and pastor of Emmanuel United Methodist Church in Philadelphia, is one example of the direction that Daly and others are taking the church. The authors of *Sophia* state that “Sophia is a female, goddess-like figure appearing clearly in the Scriptures of the Hebrew tradition.” *Wisdom Feast*, the authors’ latest book, clearly identifies Jesus with Sophia. Sophialogy presents Sophia as a separate goddess and Jesus as her prophet. The book takes liberty with Jesus by replacing Him with the feminine deity Sophia.

Another example of how goddess *thealogy* (feminist spelling for theology) is making its way into the liberal church is through seminars held on seminary campuses. One such seminar, “Wisdomweaving: Woman Embodied in Faiths,” was held at the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University in February of 1990.

Linda Finnell, a wiccan and one of the speakers, spoke on the subject of “Returning to the Goddess Through Dianic Witchcraft.” Two of the keynote speakers were of a New Age persuasion. In fact, one speaker, Sr. Jose Hobday, works with Matthew Fox and Starhawk at the Institute for Creation Spirituality.

A growing number of churches in the United States and around the world are embracing the New Age lie. Many churches have introduced *A Course in Miracles*, Yoga, Silva Mind Control, Unity teachings, and metaphysics into their teaching material. Some churches have taken a further step into the New Age by hiring individuals who hold a metaphysical worldview.

Whether the individual seeks the goddess through witchcraft, the feminist movement, the New Age, or the liberal church, he or she is beginning a quest to understand and discover the “higher self.” The higher self, often referred to as the “god self,” is believed to be pure truth, deep wisdom. This truth or wisdom embodies the basic lie of deification. As Christians we must learn to discern every spirit lest we become deceived. **FC**

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Endnotes

- ¹ Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance* (New York: Harper & Row 1989), p.23.
- ² Elinor W. Gadon, *The Once and Future Goddess* (New York: HarperCollins, 1989), p.xiv.
- ³ Ibid., xii-xiii. See also Lynnie Levy, *Of a Like Mind* (Madison, Wis.: OALM, 1991), vol. viii, no. 3, pp. 2-3.
- ⁴ See also Zsuzsanna Emese Budapest, *The Holy Book of Women's Mysteries* (Oakland, Calif.: Susan B. Anthony Coven No. 1, 1986), p.12.
- ⁵ See also Gadon, *The Once and Future Goddess*, p.xiii.
- ⁶ Jean Shinoda Bolen, *Goddesses in Everywoman* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), p.21.
- ⁷ Ibid, p.20.
- ⁸ Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance*, p.25.
- ⁹ Ibid., p.24.
- ¹⁰ Carlos Vidal Greth, “The Spirit of Women,” *The Austin-American Statesman*, 5 March 1991, sec. D.
- ¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Sonia L. Nazario, "Is Goddess Worship Finally Going to Put Men in Their Place?" *The Wall Street Journal*, 7 June 1990, sec. A.

¹³ Naomi Goldenberg, *Changing of the Gods: Feminism and the End of Traditional Religions* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), pp.4, 25.

¹⁴ Nazario, "Goddess Worship."

¹⁵ Deirdre Donahue, "Dawn of the Goddesses," *USA Today*, 26 Sept. 1990, sec. D.

¹⁶ John Weir Perry, "Myth, Ritual, and the Decline of Patriarchy," *Magical Blend* 33 (January 1992): p.103.

¹⁷ Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance*, p.99.

¹⁸ Jean Shinoda Bolen, "The Women's Movement in Transition: The Goddess and the Grail," *Magical Blend* 33 (January 1992), p.8.

¹⁹ Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance*, p.11.

²⁰ Donna Steichen, "The Goddess Goes to Washington," *Fidelity Magazine* (December 1986), p.42.

²¹ Perry, *Decline of Patriarchy*, p.62.

²² 2 Timothy 4:3.

²³ Alice Hageman, *Theology after the Demise of God the Father: a Call for the Castration of Sexist Religion* (New York: Association Press, 1974), p.132.

²⁴ Hageman, *Theology*, p.138.

The Allure of the Goddess

By Carl Teichrib (www.forcingchange.org)

"The Goddess has now emerged from the dark moon phase of a long-term lunar cycle at a time when humanity is collectively passing through a dark phase in the precessional age solar cycle. With the rebirth of the Goddess, we are being given the opportunity to reclaim her dark aspect."

— Demetra George, *Mysteries of the Dark Moon: The Healing Power of the Dark Goddess*, p. 266.

Goddess worship is alive and well. Berit Kjos, a good friend and author, relates numerous stories of goddess-inspiration making its way into mainstream Christian culture. In her excellent book, *A Twist of Faith*, she describes a visit to her husband's prairie hometown,

"You probably wouldn't expect to find goddesses in a conservative farming community in North Dakota. I didn't. But one day when visiting my husband's rural hometown, a neighbor told us that a new bookstore had just opened in the parsonage of the old Lutheran Church. 'You should go see it,' she urged.

I agreed, so I drove to a stately white church, walked to the parsonage next door, and rang the bell. The pastor's wife opened the door and led me into a large room she had changed into a bookstore, leaving me to browse. Scanning the shelves along the walls, I noticed familiar authors such as Lynn Andrews who freely blends witchcraft with Native American rituals, New Age self-empowerment, and other occult traditions to form her own spirituality.

Among the multicultural books in the children's section, one caught my attention. Called *Many Faces of the Great Goddess*, it was a 'coloring book for all ages.' Page after page sported voluptuous drawings of famed goddesses. Nude, bare-breasted, pregnant, or draped in serpents, they would surely open the minds of young artists to the lure of "sacred" sex and ancient myths.

Driving home, I pondered today's fast-spreading shift from Christianity to paganism. Apparently, myths and spiritualized sensuality sound good to those who seek new revelations and "higher" truths. Many of the modern myths picture deities that fit somewhere between a feminine version of God and the timeless goddesses pictured in earth-centered stories and cultures." (*A Twist of Faith*, pp. 10-11)

While the New Age Movement has placed goddess worship into a contemporary setting, its historical context stretches back millennium.

In the ancient Egyptian mystery religions, Isis was venerated as a universal goddess. Barbara Watterson, author of



Gods of Ancient Egypt, notes that Isis was “known as ‘The Goddess of Many Names’ and indeed she is found as a form of every great female deity from Nut and Hathor to the Greek moon goddess Astarte.” [p. 72]

Eminent author and historian, Will Durant, writes of this Isis-goddess connection,

“Profound, too, was the myth of Isis, the Great Mother. She was not only the loyal sister and wife of Osiris; in a sense she was greater than he, for – like woman in general – she had conquered death through love. Nor was she merely the black soil of the Delta, fertilized by the touch of Osiris-Nile, and making all Egypt rich with her fecundity. She was, above all, the symbol of that mysterious creative power which had produced the earth and every living thing...She represented in Egypt – as Kali, Ishtar and Cybele represented in Asia, Demeter in Greece, and Ceres in Rome – the original priority and independence of the female principle in creation...” (*The Story of Civilization*, Volume 1, p. 200)

“Great Mother,” “Queen of Heaven,” “Mother of God.” All of these titles have been attached to Isis. Ishtar too, the Babylonian goddess, had similar titles. Moreover, the lines

between the various goddesses of antiquity blur, with each mirroring the other in terms of purpose, symbolism, and meaning.

Commenting on this universal goddess aspect, Professor Cesar Vidal writes,

“The importance of mother goddesses in the various mythologies of paganism is so evident that even a shallow description could easily fill entire volumes... The mother goddess received different names and external appearances, but, in substance, she was always the same. In Egypt, she was called Isis. In Crete, she was represented as a mother who made friendly contact with snakes. In Greece she was known as Demeter, and in Rome she was worshiped as Cybele, the Magna Mater (Great Mother), a mother goddess of Phrygian origin. There is practically no ancient culture that did not worship this type of deity.” (*The Myth of Mary*, pp.74, 75)

Even the ancient Hebrews succumbed to goddess worship. In Jeremiah chapters 7 and 44, we find God chastising the Israelites for worshiping “the Queen of Heaven,” baking cakes to her, offering sacrifices, and purposely choosing to follow the Queen of Heaven rather than Himself.

Our modern culture likewise has a propensity to following the “Queen of Heaven.” The New Age Movement has been a real force in this, bringing the Gaia concept to the forefront – the idea that the Earth is a living organism, a “hypothesis” intrinsically linked to the goddess movement and “Mother Earth.”

Science writer Lawrence E. Joseph explains,

“Gaia’s closest cousin is Terra, the Roman Earth goddess; both are kin to Isis of the Egyptians, Kwan Yin of the Chinese, Lakshmi of the Hindus, Yemanjá of many African peoples, Shekinah of the Jews from the days of the caballah, the Changing Woman of the Navajo, and many others, including Mother Nature, who at one time or another has appeared or occurred to almost everyone. All are sublime female Earth deities, givers of life, wisdom, pleasure, and death.” (*Gaia: The Growth of an Idea*, p. 224)

As alluded to in the beginning of this article, Christianity isn’t immune to the allure of the goddess. In 1993, at the Re-Imaging Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota, 2000 women from a variety of protestant denominations were introduced to Sophia, the goddess personification of “Divine Wisdom.” Furthermore, this particular event, which included creating a “sacred space” and Sophia invocations, received funding from a number of major protestant/evangelical church bodies [for more on this event, see *A Twist of Faith*].

“Mother Earth,” too, can be found in our modern church culture – especially through Earth Day celebrations within the Christian community (See *Goddess Earth* by Samantha

Smith and Dave Hunt's *Occult Invasion: The Subtle Seduction of the World and Church*).

But goddess influence within churches goes beyond Mother Earth and Sophia. The biblical figure of Mary has been erroneously elevated to a goddess status by Roman Catholic theologians. She is known as the Queen of Heaven, Mother of God, Eternal Virgin, Queen of Peace, Our Mother, Lady of the Good Death, Co-Mediatrix, and Blessed Mother. Thousands of shrines around the world commemorate her. Visions, apparitions, visitations, and channeled messages accompany the mystical experiences of her followers.

Cesar Vidal elaborates,

"The idea of the universal motherhood of Mary, which does not appear historically until the 11th century, has a much greater connection with paganism than with Scripture. The same can be said of the representation of Mary with the divine child. This concept was also unknown... in the first centuries of Christianity.

...it is especially significant that Mary worship, which we find in Catholicism and in the Eastern churches, does not stem at any point from biblical concepts, but from the absorption of pagan theologies like those present in the myths of Isis, Demeter and Cybele." (*The Myth of Mary*, p. 86, 89)

Concerning the pagan goddess influence within the Roman concept of "Mary," historian Will Durant draws a similar conclusion to that of Vidal. Christian apologist Dave Hunt (see *Occult Invasion*), along with a host of other historians and researchers, also recognize this basic linkage. Even occult sources such as H.P. Blavatsky [*Isis Unveiled*, volume II] and Manly P. Hall [*The Secret Teachings of All Ages*] attest to this goddess Roman-Mary interconnection. Sadly, this Romanized-paganized Mary is now being embraced by some within Protestant circles.

Detailing the broader New Age-goddess/feminist influence within church and society, Berit Kjos writes,

"...This new spiritual movement is transforming our churches as well as our culture. It touches every family that reads newspapers, watches television, and sends children to community schools. It is fast driving our society beyond Christianity, beyond humanism – even beyond relativism – toward new global beliefs and values. No one is immune from its subtle pressures and silent promptings. That it parallels other social changes and global movements only speeds the transformation. Yet, most Christians – like the proverbial frog – have barely noticed.

This feminist movement demands new deities or, at least, a re-thinking of the old ones. The transformation starts with self, some say, and women can't re-invent themselves until they shed the old shackles. So the search for a 'more

relevant' religion requires new visions of God: images that trade holiness for tolerance, the heavenly for the earthly, and the God who is higher than us for a god who is us.

The most seductive images are feminine. They may look like postcard angels, fairy godmothers, Greek earth goddess, radiant New Age priestesses, or even a mythical Mary, but they all promise unconditional love, peace, power, and personal transcendence. To many, they seem too good to refuse." [*A Twist of Faith*, pp. 9-10]

The point that Mrs. Kjos makes is essential to understanding our times: Christianity is facing a paradigm shift of global proportions, and the goddess thrust of the New Age Movement is an important facet of this spiritual and societal-wide change.

In recognizing the impact that this alternative spiritual reality has on our cultural makeup – including its bearing on churches and Christianity – it behooves us to consider the words of Ephesians 6:10-13,

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. There take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." [Ephesians 6:10-13, NKJV] **FC**

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