

Paganism and Its Toxic Deleterious Influence on the Church

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Introduction

The world is in constant change and appears to be in continuous flux at all times. Though the changes are rapid, frequent and to some extent haphazard, there is however some consistency in its cycles, nothing is exactly new (Ecclesiastes 1:10). Something may appear novel or new but on critical analysis, it may be a repeat of a historical matter, though in a different modified garb. The principle essentially remains the same. What was outlawed in the modern era or even suppressed could make a major come back in another form, thus apparently appearing novel. What may be new is probably the tolerance levels now but not the issue itself per se. For instance, homosexuality may not exactly be a new practice¹. It has been there all along but is prohibited in God's word (e.g. Genesis 19). It was accordingly frowned upon and thus was not acceptable in Judeo-Christian contexts but as postmodern thought invasion replaced modernism, everything is now acceptable and nothing is wrong. Things are relative. This is the same case for all sorts of things including abortion, euthanasia, witchcraft, magic and a whole host sinful practices (Gal 5:16-17). This paper will not delve into specific details of the aforementioned issues but explores paganism and its impact on the Church today.

Recurrent issues

The advent of post modernism over the years has opened a Pandora box, yea, a can of worms out of which all sorts of issues have emanated, some old, ancient and outlawed while others apparently new, in keeping with what Romans 1:32 asserts. Ancient sins that once vexed the people of God about which *YHWH* warned people seem to have made a potent comeback. These sins are currently perceived as acceptable and normal in our day with hardly any one raising an eye brow. Interestingly, the one perceived out of place is the right thinking individual, given the present relative thought patterns that have virtually

¹ Some people claim that Homosexuality itself is never condemned in the Bible but the abuse of (i.e. homosexual offenders). Others claim that the Genesis 19 even was not about the evils of Homosexuality per se but the terrible treating of visitors in a collective society. Therefore, according to this latter school, homosexuality in and of itself is never condemned but a good thing!

eliminated all ethical or moral boundaries for right or wrong. The times abhor absolutes. Everything depends on one's convictions, values, world view, preferences, hind orientation, definition of reality as well as ethical options whether deontological or teleological. Among the major recurring issues is that of idolatry in its various facets manifested in paganism, materialism, occultism and/or the push towards syncretism. Many would be Christians have either a wrong notion about what truth is, ought to be or simply compromise in the quest to appear respectable (Craig, 2008). In a day when Science seems to carry more clout than God's inspired word, fewer and fewer Christians remain resolutely steadfast upon the inspired page, pre-suppositionally accepting truth as unchanging, inherent veracity and ever relevant in every age. Many people have bowed to evolutionary thought and completely eradicated the ancient boundary stones of what is right or wrong. Yet there is another extreme end of people calling themselves religious that will not bend an inch to countenance any evidences as supports to their convictions. While they may have a good valid point, there is need to be reasonable for our faith is rational and makes sense (Geisler, 2008). Though truth does not need a walking stick (or external support) to stand scrutiny, it certainly needs to be well presented in a way that honours God (I Peter 3:15).

A brief history of Idolatry, Paganism and Polytheism

I. Definitions

Any talk about Paganism at first seems to generate surprise because paganism or pagan behaviours are often associated with the ancient, backward, uncivilized and less developed eras. Pagans or paganism often carries the connotation or idea of one either being godless or at best subscribing or believing in a deity or set of them often embedded or hidden in nature. Often pagans could be pantheistic, syncretic or indeed animistic in nature often paying allegiance to some idol or a set of them. Their lives and lively hood including their fate or omens revolve around (or are influenced by) that central object of worship. Apart from being perceived backward, pagans are often considered to be brutal, sadistic and savage in nature. In short, pagans or paganism does not have anything to do with the revealed God of the Bible or some such deity to whom individuals pay sanctified homage in the Christian sense.

But what is the exact definition of '*Paganism*' or a '*pagan*'? Like other words, this word defies one single definition, let alone, meaning. I will give my own attempted constructed definition though my ideas are derived from others. While some define a '*pagan*' or '*paganism*' as '*one that does not attend a place of worship such as a Synagogue, Church or Mosque*'², another school defines it as '*one that follows, practices or offers allegiance or worship to an ancient deities*

² Source of this idea: Vocabulary.com accessible at: <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/pagan>, accessed on 13/11/2019

(I.e. polytheists), *being or object by performance of prescribed rituals or rhythmic practices other the one true God of Heaven*. Still others refer to 'pagans' as not necessarily an essentially unthinking devotee of a given deity but one whose life, mind, thinking and in inmost being revolves away from the known or accepted God whilst outwardly continuing to perform or carrying out all the external rituals of the said religion, when in fact they live as functional atheists or some such. I would therefore craft my definition as follows: *A pagan is a person whose thoughts, practices and object of worship points away from Yahweh or His veneration*. Admittedly, this is not an exhaustive or all-comprehensive definition but attempts to capture the central idea of God being secondary in one's life and practice.

Although we do not have paganism in the ancient form just described above, pagan principles have subtly percolated from the past into the present scenario obviously extremely difficult to discern or detect. It (i.e. paganism) often shows its presence or tentacles in the attitudes, devotion or attention people give to it. One form of paganism is idolatry, quite apart from the well-known vices/rites of witch craft, necromancy, or praying for the dead, it comes across in aspects such as materialism, modes of thinking or approaches to life among others. Paganism has no reference to the God of the Bible and carries about as though the True God does not exist. Examples of pagan traits include the thought process, decision making devoid of God, rank pragmatism over the will of God or some such practice. It may further be said that an idol or a set of them is anything that rules, governs or takes the centre stage in one's life with unrivalled control over the subject. Anything that takes the place of God is thus classified as an idol. When idols or objects of worship are many, this is what is referred to as Polytheism, leading to religious pluralism. By implication, this definition of idolatry definitely means that Churches, Nations or individuals are not exempt and scarcely escape its dragnet, being all pervasive, especially those raised in contexts such as the materialistic world such as most of the developed north nations. Idolatry takes different forms and shapes by that token! In the poorer South context, physical idols, animism or fear of the unknown is rife while in the richer (or materially blessed) North, materialism, humanism, self-worship or some such vice reigns supreme, practically unrivalled! It thus depends where your lot falls!

II. Paganism, idolatry and polytheism in relation to YHWH

Paganism, Idolatry and Polytheism are ancient sins that have been with us for many generations. They are inter-connected and thus emanate from each other. Although one could argue that Paganism is the mother from which idolatry and polytheism emanate, for purposes of our discourse in this paper, we shall treat them as distinct, separate entities, though connected at the core. As one reads through scripture, they will discover that as the children of Israel were entering the Promised Land (i.e. Numbers, Deuteronomy and Joshua etc.) where heathen nations lived, they encountered people of different character, thought, culture,

and practice or belief system. These native nations did not know *JEHOVAH* and thus had practices antagonistic to what was expected of God's covenant people. In Exodus 20 *YHWH* gives the Ten Commandments³ in addition to the Abrahamic and other covenants which they were to obey (Pink 2021; Watson 1957). The first and second commands specifically instruct the Israelites to exclusively be dedicated to *YHWH* and never fall prey to the idolatrous ways of the Canaanites that were not only polytheistic but had practices directly against God's word. But we need to wind back a little to remind ourselves about the Israelites that fell into idol worship when they compelled Aaron to mould a golden calf for them (Exodus 32). They demanded something they could physically see and touch, despite the clear manifestations of *YHWH*'s deliverance of them from the Egyptians at and beyond the Red⁴ Sea. It only needed a few days' of Moses' absence from camp before they quickly forgot and turned to idolatry. People tend to turn to things they can touch and see as their saviour. God tells Moses what the people were doing and determines to obliterate them but Moses intercedes and then treks down to the camp only to break the stone tablets in holy indignation! He later returns to collect a second set of tablets having punished the evil doers that would not reach or live in the Promised Land. Further, we notice that peer pressure forces people to do things they would not ordinarily do. In the fullness of time, we see the same people (i.e. Israelites) demanding a King to rule over them, all because they had seen what all other Nations were doing or being ruled (I Sam 8). We need to watch out for peer pressure, conforming or adopting ways that may not be pleasing to God. As the Israelites journey further into the land, these obstinate covenant people repeatedly lapse into idolatry, intermarriages, and sexual sins or enter alliances that displease God. This happens frequently across scripture and yet God remains true to His covenant (Pink 2021). Pagans do not fear or truly know God. They do not submit to His law nor can they do so (Rom 8:9). Fallen hearts in Adam have a tendency to do things as they please, are egocentric and will oppose any one that seeks to introduce or enforce the ways of the Lord. Furthermore, since pagans do not fear or love *JEHOVAH*, they tend to put their hope in material tangible things such as created things rather than the invisible God (Romans 1: 25). They often are mystical, syncretic, entertain Occultic pragmatic practices and at times animistic in their world view, hence the embracing of polytheism. The Christian faith posits that there is only one God who is both transcendent and yet immanent. *Elohim* is the great creator of the Universe as well as the self-existent (*Yahweh*) one that needs to be revered as the almighty King. In lands where this view of God's incommunicable and communicable attributes are better known, we often see a different approach to life. They tend to be theistic and distinguishable from other merely religious people. *Ecumenism* aims at uniting religions at the expense of specifics or distinctives that defines each particular religion (Pollit, 1996). For instance, remove the blood atonement from the Christian gospel and what you have are mere moral ethical formulations. Most likely, the so-called Christian faith will turn out to be one of the many faiths on the religious menu. But this is not so

³ Some style them as '*the ten sayings or words*'

⁴ Others claim that the accurate rendering for this is "Reed" rather than "Red Sea."

because Christianity is about faith in a saviour that left the glories of Heaven to redeem a covenant people elected in Christ before the foundations of the world (Eph 1:4). Election, Predestination, Regeneration, Calling, Justification, Sanctification and Glorification found in the Christian *Ordo Salutis* are not found in any other creed. Some religions may claim some aspects of this *Ordo Salutis* but they certainly cannot be understood in the same sense. Moreover, Christian truth never changes nor is it palatable to the unregenerate. They (i.e. the unregenerate) get rubbed on the wrong end once you begin to define biblical terms such as sin, wickedness and so forth. Sadly, some quarters of Christian circles, especially the seeker sensitive mega churches have truncated the gospel, removed offensive terms or, in some serious cases, redefined certain terms away from their etymological basis. This is definitely another gospel resulting from pagan influences or at best crippled by postmodern thinking. We have in mind some recent defective versions of the Bible too (Riplinger 1993). G.A Riplinger makes a very aggressive case against nearly all newer versions after the KJV, worth perusing through, though we do not readily agree with all her conclusions. Dr Jeff Straub has done us well to give a balanced picture to this matter. That said, some Bible versions, just like some Qur'an translations are bad!

Forms and manifestations of idolatry

Idolatry takes different shades and modes manifesting itself in different forms. For people in the Old Testament, it often came across in forms of physical images such as the Golden Calf or some such artifacts. Interestingly, the commandments in Exodus 20 as well as Deuteronomy 6 seem to suggest that idolatry was far beyond the graven images-physical or imagined. We can safely say that an idol is anything that takes the place of God in the sense of prominence or importance. If that be the case, then anything can turn into an idol, even innocent looking things appearing legitimate in and of themselves. Today, material possessions, wealth, money, fame, status, accomplishments, education and a host of other things could easily be turned into idols because they rob the prime place of God. Idols are extremely subtle today because they appear innocent at face value as opposed to ancient times when they were easy to spot, isolate and reject. They were materially visible. In Exodus, Numbers and other parts of scriptures, idols are often physical sculptures of stone, timber or some such material to which mortals bow paying homage, perform rituals, rites as well as offer sacrifices. Most civilized and educated exposed individuals disdain such idolatry considering it beneath their status supposing that they are free from any debilitating and enslaving form of idolatry. However, that may not necessarily be the case because the Apostle John in the 5th chapter of his first Epistle warns against and encourages Christians (and non-Christians alike) to flee from Idolatry, in whatever form it may rare its ugly but often disguised face (I John 5:21). It must be loathed, avoided and fled from at all costs. The aged Apostle John knew very well the deleterious effects on an enslaved soul, as they would

not properly worship God or give Him His due honour. Idols often do not come alone but invite other aspects such as syncretism which ultimately enslaves the person. One needs to be especially spiritually alert if they are to detect, identify, isolate and reject idolatry.

The Potency, Extent of Idolatry and Paganism

Paganism is far more potent than many think or imagine. Given the current conducive environment supporting tolerance of varied views, premised on post modernism tenets, Paganism is now alive, kicking, thriving and well, growing stronger by the day. It has had great support in recent times where minority views are given preference and garner huge support. Additionally, nothing is considered wrong or right and anyone pointing fingers (even over morally correct things!) is perceived as an extremist, archaic, narrow, emotionally unstable, a danger to society and bigoted. What was once considered wrong is now right, if not given preference treatment. Thus, paganism is now seeping into about every aspect of everyday life with no one daring to check its advance, for how can they? The Biblical grids have been removed from under their feet! Being all pervasive (i.e. paganism), it has percolated into literally all areas of daily life such as Academia, Church, Public life/office and may we say, Private lives too. We increasingly read or hear about *Transcendental Meditation*, *Yoga* or some such originally perceived as clearly pagan practices that were once frowned upon little over a generation ago now being tolerated, welcomed and even embraced! Now people classify these as matters of indifference, claiming to have grown wiser, when in fact experienced spiritual declension!

Dangers of Paganism

Paganism blunts the spiritual senses leading to a hardened or seared conscience (I Timothy 4:2; Hebrews 3:13). Paganism, at times, denies reality, absolutes or anything that posits the existence of one all-powerful God. Instead, it supports polytheism, idolatry or anything veering away from the God of Israel. Paganism kills Churches sapping morality out of public life, replacing it with relative tenets, which in themselves, are intolerant to Biblical Christianity (Pollitt, 1986). A Country Zambia (my context) in recent times has increasingly experienced increasing but unprecedented levels of wickedness, alcoholism, juvenile delinquency, immorality and corruption in the public sphere. One possible reason for this development is the resurgence of paganism in the private and public spaces alike. '*Fish first rots at the head,*' so the ancient adage goes. This saying runs true for all declining or may we say, post Christian contexts. The other day, I was reading a paper by a (righteously???) frustrated Muslim (Muhammad M Rahman, 2021)⁵, ranting, railing and almost insulting away against his fellow compromised Muslims claiming they had more or less apostatized in the Global

⁵ Refer to Muhammas M Rahman, Why, Currently, Muslims are their Greatest Enemies? Pages 8-12

cultural blizzard where absolutes are abhorred. Evidently, he spoke as a Shia Muslim because of certain inclinations such as preference for Iran Islamic state, the awaited hidden imam etc. among others. Though I could not agree with all his sentiments, I could not help empathising because he evidently was overwhelmed and struggling with the rigors, flood waters and reality of Postmodernism propelled spiritual tsunami rippling right across the world, shoving everything in its path, irrespective of one's creed. Dave Hunt, in his book, *The Seduction of Christianity* highlights very frightful but helpful information the Christian needs to take heed unto. What makes one's hair stand on end while reading this book is that paganism has equally invaded the Church, the supposedly House of God!

Antidotes to Idolatry and Paganism

The best antidote to what is wrong is to imbibe or ingest what is right. If you would recognise the counterfeit from afar, ensure you master and familiarise yourself with the genuine, authentic article. John Newton (1725-1805) of old aptly suggested this approach (Newton, 1764). In this case, the Christian must soak into the scriptures, ensure they internalise the Biblical meta-narrative right across scripture and thus will be able to discern, detect, isolate error or heresy from afar. To know the truth will enable a person to detect, identify and contend for the faith once for all entrusted to the saints. Error and Heresy (GK: *Airesis*), making a choice run and so common in our day. At one time, error, let alone heresy, was considered very serious, even leading to death, although I may not subscribe to this lethal practice. Although heresy was and ought to be condemned, the way it is thus persecuted needs to be ethical, lest instruments of power be abused, akin to what happened in the burning of Servetus in Calvin's day. Calvin's name has been drugged in the mud since then. We need not borrow the *spiritual Philistines'* heifer to control doctrinal deviations as probably Calvin did in his day⁶. What began as a small position of defending the faith back in the early Church probably turned to killing any one that deviated from the Roman Catholic Church⁷. At the advent of post modernism, error and heresy have turned to be an equally credible opinion, as good as any other! The Zambian Church, not even the Reformed movement has been spared. New Calvinism has been peddled by the very people who should have been fighting to dispel it (Nyasulu 2019; Williams 2017; Burke 2017). A loose, flippant and diseased Christianity has replaced the vital and vibrant Christianity that characterised the movement

⁶ Although some argue that Calvin has been unfairly judged by successive generations but if read in his context and setting, he could actually be exonerated. Some even argue that he never personally sanctioned or supported the move per se but as a statesman, was obliged to do so. Opponents will not budge for a moment, not on this one! Personally, I hesitate to judge him harshly.

⁷ Interestingly, the Reformers and Catholics agreed on how to punish/persecute those accused of genuine real heresy say the Trinity Dogma. Calvin and other Reformers could not entertain the Anabaptist for instance. We should learn from the past and never repeat these pitfalls but surprisingly, these keep being committed today, though in another form! The John 9:34 (I encourage the reading of entire chapter to appreciate my point here) scenario is all too familiar even in some supposedly Reformed Churches!

sometime before or a decade after 1990. The enemy is at work, bringing and introducing seeds of error, laxity and to some extent, laziness, couched in activity or 'credible' programs when the soul of the movement will have been long lost. There is need to return to the ancient paths. Let me be quick to put a disclaimer by mentioning here that while I strongly and whole heartedly appreciate sincere genuine efforts made to make Christianity speak to the times in our context and not become fossilised as has happened in other contexts, I firmly argue that we need not abandon the old, tried biblical standards. What we need are not new subtle truths, as Dr Peter Masters once rightly quipped (during the 1993 Zambian Reformed Conference), we just need to be more biblically aggressive!

What Others have Written on Idolatry and Paganism

Many have explored the rise of Paganism in its various garbs. Each has focused on different aspects but collectively, they highlight the emerging and toxic, damaging danger of Paganism. Worse still is that it has wormed its way into Churches unaware because many Evangelicals have imbibed wrong notions without knowing that it had pagan roots. Discernment is desperately needed and the best way to detect error is knowing what is true and right. Bob DeWaay wrote extensively in a series of monthly bulletins with penetrating insight riding on a deeply trained exegetical eye. He traces paganism for what it is, its origin and end. After reading his writing, one feels a deep urgency for the Church to arise to the occasion. Others have written deep insightful works worth perusing through. Authors like Dave Hunt & T.A. MacMahon (1986), Herbert J. Pollitt (*The interfaith Movement: The New age enters the Church*, 1996), Zacharias (*Jesus among other gods*, 2000), C.F Boerkoel (Sr.; *The True vs The false Ecumenical Church*, n.d.), JC Ryle (*Warnings to the Churches*, 1967) and Johnson C Philip are among the giants that have devoted some of their works to detect, highlight and explore the deadly changes in our time. But there is equally a growing crowd of Pagan teaching champions. Among the foremost is Carl Jung who took the world back to ancient pagan worship. Others teach about ancient Feminine goddess worship manifesting itself in Pantheism and Panentheism where people believe that the earth is a living deity or being and all humans have their roots and connection to Mother Earth. 'Gia' worship is an ancient goddess worship that claims to have flourished before the Christian Gospel suppressed it. In this climate, goddess worship is on the sharp increase and spilling into the public arena, including climate change advocacy. The idea of protecting the Earth and all is excellent and proper, for God commands humans to be good stewards (Genesis 2:15) but what is the spirit behind this movement? I leave it to your curious exploration. Be that as it may, it (i.e. *Gia* worship/veneration) often finds expression in Feminist Theology.

Take Home Lessons relating to Paganism

There are many lessons that were synthesised from the various sources I brooded over as I prepared this paper. The points that follow summarise what I came away with:

1. People only like aspects of the Cross (of Christ) not what it actually stands for. The Cross differentiates the Biblical Jesus from the wrong notions of the day.
2. Some people (and evangelicals) cannot stand certain Biblical teachings such as damnation, Hell, Sin, Holiness etc., among others because they think these are offensive and must be either modified or avoided while presenting the Christian message. Many Seeker Sensitive Churches patronize that route.
3. Many Christians are sold out to pragmatism at the expense of vital basic Christian doctrines that must be known before someone is saved. As long as it works, no worries, just adopt it! We can talk about whether it is Biblically correct or not later!
4. Many Theological liberals and those running Mega Churches prefer preaching a *self-esteem* gospel, which is no gospel at all. They insist that if you want your Church to grow, tell people what they want to hear. Your sermons and preachers must be informed by demographics, marketing antics and pragmatic manoeuvres. The true gospel is out of the window. Seeker sensitive churches are compromised, normative, affective and often leave out truths.
5. Idolatry is subtle; it appears (i.e. is expressed) in different ways, forms and shades. It often blinds and leads to wrong practice.
6. Idolatry is extremely complex and easily captivates unsuspecting people, hence the need to ensure you are protected in Christ. Know the Word of God.
7. God is both immanent and transcendent; condescension of God sorts out paradoxes.
8. The balance (between immanence & Transcendence) is what confuses people with some veering to one extreme or other.
9. Idolatry replaces God. The Golden Calf story is an example-Exodus 32:8 ff. The Story shows how people easily turn from God "out of sight, out of mind!"
10. Paganism trusts in what it can see (created things) rather than faith or cannot see-e.g. evolution.

11. Saints must strike a balance and be patient to wait in faith upon God. When things are not well or seem to be delaying, people tend to shift in their faith.
12. God reveals Himself in Scripture, though natural revelation points to Him- Romans 1:18
13. Paganism and unbelief easily substitute God- the Golden Calf story is an example.
14. Once God is rejected, absurdities take over.
15. Paganism has deadly consequences and end.
16. Idols are nothing and cannot save or deliver. Isaiah 44 narration comes to mind.
17. God can be known because He is relational and cares for His people.
18. Covenant entails a relationship between God and His people. He is revealed in Jesus Christ.
19. Christians must refuse to go forth into the world to represent God unless He is on their side. That speaks dependence on Him. Spirit filled Christians refuse to proceed without God.
20. Christians should avoid agnosticism or pantheism. At times, Christians venture into legitimate things but without God. This is not safe. What is seen at times seems to give a false sense of security.
21. People tend to shift blame once confronted.
22. In the quest to achieve unity among churches or religions, people go the Ecumenical route. This cannot bring about Unity since it touches on superficial aspects. The ecumenical movement purports to bring about unity on "lowest common denominator theology". It gained momentum from 1967. Ecumenism resists and rejects true Christianity. It is anti-dogmatic which true Christianity is made out of.
23. Today, Evangelicals advocate liberal views that call for unity based on false premises-They fear stigma. Even once solid theologians cower at the idols of the times-fame.
24. True unity in the faith, the ongoing goal of the saints, is premised on truth as revealed in scriptures.

25. Saints can only be trained and equipped by scripture as seen in 2 Timothy 3:1-9; I Tim 4:1-5
26. True Christianity entails sacrifice, commitment and resolve. Very few are ready to ride along this path, not even self-proclaimed Reformed Preachers. The carrot and promise of materialism cripples many before they go far. They are soon tamed ending up justifying what ought not to or in fact re-interpret the very word of God to suit their desires.
27. The word "Church" or *Ekklesia* means; people gathered under Christ; Local assembly of believers; Universal or at times militant. At other times means Triumphant; Never means a building or hierarchical structure or organization.
28. The word "*Bishop*," "*Pastor*," "*Shepherd*," and "*elder*" are used interchangeably in scripture.
29. The Church should Minister grace-*Diaconia*
30. The early saints knew each other and thus error was relatively minimal unlike today.
31. The Saints must know exactly what God requires and contend for the faith-Jude3.
32. Saints get engrafted into church by regeneration (Titus 3:3-5).
33. Progressive Sanctification is a life-long process and so is the quest unto the unity of the faith. Christians must be life-long students.
34. Sadly, many have compromised the faith and in the process rejected basic tenets of the faith such as inerrancy of scripture, bodily resurrection of Christ etc.
35. Many want to be viewed as all inclusive, ecumenical, loving etc. by contemporary scene and thus have documents or activities such as "*Evangelicals & Catholics together*" e.g. J.I. Packer. Others like Ronald Kalifungwa, John Piper, Conrad Mbewe and Isaac Makashinyi among others have veered towards ecumenical directions. This is worrying.
36. The visible Church was born at Pentecost according to some views. Others hold that it already existed in the Old Testament (OT) but manifested or expressed in the New.

37. Context in Bible determines interpretation of the use of the word “Church”- in various senses.
38. The NT canon is closed with vanishing of the Apostles, though some claim otherwise.
39. Human organizations and the Church must be distinguished. One is spiritual while the other is not. Some however argue that this is entirely God’s world and no distinctions exist by that token.
40. Some surmise that the Church might be heading towards Harlotry as read in Revelation 17, 18. There is need to awake!
41. Ecumenism kills the vitality of Churches and removes its power. Though some seek to justify this direction, it simply robs the Church of its distinctive identity, introduces laxity and abhors doctrinal exactness. From the face of it, Ecumenism appears cordial, makes sense, enhances networking and builds strength in numbers, the subtle down side is that it attacks doctrinal precision in the name of maintaining unity, obviously not based on truth. Some compromised souls and preachers use pious and seemingly Biblical arguments such as ‘*Evangelical ecumenism,*’ ‘*being relevant,*’ ‘*responding to felt social needs*⁸, ‘*speaking to the times,*’ ‘*impacting the world*’ or some such fine sounding phrase to justify the imbibing and tolerance of this plague but the bottom line or root cause revolves around individual and/or corporate benefits while sacrificing truth on the Ecumenical alter. In the end, everything becomes relative have allowed post-modern thinking to creep into the entire cognitive faculties.
42. Pragmatism posits that ‘*if it works for you, it is ok*’. The Christian should ask critical questions before embarking on a matter. Questions such as: “How does this glorify God?” ought to be asked.
43. Pragmatism does not allow for dogma, absolutes.
44. Pragmatism, as taught by William James and imbibed by some Christians, is anti-God.
45. Evangelicals must stand on scripture for any matter. They should seek out the authorial intent to adopt and apply not the other way round.
46. Many Christians have been led astray by pragmatism in the quest to make a big name, acquire fame or impact the world. Granted, some level of pragmatism may be handy but this should not be in the driving seat, ignoring what God has said or principles hidden in the word of God.

⁸ Although arguably this phrase may have its place in some contexts such as the Social Development industry

47. Pragmatism is self-centred rather than Theocentric. That explains why some Reformed brethren in Zambia have since discarded the Regulative principle in preference for the normative. After all, it works better and gives immediate results! Never mind the effects, implications or ramifications into the future (Nyasulu 2019).
48. Pragmatism (whether hyper or not) must be laid aside by the Church. It is not always correct for the Church.
49. Pragmatism is pluralistic in nature. Without any standard, anything goes.
50. Pragmatism is destructive in nature and in future. It has crippled the Church, though the gates of Hell can never prevail in the end. The church may be diseased but never die. Christ has promised.
51. Truth is objective. Christians need to learn to “*prove all things*” and not blindly accept things that come their way.
52. Christians need training to know truth so that enabled to discern well and better.
53. People should avoid divination and necromancy-consulting the dead.
54. Christians should read and love the Bible, fear God, reject and expose error.
55. Today, the Church cannot clearly or easily discern because it is: subjective, not biblically trained, imbibed a poisoned culture, rejects the basis of truth (Bible)⁹, prefer emotional experiences over truth, dwell in the “*spiritual realms*” rather than on reality and think objectiveness and truth are unattainable.
56. The Bible is more certain. It is God’s sure word unlike the whims of men that changes with time. (I Peter 1:18-20)
57. The lure of Paganism is real and an ever present danger¹⁰. It is very potent and difficult to detect or wad off. It affects people far more than they realise. The push and pull of unbiblical world needs to be meticulously watched. The Christian’s anchor should be the written word of God lest they conform to the pattern, thinking of this world. Many in the western world¹¹ have abandoned Biblical thinking in preference for pagan heathen thinking and ways of doing things. The saint must therefore watch and be on guard.

⁹ At other times pays mere lip service to Truth

¹⁰ It does not pick and choose regardless of one’s creed, race or status on this terrestrial ball. It invades all regardless

¹¹ Although made serious inroads in other parts of the world in recent years as well.

58. Sadly, the world teaches more about paganism e.g. Roman, Greek culture than about Christian past that has shaped and affected America or Europe.
59. Pagan thought is all pervasive and affects even evangelicalism, as long as it works.
60. We either are transformed by God's word or we conform to the world.
61. If not well trained, will not realise how affected by pagan philosophy.
62. Paganism militates against Christian world view. This is a serious matter!
63. The Children of Israel wanted to conform leading to captivity-demanded a King which eventually became a snare to them (I Sam 8).
64. Monasticism in any form never helps. Whether practiced by Evangelicals or Roman Catholics and indeed other religions, it just never helps!
65. It must be stated though that not everything is evil or wrong about modern technological advancements. The saint must watch though! The attitude must be right to meticulously handle these finer things of life that make life far much easier and better.
66. Truth centres around the person, deity and nature of Christ.
67. The Roman Catholic Church has led in error & heresy in some senses, having laid a foundation which many follow today. Names like good Cyprian¹² come to mind. Cyprian was the one who set the tone of Catholic teaching on re-baptism, hierarchy etc.
68. Many people think Truth is relative when in fact not. Sadly, even Evangelicals are not spared by this plague.
69. The Person and teaching of Jesus come together and determine what is truly "Christian" or not.
70. Novatian was a Church leader who insisted on stricter Christian teaching but was later excommunicated by the Roman Catholic Church. He wrote on the Trinity.
71. A Christian is to hold both to the nature and claims of Christ. Baptism does not save.

¹² Great African theological mind of earlier centuries!

72. Relationship to an organized Church does not mean one is saved.
73. Anyone who separated from the Church was viewed a heretic by the Roman Catholic Church.
74. Christians need to repeatedly affirm and define their theological doctrine e.g. Trinity.
75. Certain truths are fundamental such as Divinity of Christ, Trinity etc. without them, one is a heretic and thus not a Christian.
76. Truth exposes error.
77. The fact that one aligns themselves to a "*just cause*" may not necessarily mean they are orthodox. However Orthodoxy and orthopraxy operate like hand in glove. They cannot be separated by a regenerate mind.
78. To declare other people's views as heresy is not acceptable in the postmodern context. Tolerance is the currency of the times.
79. Today, People do not care about Truth. It is not only those with an African world view that are especially prone to but all fallen humans in general (Chalk, 2013).
80. 'Heresy' means 'to choose or make a choice'. "*Airesis*" is Greek for Heresy as stated elsewhere. Heresy is a choice to depart from fundamentals- Choosing one's belief away from the norm. It is to depart from the norm, establishing one's own "truth" and what to believe. Thus, it is a menace and not correctly understood in the contemporary context. Heresy has terrible consequences and effects upon one's soul. Heresy charge should be connected to Biblical truth not organized structures such as Church organization.
81. We live in an age of choices which choices no longer regulated by God's truth.
82. Christians need to know the truth of God in order to contend for the faith.
83. Without fundamentals being known, God's people cannot rightly contend.
84. God has revealed himself in general and specific revelation.
85. People have freedom of choices but corrupted by the fall.
86. God's elect cannot live as they please for they are covenant people who should obey him only.

87. Some are ready to learn Truth to abandon error while others are defiant.
88. Today, if one contends for the faith, questions notions, they are perceived as “*witch hunters*,” “*insane*,” “*not gracious*,” “*divisive*,” “*backslidden*” or some such ugly labels carrying negative connotations tied around them. This has taken place in Zambia in recent years as the Church has transitioned towards liberalism led by its leaders; Reformed or not.
89. American culture believes in as many choices as possible for this is viewed as better.
90. Some Individuals claim to create their own reality while others reject the very notion of reality.
91. God is the self-existent one (*Yahweh*), not needing anything outside himself. People ought never to forget this.
92. Reality cannot be altered/changed but our relationship to that reality.
93. Post-modern thinking abhors dogma, absolutes or fixed truth.
94. Many accept extra Biblical revelation today as a result, many are led astray. Extra Biblical revelations are deadly, undermine revealed scripture.
95. False Prophets especially “*word of faith*” led by late Kenneth Haggin and a galaxy of others have arisen.
96. Baxter (Mary) claims to have gone to Hell and back. Amazing but clearly false claim! On the other hand, Duplantis claims to have gone to Heaven and back. The two books by Baxter and Duplantis teach extra Biblical revelation and are therefore heretical in nature. Some claims by Baxter and Duplantis are clearly at variance with scripture and other teaching. For example, Baxter claims Satan is in charge of Hell, tormenting others! The Biblical account holds a different view.
97. Inspiration and revelation is consistently under attack in the contemporary context. The canon is complete, no need for new revelations.
98. The claim that any “*final word*” claims inspiration and therefore authoritative. This is not biblical.
99. Heretics have wrong views of Biblical truth including the Trinity etc. Christians need to be very clear on truth.

100. Dante' wrote several books (3 of them) and considered one of the finest poets of all time. His views were not 100% evangelical but some aspects not so or marginally good.
101. The popular phrase "*All truth is God's truth*" can be misleading at times, although it essentially is true.
102. For authentic Reformed Churches, the Regulative principle must be the guide.
103. Christians should preach what Christ commanded. There is need to preach "the whole counsel of God" not "felt needs". Christians need to preach the whole counsel of God regardless. Everything God wrote is relevant in every age, time and date. Wisdom is needed to handle situations.
104. Christianity is unique in its basic tenets. Christians can ignore central tenets in the quest to appear accommodating. This is vastly damaging to the faith.
105. The Bible is both relevant and true. God decides what is relevant or not. Truth is good but must be in sync with God.

Conclusion

Paganism is an ever present danger. It needs to be meticulously watched, nipped in the bud and curbed before it takes over the world once again. Sadly, even Evangelicals have been sucked into this pagan way of thinking, veering away from the time tested truths, definitions and dogmas in preference for humanistic theories. We need to beware of subtle changes such as "at-one-ment" which replaces blood atonement. The Christian must know what is true so that they can contend for the faith (Jude 3). It will not be easy but must be done, all to the glory of God.

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