

Wicca

Wicca, also known as *The Craft*, is a religion that recognizes the sacredness of nature and exalts it, promotes god and goddess worship, professes relativism over truth, utilizes magick, spell casting and rituals to harness the energies of the earth to enhance well being and manipulate life events.

Wicca is a contemporary form of witchcraft or neopaganism (new paganism) and is becoming increasingly popular and according to some sources, is the fastest growing religion among high school and college students.



Popular movies include *The Craft* which came out in 1996, *Practical Magic* in 1998, *Bewitched* in 2005, which of course was based on the TV show in the 1960's, *The Covenant* in 2006, and of course the *Harry Potter* movies in which the main characters attend the *Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry*.

TV Shows such as *Charmed*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* and cartoons such as *Sabrina*, *W.I.T.C.H*, *Scooby Doo*, and *Shaman King*¹ are tempting television shows for children and adults alike and show just how the media can sanitize us into thinking these shows are harmless television icons.

In 2003, Mattel came out with a Barbie called *Barbie Kayla Secret Spells Wiccan Doll*.

Today, its growth from 8,000 adherents in 1990 to 134,000 in 2001² makes it the fastest growing religion, not in terms of size, but in terms of percentage and at this growth rate, the number of adherents to Wicca could have passed the million person mark by summer 2008.



Although this estimate could be low since according to Wiccan High Priestess and bestselling Author Phyllis Curott, there could be as many as three to five million Wiccans living in the United States at the end of 1999.³

A History of Wicca

While the origins of Wicca are debated, Witchcraft often used synonymously has been around for longer than thirty-five thousand years according to *Starhawk* in her book *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess*:

- "But Witchcraft is a religion, perhaps the oldest religion extant in the West. Its origins go back before Christianity, Judaism, Islam – before Buddhism and Hinduism, as well, and it is very different from all the so-called great religions. The Old Religion, as we call it, is closer in spirit to Native American traditions or the shamanism of the Arctic."⁴

Wiccan author Scott Cunningham (1956-1993) says:

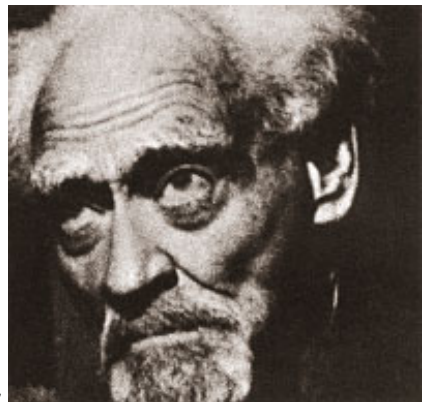
- "Shamanism has been defined as the first religion. It existed prior to the earliest civilizations, before our ancestors took the first steps down the long journey to the present...From these primitive beginnings arose all magic and religion, including Wicca. Despite current controversy as to the "antiquity" of Wicca, it is spiritually descended from such rites... Wicca, therefore can be described as a shamanic religion."⁵

Interestingly enough, even one of Wicca's main websites points out that Wicca is a new religion when it states that, "Starting in the early nineteenth century, a new natural religion gradually evolved. It gathered momentum in the mid-twentieth century."⁶

The truth is that although Witchcraft has been around thousands of years, Wicca as it exists today, is a relatively new religion and has been around less than one hundred years.

In other words, it's a new religion that's based on ancient forms of pagan religions.

Although Witchcraft definitely has a background going back a long time, Wicca is a more modern name and this version of Witchcraft has a definitive start in the 1950's by a man named Gerald Brousseau Gardner (1884-1964).



In the late 1930's or early 1940's, Gardner was initiated into a "coven" of witches in England and subsequently authored *High Magic's Aid* in 1949, *Witchcraft Today* in 1954 and *The Meaning of Witchcraft* in 1959.

Gardner states that he had heard the word Wicca being used by other coven members in the woods in England as he explains:

- "I was half-initiated before the word 'Wica' which they used hit me like a thunderbolt, and I knew where I was, and that the Old Religion still existed. And so I found myself in the Circle, and there took the usual

oath of secrecy, which bound me not to reveal certain things...As they (the Dane and Saxon invaders of England) had no witches of their own, they had no special name for them; however, they made one up from *wig* ('an idol'), and *laer* ('learning'): *wiglaer*, which they shortened into 'Wicca'".⁷

Still others believe that the words witch and Wicca originate from the same German root word *wic* or *wik* which means "to bend or to shape".

Even still, others claim that the word originated from the German *wikken* which means "to practice witchcraft".

Either way, the bottom line is that Wicca is a relatively new religion that uses a word or root form of a word from older times.

In 1986, a federal court upheld a district courts ruling in *Dettmer v. Landon* that stated that Wicca would be regarded as a religion in the United States court while giving it the same legal rights as other religions.

As such, the *Wiccan symbol*, the *pentacle* has been included among the acceptable headstone emblems of the armed forces along with the Christian cross, the Buddhist wheel of righteousness, Judaism's star of David, the Muslims crescent and star just to name a few of the total of 39 approved emblems.



Wicca is a popular religion among college campuses, the prison systems, and the armed forces; it's virtually everywhere including the church.

The Appeal of Wicca

First, as a religion, the appeal of Wicca is that it's very flexible



and a Wiccan can mix and match different beliefs and worship different gods depending on what their preferences are.

- "Wicca is personal and adaptable. Wiccans can worship privately as solitary practitioners of the craft, or they may join a coven. They can create their own brand of Wicca that works for them. One Wiccan writes, 'Really, there's no one true or right way to practice the craft. Wicca is what you make of it.'"⁸

Second, Wicca is very popular among girls and women since the worship of the goddess as the main deity appeals to their feminist side and is a counter balance to the patriarchal belief systems that have dominated western society. It's estimated that three-quarters of Wiccans are women.

- "The image of the Goddess inspires women to see ourselves as divine..."⁹
- "According to Wiccan beliefs, way back in the beginning of time – before the earth and anything else – there was the All. The All, a female spirit...created her other half – the male spirit...Wiccans are more into the goddess because she represents the part of the All that is nurturing and compassionate, enabling growth, fertility, and gentleness...Wiccans believe that the goddess is in everything and is everything."¹⁰

Some famous females who practice Wicca are Fiona Horne, Tori Amos, Stevie Nicks, Sarah McLachlan, Cybill Shepherd, Roseanne, Chrissie Hynde¹¹ as well as Margot Adler of National Public Radio (NPR).¹²

Third, the allure of personal power is very appealing to many people in a society where we are taught and pushed to succeed and excel at everything we do from a very early age.

- "Teens are turning to the craft today because this religion appears powerful, glamorous, and definitely not the norm. Those involved in Wicca claim to have a depth of power far greater than the average person seems to have."¹³

Finally, Wicca is also known as a *neopagan nature* religion and thus with today's emphasis on being green, worshipping the earth as a deity that is living and breathing, also appeals to many people.

- "Wiccans view the earth as a living goddess, who blesses us and must be nurtured and cared for in return. They honor and work with the cycles of nature and the seasons rather than trying to dominate their environment...Because Wicca is a nature religion, Wiccans see the goddess in everything. They not only see the goddess in everything, but Wiccans honor the goddess in everything by living in harmony with nature."¹⁴

The Beliefs and Practices of Wicca

Wicca doesn't hold to any one set of creedal statements, it doesn't use one book for its definitive statements and it doesn't have a centralized authority who dictates policy – this is why it's such a diverse religion, but as such, there are a few commonalities whether one is a solitary practitioner of Wicca or a member of a coven.

1. Wicca doesn't look for converts. Wiccan Scott Cunningham states:

- "Wicca doesn't seek new members...Wicca doesn't solicit because, unlike most western religions, it doesn't claim to be the one true way to deity."¹⁵

2. Wiccans usually gather together to create a *Sacred Circle* where Wiccan rituals and Magick are practiced:

- "The circle, Magic circle, or sphere is a well-defined though non-physical temple. In much of Wicca today, rituals and magical workings take place within such a construction of personal power...the circle is used to create a sacred space in which humans meet with the Goddess and God."¹⁶

3. Wiccans have 8 holy days called *Sabbats*; 4 major and 4 minor.

Major:

1. Imbloc (February 2) – Designates the middle of winter.
2. Beltane (April 30 or May 1) – Signifies the approach of summer.

3. Lughnasadh (August 1) – Signifies the beginning of the harvest season and the middle of summer.
4. Samhain (October 31) – Signifies the beginning of winter.

Minor:

1. Yule (December 21) – Winter Solstice or the shortest day of the year.
 2. Ostara (March 21) – Spring Equinox or the day and night are equal in length.
 3. Midsummer Eve (June 21 or 22) – Summer Solstice or the longest day of the year.
 4. Mabon (September 21) – Autumn Equinox or the day and night are of equal length.
4. Although Wicca doesn't hold to any set of doctrines or have any sacred books, most believe in three basic tenets:
- The *Rede*: *And it harm none, do as ye will.*
 - The *Rule of Three*: Effects of magick will be returned threefold upon the person working it. Good or bad, it will come back upon you threefold.
 - The *Wiccan Code of Chivalry* or the *Old Code*: "That code, as we envision it today, exemplifies a deep love of the Wiccan religion and of those who practice that religion. It is carried forth in some of the wording of an initiation wherein the initiate swears to defend the Lord and the Lady and all those who love Them, in this life and all those sure to follow." ¹⁷

It's the *Rede* that I'd like to look at tonight as we look at some Wiccan beliefs and how we, as Christians, can use their belief systems to witness to them as Richard Howe states:

- "Jesus' command to preach the gospel and make disciples of all nations invariably includes witches. In order to do so, it is necessary that we understand who they are and what they believe."¹⁸

So I'd like to use the acronym *Rede* tonight as we look at the religion of Wicca.

1. **R**elativism and Reincarnation
2. **E**mbraces Nature Worship
3. **D**ivination, Spells and Magick
4. **E**xperience Based

Let's start off our critique of *Wicca* by looking at the **R** in the acronym **R.E.D.E.** – **R**elativism and Reincarnation.

1. Relativism and Reincarnation

Relativism

According to John 18:38, two thousand years ago Pilate summed up the mantra of relativism when he asked "What is truth?"

Relativism is the belief that truth is pliable, fluid and a moving target in the respect that it's not absolute and varies from people to people, place to place as well as from time to time.

Today, we live in a society where someone may consider truth as relative and you might hear someone state "what's true for you isn't necessarily true for me."

Wiccan Priestess Margot Adler echoes this relativistic view when she says that "the belief that there is one word, one truth, one path to the light, makes it easy to destroy ideas, institutions, and human beings...your spiritual path is not necessarily mine."¹⁹

Wiccan Author Scott Cunningham says that "there is not, and can never be, one 'pure' or 'true' or 'genuine' form of Wicca", and a little later he says "Wicca is a religion with many variations. Because it is such a personally structured system [i.e., what works for me might or might not work for you],

I can only state generalities...filtered through my experience and knowledge."²⁰

One of the appeals of Wicca is that it's a "buffet style" or "cafeteria style" religion that you can mix and match spells, gods and goddesses since as Wiccan author Silver Ravenwolf states, "There is no one right way to practice the Craft. The religion is what you make of it."²¹

In fact, a Wiccan might be in love with a certain individual and petition Aphrodite the Greek goddess of love one day and the next day might be angry and decide to take part in a ritual to honor Athena the Greek goddess of war, again echoing Silver Ravenwolf, "There is no one right way to practice the Craft. The religion is what you make of it."

Christian author Steve Russo says that "the 'cool' thing about Wicca is that there's no one right way to practice, worship, or believe. It's all about finding what fits for the individual-choosing what works for them spiritually-what they like, relate to, and identify with."²²

Biblical Teaching

Webster's Unabridged Dictionary defines *truth* as: ²³

- "that which is true; a fact; a reality; that which conforms to fact or reality; the real or true state of things."
- "a verified fact; a true statement or proposition; an established principle; a fixed law, or the like."

Here's what Dr. John MacArthur says about truth:

- "Here is a simple definition drawn from what the bible teaches: *truth is that which is consistent with the mind, will, character, glory, and being of God.* Even more to the point: *truth is the self-expression of God.*"²⁴

Truth is reality as it corresponds to the way things really are. Absolute truth is absolute no matter where you are, no matter what time you live.

When Jesus said "I am the truth" (John 14:6) and then said "When you have seen Me, you have seen the Father" (John 14:9), He was saying that God is truth.

The Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity, is called "the Spirit of truth" (John 16:13) "because the Spirit is truth" (1 John 5:6).

That which is truth, is indeed true. The Father is known as the "only true God" (John 17:3) and John wrote that "we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God..." (1 John 5:20).

The bottom line is that to deny that there is absolute and moral truth is to deny God. To deny that we can *know* absolute and moral truth is to deny that we can *know* God.

Yet, Jesus prayed in John 17:3 that "[we] may *know* You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." (emphasis added)

Why would Jesus pray that Christians would *know* "the only true God" if He knew it was impossible for us to do so?

Jesus said in John 4:24 that "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and *truth*." (emphasis added)

Would Jesus give direction to the early church and by extension to us, on how to worship God knowing that it was impossible and that we would be unable to?



Is the statement "All truth is relative" absolutely true? Do you see the absurdity in this statement? Where does it end since it is ultimately a self-defeating statement?

What if my truth is to burn witches? Is it absolutely wrong to burn witches or is that only a Wiccan truth not to burn witches?

Reincarnation

Reincarnation is the belief that a person's soul lives in a continual cycle of physical birth and death over and over again in order for them to grow and learn. In other words, it's the *rebirth* of one's soul into another body.

Wicca teaches that when a person dies, the soul goes to a place called *Summerland*. Wiccans do not believe in heaven or hell but believe that when their soul is in *Summerland*, they have time to think and ponder their experience in their former lives and they can think about where they would like to come back next.

Wiccan author Scott Cunningham elaborates:

- "The soul is said to review the past life...Lessons learned or ignored are brought to light. After the proper time, when the conditions on earth are correct, the soul is reincarnated and life begins again."²⁵

If the soul decides that it doesn't want to come back to a physical body, they can be a spirit guide for those who are back on earth.

Once the person/soul has learned all there is and perfected that knowledge, the soul is then freed from the cycle of death and birth and is reunited and absorbed back into the *All* or the *One* which is a non-personalized permeating force.

Again, Scott Cunningham:

- "...those souls who have attained perfection break away from the cycle forever and dwell with the Goddess and God."²⁶

The witch Starhawk says that “most witches believe in some form of reincarnation. This is not so much a doctrine as a *gut feeling* growing out of a world view that sees all events as a continuing process.”²⁷ (emphasis added)

❓ Why would you base your eternal destiny on a “gut feeling” that you will go to Summerland and eventually be reincarnated?

Wiccan Scott Cunningham says that “it isn’t wise to accept a doctrine as important as reincarnation without a great deal of study to see if it speaks to you.”

❓ Would you agree with Scott Cunningham that reincarnation requires study?

Jesus, who the Bible says is God, taught that people die once and then the judgment. In Matthew 25:46, Jesus says, “And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Would you agree that it’s wiser to base your eternal destiny on what God says rather than on what fallible humans say or on a “gut feeling”?

What’s the point of reincarnation if we cannot remember our past lives and the lessons learned? How can you “attain perfection?”

Biblical Teaching

The Bible teaches that human beings live once and die once.

- Hebrews 9:27 says, “And it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.”

Other passages that can be used to refute the false teaching of re-birth or reincarnation:

- Philippians 1:21 says, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain."

The "gain" that Paul is speaking about is his longing to be with Jesus Christ.

- 2 Corinthians 5:8 says, "We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord."

This verse makes clear that to be "absent from the body" is to be "present with the Lord" and not jumping to the next lifetime to do it all over again.

- See also Eccles. 12:7; Luke 23:43; Acts 7:5-9; 17:31; 1 John 3:2; Revelation 3:21.

It's important to note that people decide their eternal destiny, i.e. heaven or hell – not Summerland, in one single lifetime.

- Matthew 25:46 says, "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

It's important to note here that the punishment is said to be everlasting or eternal [Greek: *aionios* - pronounced *ahee-o-nee-os*]. It's the same Greek word used to describe the righteous to eternal [*aionios*] life.

In summary, as Christians our hope lies in the resurrection of Christ and that one day, not after many births and deaths, but after one birth and death, we will be raised up with a new body.

- 1 Corinthians 15:12-14 says, "Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty."
- 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 says, "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – in a moment, in the

twinkling of an eye...and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

Let's move on to the next topic in *The Religion of Wicca* by looking at the **E** in the acronym R.**E**.D.E. – **E**mbraces Nature Worship.

2. Embraces Nature Worship

Wicca is a pantheistic and a polytheistic nature religion. Wiccans believe that nature is a living organism and all living things, as well as inanimate objects such as rocks, trees and plants are living and conscious creatures.

Christian author Steve Russo explains:

- "Because Wicca is a nature religion, Wiccans see the goddess in everything. They not only see the goddess in everything, but Wiccans honor the goddess in everything by living in harmony with nature."²⁸

Pantheism is the belief that "All is God and God is all". This is the concept that the earth and its life force is god and god permeates all things. Some Wiccans believe that the god of pantheism is an impersonal god or force where as others do not.

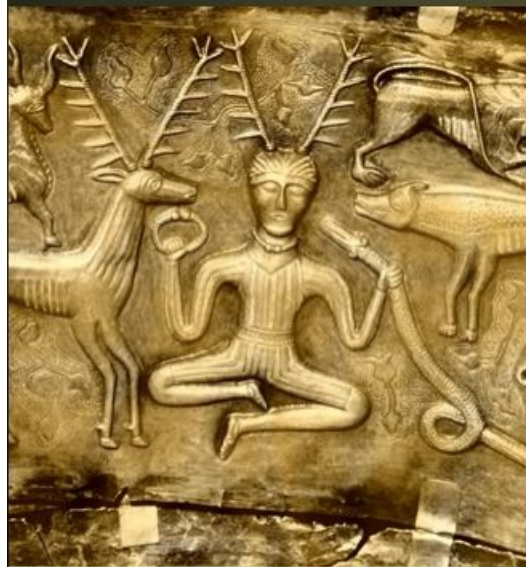
Polytheism is the belief in many gods and goddess. Wicca makes no qualms about worshiping as many deities as you desire. Hinduism, Buddhism Egyptian, Celtic, Greek, Sumerian, Latin, and Roman gods-it's all open. Wicca's supreme being is often referred to as the All, the triple goddess (maiden, mother and crone) the goddess, sometimes the goddess and god or the goddess and the horned god (see below) or sometimes even the "Lord and Lady".

Wiccan author Scott Cunningham elaborates: ²⁹

- When envisioning the Goddess and God, many of the Wicca see them as well-known deities from ancient religions. Diana, Pan, Isis, Hermes, Hina, Tammuz, Hecate, Ishtar, Cerridwen, Thoth, Tara, Aradia, Artemis,

Pele, Apollo, Kanaloa, Bridget, Helios, Bran, Lugh, Hera, Cybele, Inanna, Maui, Ea, Athena, Lono, Murduk - the list is virtually endless."

- "Wicca is a joyous religion springing from our kinship with nature...Because the Wicca see deity inherent in nature, many of us are involved in ecology-saving the earth from utter destruction by your own hands. The Goddess and God still exist, as they have always existed, and to honor them we honor and preserve our precious planet."



Witch and author Starhawk says:

- "The Goddess is first of all earth, the dark, nurturing mother who brings forth all life...The Earth Goddess is also air and sky...the Star Goddess, ruler of things felt but not seen...The celestial Goddess is seen in the moon...The Moon Goddess has three aspects..."³⁰

Of course, the concept of "All is God and God is all" can only mean one thing; we too are gods according to Wicca.

- "We are of the nature of the Gods, and a fully realized man or woman is a channel for that divinity, a manifestation of the God or the Goddess."³¹

Witch practitioner Margot Adler elaborates:

- "A spiritual path that is not stagnant ultimately leads one to the understanding of one's own divine nature. Thou art Goddess. Thou art God. Divinity is imminent in all Nature. It is as much within you as without."³²

Biblical Teaching

One thing that Wicca and Christianity can agree upon is that nature and our planet are here for us to enjoy and as such, we need to take care of it as much as possible. We should all be environmentally conscious.

In fact, one of the things you can stress to a Wiccan is that in the first chapter of Genesis, God said seven times "it was good" after the creation events.

Also, the Bible does teach that we are to be environmentally conscious and take care of the environment as seen in the following verses:

- Genesis 2:15 says "Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it."
- Deuteronomy 20:19, 20 says that when besieging a city that "you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an ax against them; if you can eat them, do not cut them down to use in the siege, for the tree of the field is man's food..."
- Psalm 115:16 says "The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD's; but the earth He has given to the children of men."

But while there are things we can agree upon, there are essentials that we cannot compromise on.

First, the Bible states that there is only one God and not a pantheon of gods and goddess:

- Deuteronomy 6:4 says "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!"

Second, the Bible says that we should have no other gods before the "only true God" (John 17:3):

- Exodus 20:3 says "You shall have no other gods before Me."

Of course this verse is not saying there are many *true* gods and you should only worship Jehovah God. What its saying is that in those

days, there were many surrounding peoples who worshipped and sacrificed to *false* gods and the Israelites were not to be led astray to worship those gods.

This verse also speaks to things i.e., money, success, jobs, property, etc. that could draw our eyes and attention off the “only true God” (John 17:3) effectively causing us to worship them instead of God.

Third, the Bible states that God is separate from His creation:

- Genesis 1:1 says “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

This one verse demonstrates that God was before creation and thus not part of it. God is outside of our spacetime continuum and He is not dependent on anything for Him to be.

- Colossians 1:16, 17 further testifies that Jesus is the creator of all things, “For by Him **all things** were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. **All things** were created through Him and for Him. And He is before **all things**, and in Him **all things** consist.”

While God is present everywhere according to Psalm 139:7-8, God is not everything:

- Psalm 139:7-8 says, “Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.”
- Isaiah 57:15 says, “For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: ‘I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit. To revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.’”

Here we see His *Transcendence*, meaning God is above and uniquely different from His creation.

And we see His *Immanence*, meaning God still works and His presence is felt in the lives of believers who repent and live by faith.

Pantheism reduces the personal and loving God to little more than an impersonal force.

Finally, the Bible states that since God is separate from His creation, we shouldn't "exchange a truth for a lie" and worship what has been created:

- Romans 1:24, 25 says "Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged a truth for a lie, *and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator*, who is blessed forever."

Wiccan Scott Cunningham states that "in Wiccan thought, the deities didn't exist before our spiritual ancestor's acknowledgement of them."³³



Do the gods and goddess of Wicca actually exist?

What objective proof can you offer or how do you know they exist?

If they didn't exist before somebody made them up, according to Wiccan Scott Cunningham, doesn't that mean that they were created in someone's mind?

If you can make up a god in your own mind, is it really a god or a figment of your imagination?

Let's move on to the next topic in *The Religion of Wicca* by looking at the **D** in the acronym R.E.**D**.E. – Divination, Spells and Magick.

3. Divination, Spells and Magick

Wiccans utilizing spells and magick go hand-in-hand like Christians utilizing prayer and Bible reading go hand-in-hand.

Wiccan Scott Cunningham says "It's common knowledge even among the masses that Witches practice magic...Wicca is...a religion that embraces magic as one of its basic concepts"³⁴ and the Witch Starhawk states that "divination is a traditional part of the Craft..."³⁵

The purpose of divination, spells and magick (spelled with a "k" to differentiate it from entertainment or stage show magic), is to harness the power or force that permeates all things, i.e., personal power, earth power and divine power, into one's own bidding.

Divination, [Latin: *to be inspired by a god*] is the practice of consulting powers outside of ourselves in an attempt to get information or direction on a decision we can't seem to make by dowsing, palm reading, tarot cards, astrology, numerology, Ouija boards, necromancy (consulting the dead), reading tea-leaves, crystal balls, etc.

Regarding divination, Scott Cunningham says:

- "The crystal has long been used in contemplative divination. The diviner gazes into the ball until the psychic faculties' blossom, and images, seen in the mind or projected by it into the depths of the crystal, reveal the necessary information."³⁶

Regarding spells and magick, Scott Cunningham says:

- "The spell is...simply a ritual in which various tools are purposefully used, the goal is fully stated (in words, pictures or within the mind), and energy is moved to bring about the needed result."³⁷
- "Magic is the projection of natural energies to produce needed effects...contrary to popular belief, magic isn't supernatural...it is an occult (hidden) practice steeped in millennia of secrecy, slander, and misinformation, but it is a natural practice utilizing genuine powers that haven't yet been discovered or labeled by science."³⁸

And Starhawk explains:

- "A spell is a symbolic act done in an altered state of consciousness, *in order to cause a desired change...*" ³⁹ (emphasis added)

From the preceding quotes, we see that divination, spells and magick are used by Wicca to focus energies, get information and influence events around the practitioner by directing psychic powers for a specific and practical purpose.

But how does magick and spells work? According to Wiccans, what causes the outcome of spells and magick?

According to Starhawk:

- "When our own energy is concentrated and channeled, it can move the broader energy currents. The images and objects used in spells are the channels, the vessels through which our power is poured and by which it is shaped. *When energy is directed into the images we visualize, it gradually manifests physical form and takes shape in the material world.*"⁴⁰ (emphasis added)

Basically, by using the energies in our plane of existence or material world, Wiccans say that they can manipulate the non-material world to bring into existence or "physically manifest" objects or circumstances in the material world.

The Witch Starhawk says that "Magic is the craft of Witchcraft, and few things are at once so appealing, so frightening...magic is to weave unseen forces into form...dangerous-the ultimate adventure."⁴¹



How do you know if what's behind these "unseen forces" is evil or not?

Why would you want to open something you possibly might not be able to close that's "frightening" and "dangerous"?

Biblical Teaching

The Bible does not equivocate when it comes to teaching that occultic practices such as divination, magick and spells, sorcery (a word *Wiccans* avoid using due to its negative connotations) and contact with the dead are forbidden practices that are appalled by God.

- Leviticus 19:26 says "You shall not eat anything with the blood, nor shall you practice divination or soothsaying."
- Isaiah 44:24, 25 says "Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer...Who frustrates the signs of the babblers, and drives diviners mad; Who turns wise men backward, and makes their knowledge foolishness;"
- Exodus 22:18 says "You shall not permit a sorceress to live."

Please note that I am not condoning killing witches since we live under the New Covenant of grace but merely pointing out that sorcery is appalling and an abomination to God.

- Deuteronomy 18:10-14 says "There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD, and because of these abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before you. You shall be blameless before the LORD your God. For these nations which you will dispossess listened to soothsayers and diviners; but as for you, the LORD your God has not appointed such for you."
- 2 Kings 21:6 says "Also [Manasseh] made his son pass through the fire, practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft, and consulted spiritists and mediums. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger."
- (See also Isaiah 47:12-14; Revelation 19:21; 21:2; 22:15)

It's interesting to note that in Acts 8:9-25, the apostle Peter rebukes Simon Magus a sorcerer and magician, and it's here that a possible forerunner for the roots of Wicca can be found as Saint Hippolytus of Rome (AD 170-236) comments on Simons doctrine:

- “The disciples, then, of this (Magus), celebrate magical rites, and resort to incantations. And (they profess to) transmit both love-spells and charms, and the demons said to be senders of dreams, for the purpose of distracting whomsoever they please... ‘And they have an image of Simon (fashioned) into the image of Jupiter, and (an image) of Helen [Simon’s paramour] in the form of Minerva; and they pay adoration to these.’ But they call the one Lord and the other Lady. And if any one amongst them, on seeing images of either Simon or Helen, would call them by name, he is cast off, as being ignorant of the mysteries.”⁴²

The bottom line is that God does not want us to circumvent Him by trying to do a “tail-end run” around Him to get to powers that He warned us about and we have no business meddling in.

God is the only source of good power and Satan, whether Wiccans acknowledge his existence or not, is the source of all other power - and it’s an evil power that fuels the occult side.

The Bible tells us that Satan is a liar (John 8:44) and it’s not gods and goddesses that make things happen in the world of the occult but Satan and demons who masquerade as nature deities.

Let’s move on to the final letter our critique of *Wicca* by looking at the **E** in the acronym R.E.D.**E**. – **E**xperience Based.

4. Experience Based

One of the greatest dangers entering the church today is an experience or mysticism based type of religious experience that takes precedence over the theological truths God has revealed about Himself in the Bible.

The danger lies in that while experiences are subjective and change with our emotions, the Scriptures remain objective.

Relativism, as discussed earlier is an experienced based response that says that there are no absolutes and truth varies from people to people, place to place, as well as from time to time. What is true for you may or may not be true for me.

In Wicca there are no “scriptures” or books that hold their “doctrines”, so experiences are all they have to fall back on and these experiences take precedence over any kind of dogmatic teachings.

These experiences take place in the form of “chanting, meditation, concentration, visualization, music, dance, invocation, and ritual drama.”⁴³ The witch Starhawk says that “solitary meditation and visualization practice are part of every Witch’s training.”⁴⁴

Starhawk also explains that the Eastern religions are “very close to that of Witchcraft” in the respect that “they are experiential rather than intellectual; they offer exercises, practices, and meditations...”⁴⁵

Let’s take a look at a few of these in detail to see exactly what Wiccans teach regarding meditation, visualization, and altered states of consciousness.

Meditation

Meditative practices are utilized in Wicca to enhance clarity and psychic awareness by having the practitioner concentrate on certain thoughts or symbols.

Wiccan Scott Cunningham explains:

- “Meditation is an important art for inducing total relaxation...it’s a quite time in which we commune with the Goddess, the God, and ourselves, relaxing the conscious mind’s hold on our psychic awareness.”⁴⁶

Janet and Stewart Farrar explain in *A Witches' Bible* that the first step in "The Ways of Making Magic" is *meditation and concentration*.

Starhawk explains that:

- "Meditations on the elements are part of the training of every Witch. After experiencing the energy of each element separately, the apprentice is taught to combine them, in preparation for learning to cast a circle."⁴⁷

Former Occult/New Age practitioner turned Christian, Marcia Montenegro says:

- "Meditation, visualization, invocation (calling on forces or gods/goddesses), chanting, burning candles and special rituals trigger a sense of the mystical, thus reinforcing the core belief system. Practicing these techniques over a period of time usually leads to ecstatic or paranormal experiences because 1) of the subjective expectation, & 2) there are forces that will respond."⁴⁸

Biblical Teaching

Biblical meditation needs to be understood since the word "meditate" or "meditation" is used twenty times in the Bible.

Let's examine verses that teach us why and how to meditate on God's word:

- Psalm 1:2 says, "But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night."

The word *meditate* [Hebrew: *hagah*] means to "ponder by talking to oneself, speak, study or talk."

- Joshua 1:2 says, "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it."

- Psalm 19:14 says, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer."
- Psalm 63:6 says that "when I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches."
- See also Psalm 48:9; 77:12; 104:34; 143:5 and Psalm 119

So, we notice that we are to "meditate" or "ponder by talking to ourselves," inwardly and outwardly about the word of God, about God Himself and His works and it should be from the heart. This is a far cry from what meditation means to the Wiccan.

Philippians 4:8 says, "Finally, brethren, whatever things are **true**, whatever things are **noble**, whatever things are **just**, whatever things are **pure**, whatever things are **lovely**, whatever things are **of good report**, if there is any **virtue** and if there is anything **praiseworthy**--meditate on these things."

Visualization

Visualization is defined as consistently and repeatedly forming mental images of an object or a desired goal in order to bring that thing into reality.

Visualization is an occult practice that's taught by Joel Osteen and other Word of Faith teachers as well as by Rhonda Byrne in her bestselling book *The Secret*.

Wicca teaches that without proper visualization techniques, rituals, spells, and magick will not work as intended. Cunningham teaches that it "is also used to direct *personal power* and *natural power* energies during *magic* for various purposes, including *charging* and forming the *magic circle*."⁴⁹

Laura Cabot, a witch, offers classes on the "practice and study of aura, visualization, healing and techniques of spell casting..." on her website.⁵⁰

Wicca offers classes on visualization and says it's "the ability to see something in your mind that is not there for real...Use of visualization was common among shamans too...Shamans taught that a person must learn not only to see the object but make it alive - to smell, touch, taste and hear the object - to imagine it as a whole and feel that it is real... As you know - the thought can materialize. If you wish for something and visualize it as if it was real, that something will eventually come to you in your real life."⁵¹

Wiccan Scott Cunningham talks about taking a cord and forming it into a shape of an object that you desire on an altar and writes that while you are doing this, "visualize the needed object; raise power and send it forth to bring it to manifestation. So shall it be."⁵²

Biblical Teaching

Visualization is also used by professional athletes and artists. For example, a professional golfer might visualize a perfect swing and getting the shot straight down the fairway or a musician might visualize how a certain piece should go or how a movement should blend into a chorus.

These are perfectly expectable, since after all, God did give us a mind and an imagination in which to produce beautiful music, art and literature.

The visualization practices we are talking about that are utilized by Wicca are basically a way to circumvent God by trying to get what you want by another means.

No where in Scripture do we read of Jesus or His apostles using visualization techniques or any occultic practices taught by Wicca.

No where in Scripture is prayer and healing accomplished by visualizing the final outcome with the purpose of bringing it into reality.

In the Bible, we read that God hears our prayers and that He is the provider of all things:

- 1 John 5:15 says, "And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him."
- James 1:17 says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning."

The Bible also tells us that it is our *faith* in God and what God does – it's God who moves the mountains. Time and time again the disciples were rebuked for not having enough *faith* in God.

- See Matthew 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 17:20

It's our *faith* in God, our trust in God and our hope in God that He is in control of all our circumstances because "[His] grace is sufficient for [us], for [His] strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:7); this is where the Christian gets his strength and not in utilizing the occultic practice of visualization techniques.

Remember that out of the "thoughts of our hearts" our wickedness is displayed:

- Genesis 6:5 says, "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

Trying to circumvent God, His wisdom and His plans for our lives is foolishness.

Altered States of Consciousness

An altered state of consciousness [ASC] can be defined as, "that state in which the mind is highly susceptible to outside suggestion."

ASC can be achieved or instigated by such things as hypnosis, serious trauma, sleep disturbances, sensory deprivation or overload, chemical imbalances in the brain, fever or even epileptic seizures. Social behaviors such as frenzied dancing or chanting can induce ASC and finally, they may be induced by electrically stimulating parts of the brain or by ingesting certain drugs such as excessive alcohol, LSD, peyote and psychedelic mushrooms just to name a few.

Wicca utilizes ASC techniques as we see in the following quotes from Starhawk: ⁵³

- “[Magic] opens the gates between the unconscious and the conscious minds...”
- “A spell is a symbolic act done in an altered state of consciousness, in order to cause a desired change.”
- “Deeper levels of trance [what Starhawk calls ASC] may open up paranormal senses, psychic awareness, precognition. We may empathize and connect with other beings and life forms...”

Scott Cunningham reinforces Wicca’s use of ASC:

- “With these spiritual tools [chanting, meditation, concentration, visualization, music, dance, invocation, and ritual dance], the Wicca achieve a state of ritual consciousness similar to those attained by the most brutal shamanic ordeals. I deliberately used the term “alternate states of consciousness.”...Effective Wiccan ritual enables us to slip into such states, allowing communication and communion with the Goddess and God.”⁵⁴

Biblical Teaching

Human Beings should be very leery of anything that makes us *susceptible to outside suggestion*. 1 Peter 5:8 says to be “self-controlled, be watchful; because your adversary the devil walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”

Dr. Ron Rhodes talks about altered states of consciousness:

- “Leon Otis at Stanford Research Institute has documented that some who attain an altered state of consciousness develop *increased anxiety, confusion, and depression*. The severity of these symptoms was directly correlated with the length of time the person was in the altered state. Researcher Gary Schwartz likewise found that too much deep meditation – leading to an altered state - *can hinder logical thought processes*. Researcher Arnold Ludwig found that ‘as a person enters or is in an ASC [altered state of consciousness], he often experiences fear of losing his grip on reality, and losing his self control.’”⁵⁵ (emphasis added)

Over and over again, the Scriptures tell us that we are to practice self-control:

- Galatians 5:22, 23 says, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”
- 1 Peter 4:7 says, “The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.” (NIV)
- 2 Peter 1:6 says, “But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.”

The Bible Knowledge Word Study comments on this verse saying that “in the NT as well as here, it means ‘Self-control’ with respect to the restraint of one’s emotions, impulses, desires [and actions].”⁵⁶

- Titus 1:7-9 says, “For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.”

The word *self-control* [Greek: *enkrateia*] means to be “in control or to be in control over ones passions or desires” and anything that removes that control out of our hands is indeed dangerous.

We read that self-control is a Christian virtue and part of the fruit of the Spirit and that “if we live in the Spirit, let us also walk [i.e., live your life] in the Spirit.”



If researchers have determined that altered states of consciousness can lead to *increased anxiety, confusion, and depression* and can *hinder logical thought processes* as well as the *fear of losing ones grip on reality, and losing ones self control*, why does this sound appealing?

Read Galatians 5:22, 23 – doesn't this sound like a more excellent way to be in touch with the Spirit of God?

Conclusion

As we have seen, Wicca goes against the worldview of Christianity in many aspects.

Occultism, shamanism, polytheism and nature worship all go against what God has taught us in His word - the Bible.

Relativism goes against all logic. If nothing or everything is true and everything and anything goes, where does it end?

Even Wicca and witches ultimately believe in some form of truth – they must – for example, they believe that the *Burning Times* were hideous and terror filled, and for good reason. But, with Relativism my truth may be that burning witches is a good thing and so who is to say otherwise? Relativism, taken to its final conclusion is illogical.

As Christians, we need to be able to effectively and openly discuss these issues, not by fear or condemnation, but with love, compassion, and with gentleness and respect. (1 Peter 3:15).

Wiccans are concerned about the environment and world peace, and often times the church has been silent on those issues.

1 Timothy 4:1 says, "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons..."

We need to realize that before we came to a saving faith in Jesus Christ, we were in the same boat as Wiccans and pagans and yet someone shared the love of Jesus Christ with us. We need to share that same love with those who are lost, whether Wiccan, Mormon, Jehovah's Witness, Muslim, etc.

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4. *Find It Quick – Handbook on Cults & New Religions*, Ron Rhodes, Harvest House Publishers, ISBN: 0736914838
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If you have questions or comments, please feel free to email info@calvaryCO.church

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