

A STUDY GUIDE
for
THE
GNOSTIC EMPIRE
STRIKES BACK

by

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A STUDY GUIDE
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THE GNOSTIC EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

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Preface

My wife and I recently visited Berkeley, California for the first time. We spent only a day there to settle our son into his university room. The friendly streets of this green, northern California town reminded us of our own university days in Boston. We wandered the streets, surprised at the similarities we saw between Berkeley in the nineties and Harvard Square in the sixties. We passed little shops full of Indian manuscripts and incense. A lady with short, spiky, purple hair jiggled a baby to sleep in a home-made back-pack. A man dressed only in shorts passed us by, walking down the street in the rain - on his hands!

I thought back to the excitement I had as I entered the secular world of university life in the sixties; not an excitement of rebellion, nor of pride, but a desire to try my wings, to meet people outside the influence of the gospel and to confront them with the love of Christ. Our hearts lifted in prayer for our son, who is faced with the fruit of the sixties revolution in his generation. Is the presence of "the naked man" (finally expelled for sexual harassment) the equivalent of the sixties "streakers?" Or is Berkeley today far more than a hippie culture frozen in a time warp? How deeply is the fabric of our society stained by the sexual, moral, political, and cultural revolution which some might say began on the Berkeley campus nearly thirty years ago?

Paganism and idolatry are nothing new. Paul wandered through the streets of Athens, greatly distressed to see a city full of idols. Driven by a love for the true Creator God and for the men of that pagan city, Paul moved forward in confidence and engaged the discussion. He didn't run scared, or adopt a policy of silence, deciding that the preaching of the gospel would be

useless since the Athenians were only running after new ideas. He spoke the truth of the resurrected Jesus, evoking a variety of responses from mild interest and mockery to belief.

Whenever we speak the gospel we will meet those three responses; interest, mockery, and belief. The purpose of this study guide is threefold:

1. to encourage Christians to be "greatly distressed" by the idols which the New Age presents.

In order to achieve this end, we must spend time wandering around Athens examining the idols and the inscriptions which accompany them. *The Gnostic Empire Strikes Back* has assembled these idols for us so that we may look closely at them and understand the philosophies behind their worship.

2. to help Christians to see how "the Lord of heaven and earth" meets the religious desires of men. The depth of our knowledge of God will give us the power to resist the inroads which the New Age philosophies are making in our own churches.

3. to reflect on how we can "preach the good news about Jesus and the resurrection" to those influenced by New Age philosophy. Many are seeking the "unknown" and unknowable God. We can share the exquisite truth that God loves and knows us. Looking at counterfeit and heresy can be discouraging, but it has one wonderful unexpected by-product. Like sparkling diamonds laid out on black velvet, the beauty and truth of the gospel is even more compelling when seen against the backdrop of error. In darkness the light shines more brightly, or, as the Reformers said: *Post tenebras, lux* - "After darkness, light."

This study was produced at the request of many readers and groups in churches who have found the book, *The Gnostic Empire Strikes Back* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1992), a useful tool for understanding the times in which we live. May the Holy Spirit give us discernment, power and love to walk boldly into the marketplace and into the churches to reason, dispute, advocate, and preach repentance and faith in our risen Savior, Jesus Christ, the light of the world.

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE

This study guide is not organized to follow *The Gnostic Empire Strikes Back* in the order of its chapters. The best way to profit from the guide is to read the book through first. Then go to the study guide referring to specific pages in the book as indicated in the lessons. There are probably too many questions in each lesson to cover all of them in one meeting. Ideally, each member of the group should prepare the lesson at home. The quality of discussion will depend on this home preparation.

If the leader knows that members will not have the time to prepare lessons, then he or she should take special care in preparing them thoroughly and in bringing to the class particular examples of New Age influence in the society so that the class can profit from discoveries made together. The suggested activities at the end of each lesson may be assigned to individuals, or to groups. The leader may wish to prepare material ahead of time and allow small groups to do the research during class time.

The structure of these lessons allows a great deal of freedom. The goal is to encourage Christians to think hard about their society, their church, themselves, and the Savior, so that, like Him, we will be "eaten up" with the zeal of the Kingdom of Christ (Jn. 2:17).

The completed study guide should be kept, referred to from time to time, and up-dated. The questions raised here will not go away in the foreseeable future. The answers readers find and the documentation they collect will be of service both to themselves and their children for years to come.

LESSON ONE

Introduction

(See Preface and Chapter One of GESB)

The preface and the first chapter of *The Gnostic Empire Strikes Back* emphasize the urgent nature of a battle which many of us sense. Some of us, like Elisha's trembling servant in 2 Kings, chapter six, have seen all we want to see of the enemy! Like him we squeak-- yes, I said, *squeak--*, "Oh my lord, what shall we do?" Others of us are over-confident, joining the Israelite scouts when they saw Ai, "Don't weary all the people to go up against Ai. Only a few men are there."

May the Lord open our eyes, as He did the eyes of Elisha's servant, to see not only the enemy, but the great host of chariots of fire that surround us in our battle. And may we turn the blindness of God's enemies to their own advantage, as we lead them into the city of God and spread before them the great feast prepared for them by the conquering Savior. The battle is fierce, but it is a war of love that we wage.

1. How would you define the New Age as you see it in the society around you?

2. What specific evidence of New Age thinking have you noticed in your community?

3. Do you think the New Age has influenced the church? If so, in what areas? If not, why not?

4. Does the New Age frighten you? Why? How?

5. What elements of the sixties social revolution have infiltrated our society? Do you see a link with the New Age?

6. In what ways is the New Age really a religion, or a world-and-life view rather than a sect or a cult? What is the difference between a worldview and a sect?

7. On page seven we read of "demonic delusion cavorting about in the fake clothes of spiritual renewal." Have you met up with this kind of spirituality? How can we Christians know what is of the Spirit? (See 1 John 4: 1-6; Acts 17:11).

8. What do Revelation 19:20 and Matthew 24:24 say will be the means by which the evil one will delude many?

9. How can history help us counter demonic delusion? Note how the New Testament uses Old Testament to understand its own situation (1 Corinthians 10:1-13; Hebrews 3:7-19). In the same manner, should we not seek an understanding of our present time in the light of Church history?

ASSIGNMENT

Below you will find several suggested projects for the week. You may want to decide which members of the study group will take each question and give time for a brief presentation of their findings at the end of the following lesson.

- A. Page eight warns us that "difficult days may lie ahead for Christians who refuse to compromise." This week, try to find an article in a newspaper or magazine, or a report on radio or television which indicates some form of "persecution" or unfair treatment of Christians. Analyze the attitude which led to this treatment, both from a "worldly" viewpoint, and then from the Christian viewpoint.
- B. How does twentieth century America accomplish the Lennon dream of "no heaven, no hell, no countries, no possessions, no greed, no hunger, no religion?" Do you think most non-Christians would agree with this philosophy? Are any of these goals Christian? Each member of the group should take one of the elements mentioned in Lennon's song and try to find an article or current event which shows some organization attempting to accomplish one of these goals. How are they approaching the problem? How might a Christian try to deal with the problems of hunger and greed?
- C. Go into a New Age bookstore this week, or look up "New Age" in your local library and browse through some of the books. Take notes and tell the group what you found, and what most struck you.

LESSON TWO

(See pages 11-22, 43-47 of GESB)

COSMOLOGY I

This lesson deals with cosmology. The word "cosmology" comes from two Greek words, *cosmos*, meaning universe, and *logos*, meaning word, or study. Cosmology is therefore the study of the universe, of how things fit together in it, and of the way it came about. This lesson will help you dig into the New Age view of the world and understand how it differs from the biblical view.

1. Reread pages 11-22 and 43-46 of *The Gnostic Empire Strikes Back*. What mixture of two different cultures is common to Gnosticism and the New Age movement? What evidence do you see of this mix in the twentieth century?

2. How does the New Age define creation (page 46)? What does "syncretistic pantheism"

mean (see glossary)?

3. The Gnostics taught that the creator God was evil and that creation was a goof. Why do you think this led to two extremely different attitudes about the body, namely asceticism and libertarianism (see glossary)?

4. Does this rejection of the Creator explain the collapse of morals in our time? If so, how?

5. Does this rejection of the Creator fit like a hand in a glove with evolution? If so, how?

ASSIGNMENT

- A. Try to find quotes form New Age writers like Shirley McLaine illustrating their view of creation.
- B. Try to find examples of the mixing of evolution, the New Science and New Age thinking. See especially the writings of Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics* (New York: Bantam Books, 1976), and Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, *The Universe Story* (Harper, 1992). For a scientifically-balanced, scripturally-based view of the ecological question, see E. Calvin Beisner, *Prospects For Growth: A Biblical View of Population, Resources and the Future* (Westchester, Ill: Crossway Books, 1990).

LESSON THREE
COSMOLOGY II - ECOLOGY

1. If the New Age is "anti-creational," how do you explain its emphasis on ecology? Can we trust New Age instincts for handling ecological problems? Why or why not? How do you explain that the New Age mentality has a higher view of plant and animal life than of human life? As the bumper sticker says, "Be a hero, save a whale; save a baby, go to jail."

2. Is there more to New Age ecology than respect for the environment?

3. Hosea 4 gives its own reasons for ecological disaster. What are they?

4. Look at Hosea 10:4. What other "toxic waste" is our country experiencing today? What is the source of this plague, according to Hosea 10:1-3? How might this problem be exacerbated by the New Age/Gnostic teaching that the Creator is evil?

5. What does God say will be the results of worshiping the creature rather than the Creator?
See Isaiah 44:19-20; Jeremiah 7:20; 8:1-3; 44:24-25; Romans 1:21-22.

6. What parallels do you see between idol worship in the Old Testament and "goddess earth" worship in the New Age?

7. What things does God specifically prohibit us to worship in the following passages:

Deuteronomy 4:15-19

Jeremiah 1:16

Revelation 22:8-9

Acts 14:11-15

Matthew 4:8-10

10. How would you answer someone who claimed that God the Creator, Jehovah of the Old Testament is an arrogant God (see pages 21-22, 45-46)?

ASSIGNMENT

- A. Try to find an article this week which indicates the various gods our society finds to replace the Creator.
- B. Do a survey among your work acquaintances or other non-Christians, asking them the

following, or similar, questions:

1. Where did the world come from?
2. Why are we in an ecological mess? How could we get out of it?
3. Is there anyone you trust to give the world real direction?
4. Do you think there is hope for unity and peace in the world? Why or why not?
5. Is there such a thing as absolute truth?
6. Is there such a thing as ultimate good and evil?

C. Read the following quotes from articles recently published in the *Los Angeles Times*.

Discuss the viewpoint from which each is written. Find the flaws in logic, the contradictions which appear in the articles, or in the overall agenda described.

L.A. Times, May 14, 1993, about the possible declassification of the Mojave ground squirrel as an endangered species:

"Environmentalists fear the precedent that could be set if the commission were to strip the squirrel of its legal protection...Economic issues should not decide whether something stays listed or not...."

L.A. Times, June 14, 1992 about the difficulties of unwanted pregnancies, an article which condenses a recent book by Rita Townsend:

"A recent, widely reported study... found that women rearing children from unwanted pregnancies often harbor resentment and anger toward these children.... Perhaps our

concept of "viability" needs to be extended... Is the fetus economically viable, given the circumstances of this mother, this family, this community: Is it culturally viable?"

Book Review Section, *L.A. Times*, June 14, 1992:

"In response to the anti-abortion assault, the women's movement has become preoccupied with protecting the right to an abortion, often having to delay action on the rest of its... agenda:... better and safer contraception, sex education, *decreased infant mortality rates through prenatal care...*" (italics mine).

L.A. Times, June 17, 1992, about a woman who took a heavy dose of drugs just before birth, thereby probably causing the baby's death:

"'An unborn child has the right to protection from murder,' said San Benito County Assistant District Attorney Harold Nutt...Prosecutors have charged Jaurigue with second degree murder, which calls for a sentence of fifteen years to life in prison. Although she did not intend to kill her baby, she can be charged because she used drugs in knowing disregard of the dangers they presented to the child, prosecutors say."

LESSON FOUR

(See pages 23-25, 47-56 GESB)

REDEMPTION

This lesson deals with the gnostic notions of the serpent savior, the goddess savior, the self savior, and the superfluous savior. The Bible uses much imagery to teach us. Beginning in the garden of Eden the serpent is the symbol of evil. More complex are the images given using women. Some ideal women stand out: wisdom, who calls to young men to follow her; the industrious woman of Proverbs 31. Other figures depict the prostitute and represent Israel's unfaithfulness to her husband and bridegroom, none other than Jehovah. The questions which follow may incite you to a more thorough study of these passages.

Of course the ultimate denial of God the Creator is to refuse Him His rightful authority over the earth and its inhabitants. This leads to the protest that no savior is needed at all. If a savior is needed it is not because of sin but rather to help us assert our rights in the face of an unreasonable authority.

1. What are the sins of the great harlot in Revelation 18? See also Nahum 3. What was her

way of life?

2. Does the Bible always identify evil with a woman? Give examples of women (real or pictorial) who represent evil or good in the Bible.

3. Look at Proverbs 8 and 9. What are the characteristics of Wisdom, of Folly? Compare Proverbs 9:18 and Revelation 18:13b. What is the final end of those who place their confidence in the goddess savior?

4. What is the contrasting image to Babylon? See Revelation 19:7. What implications does this have for today's church?

5. How does the serpent delude men? See Revelation 12:19; 19:20; 2 Corinthians 11:1-3, 13-15; Matthew 4:1-10; Genesis 3, 2 Thessalonians 2:5-11.

6. How are we to resist the serpent savior? Ephesians 6:10-18 (Notice that this comes immediately after Ephesians 5:22-6:3, as if Paul is aware that the tempter will attack in these very areas of submission and obedience); Revelation 7:9-10; 12:10-11.

7. What excuses do men give, claiming their innocence before God's face? See Jeremiah 2:25, 35; 5:12-13; 8:6-8,11,15; 9:5; 1 John 1:8.

8. Think of biblical examples of those who set themselves up as saviors in God's place.

9. If there is no king, and we save ourselves, what happens to morals?

See Deuteronomy 12:8; 2 Kings 21:25. Is this the way our society functions? Can democracy still work under these conditions?

10. Why do you think a society loses its sense of guilt and sin? What can be done to remedy the situation? See Isaiah 30:8-11; 1 Kings 22:8-28; Jeremiah 11:21; Jeremiah 6: 13-16; study Peter's sermon in Acts 2, and Steven's in Acts 7. Look especially at Acts 2:23, , 38, 40 and 7:51-53.

ASSIGNMENT

- A. Find arguments from our society claiming moral innocence for sins explicitly condemned in the Bible. Name the sin and give the excuse found. Don't hesitate to bring in newspaper or article clippings, or quotes from television programs (write them down when you hear them).
- B. Find in Christian magazines or in teachings of evangelical churches evidence of "prophets" declaring, "peace, peace," when there is no peace. In what areas might the church be doing this?
- C. Do you think the church has substituted anything for the Savior? What? Prove it with articles, sermons, books, tapes and religious television programs.

LESSON FIVE

(See pages 26-27, 57-58, 90-94 of GESB)

CHRISTOLOGY

For the modern Gnostics to set up their "new" way of redemption, they must undermine the truth about the resurrected Jesus, thus destroying the pillar of the Christian faith. Blind though they may be, if they succeed in laying hands on this pillar of the church, they may bring the structure of the church crashing to the ground, at least temporarily in our society. It is our duty as Christians to strengthen our faith in the risen Lord and to ward off the subtle, insidious attacks on His work and person. It is every Christian's duty to know who Jesus Christ is, because the Church is built only and exclusively on this rock (Matthew 16:16-20).

1. How could you argue from the Bible against the statement on page 57: "Jesus was not always Christ." See John 8:56-58; Revelation 1:8,17,18; 2:8; Isaiah 48:11-12; 1 Corinthians 10:3; John 1:1.
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2. How do the apostles prove Christ's physical resurrection? See Luke 24:1-51; Acts 2:22-33; 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, 50-55.

3. Summarize the New Age view of Jesus.

4. How would you try to persuade a person influenced by the New Age that the physical resurrection of Jesus is crucial to the Christian faith? See Acts 13; Acts 2:22ff; 1 Corinthians 15; 1 John 4:2.

5. What is the gnostic view of the Old Testament? (see pp.21-22) Why does our view of the Old Testament matter in establishing the nature of Jesus Christ and His work? (See Luke 24:19-27).

6. According to 1 Corinthians 15, how is the resurrection tied to redemption and creation?

Write a brief summary of how the New Age skews the Christian belief in these three elements.

ASSIGNMENT

A. Read the following excerpts from the Gospel of Thomas (which was not written by the apostle Thomas) and their "parallels" in the canonical gospels. How is the gnostic version of Jesus different? Anyone interested in further study could read the whole Gospel of

Thomas and bring his findings to the class.

Jesus said to his disciples: “Make me a comparison; tell me what I am like.” Simon Peter said to him: “You are like a righteous angel.” Matthew said to him: “You are like a man who is a wise philosopher.” Thomas said to him: “Master, my mouth will not at all be capable of saying what you are like.” Jesus said: “*I am not your master*, because you drank and became drunken from the bubbling stream which I have measured out [emphasis added].”

[Gospel of Thomas 13]

Compare this text with Matthew 16:13-20; Mark 8:27-33; Luke 9:18-22; John 6:67-69.

B. Bring examples showing how people today think differently about Jesus than they used to.

What specifically is lost? What is added?

LESSON SIX

(See pages 28-30, 59-60 of GESB)

THEOLOGY

Christ the Savior is "the image of the invisible God." An attack on Christ is rebellion against the Father. The Gnostics, and their New Age counterparts, argue that Jehovah is a vindictive, jealous, tyrant. If we can abolish a God like that, good riddance! This lesson will help you grapple with the person of God, in order to answer such an accusation. Indeed, taking God's name in vain by adding to the names He has given in Scripture, or refusing to use them (especially Father), is, according to Exodus 20:7, one of the ten heinous sins that God denounces.

- 1. Are the Gnostics right in calling God jealous and envious? See Exodus 20:5; Deuteronomy 32:15-17,21; Joel 2:16; Zechariah 1:14.

- 2. Of what is God jealous?

3. What motivates his jealousy? See Ezekiel 16.

4. Why does the Bible so often link holiness with jealousy?

5. What does God's jealousy cause Him to do? See Zechariah 8:2-3.

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6. How is this jealousy different than spiteful human jealousy? See 2 Corinthians 11:2; 12:20.

7. Why are God's biblical names being rejected today? What names are being put in their place?

8. Gnostics claim that the real God is unknowable. If this is true, why do you think they bother with self-knowing techniques which involve so much effort and personal discipline?

9. Is the God of the Bible unknowable? If yes, why? If not, how can we know Him? See
Isaiah 2:3; Psalm 51:13; Job 23:3; Isaiah 4:20; Romans 1:19.

10. What elements in the history of Israel show that God is an intimate God? See
Deuteronomy 4:7; Isaiah 43:4; Jeremiah 30:21; Exodus 33:11; Isaiah 41:8.

11. Knowledge is salvation for the Gnostic. What kind of knowledge exists in the Scripture?
Who is doing the knowing? See Jeremiah 1:5; Joshua 4:24; John 17:3; Ephesians 1:17;
Proverbs 2:6; 1 Corinthians 8:3; Psalm 139; Jeremiah 24:7.

12. Look at Genesis 4:1. Older translations say "Adam *knew* his wife, Eve...." This is the same description used to describe knowing God. What does this tell you about the kind of knowledge God gives us of Him? How does John 17:3 describe eternal life?

13. Contrast Christian and gnostic knowledge.

14. What kind of moral behavior does Shirley McLaine's "god within" finally produce?

15. How is this "god within" fundamentally different from the God of Scripture?

ASSIGNMENT

- A. Find some definitions of knowledge from our society -- scientific, educational, etc.
Does our view of knowledge do justice to the biblical view? What do you think is missing? How might we try to make the learning process for our children more complete?
- B. Find evidence of knowledge as salvation in our society. What sects or cults hold up "secret" knowledge as the means to real fulfillment? Are sects and cults the only ones who

advocate secret knowledge?

C. On the basis of Acts 8:18-20, reflect about the connection between money and knowledge.

Is this a problem for the church today? If so, how might it be solved?

D. Many of your friends believe in God (95 percent of Americans). Try to find out if their notion of God bears any resemblance to the God of Scripture? If it does not try to build a composite picture of this popular "god" and see into which religion such a god really fits.

LESSON SEVEN**(See pages 30-33, 60-69 of GESB)****SEXUALITY I**

In Isaiah 47:7 the "queen of Babylon" claims: "I will continue forever, the eternal queen. I am and there is none beside me." In thinking about God and about our own place in His creation, we strive to be "like Him" in the way He intended. We must not erect ourselves as the source of knowledge. We do not achieve it, but receive it. This was Eve's mistake. Instead of trusting God's revealed word, she tried to achieve knowledge by circumventing God's prescription for receiving it. It is in a spirit of reverent humility that we must be known by God and thus learn to know God.

1. Genesis 1:27 says "God created man in His own image...male and female He created them." How do you think each expression of God's image, the male and the female, reflects His character?

2. If God, who does not have a body, is therefore "sexless," why is it wrong to think that

androgyny is the ideal state?

3. What aspects of our sexuality are temporary? See Luke 20:34-36; Mark 12:18-25. When will this phase end? Will sexuality survive in another form?

4. Why does God choose to reveal Himself in male imagery? Does He not fully embody both female and male qualities?

5. How do Christ's life and death perfectly fulfill the roles required of both men and women?

Why do you think God chose to take on the form of a man, rather than an angel, some

androgynous being, or a woman?

6. What truths about God are the sexual structures intended to teach us? See Ephesians 5:22-32; 1 Peter 3:1-7.

ASSIGNMENT

A. How have expectations for women and men changed over the last twenty or thirty years?

Give specific examples. Try to analyze which of these changes are biblical, which are not.

Be sure to give scriptural support for your opinion.

- B. How might you as an individual, or your church as a whole, attempt to honor the sexual structures which the Lord has laid down? In church life how might women better serve the Lord? Men? In what way do you feel under attack from the society in this area?

LESSON EIGHT

(Pages 30-33, 60-69 GESB)

SEXUALITY II

Most Christians do not deny the creational structures established by God for men and women and for the family. However, some argue strongly that our churches do not allow women a full place in the body of believers. They question traditional role definitions for both men and women in the church and in society. Like the Bereans, we must "examine the Scriptures every day" to see what is of God.

1. In what sense might it be true to say that feminism and the new view of sexuality and gender roles represent the tail that wags the New Age dog?

2. What abuses of creational structures have led to the feminist movement?

3. Which of these do you feel are genuine grievances according to the Bible? Support what you say from Scripture, if possible.

4. What specific scriptural commands deal with the relationship between the sexes?

5. According to pages 62-69, what principle might lead from "feminism" to homosexuality, pedophilia, and bestophilia? Do you think this is an exaggeration? Do you have any

evidence from the world around you of these movements?

6. If democracy dictates a redefinition of sexual standards and morals, how ought the Christian to react? When and where does the principle of 1 Corinthians 5:12 apply?

7. Read Leviticus 18. What practices does God abhor? What are the results of disobeying God's law? See Leviticus 20. Can you think of any Old Testament figures who disobeyed any of these laws?

8. Do you think the present push to have women do everything men do is a good thing? Find examples. Should Christians support such a program? Or do we need to be discerning and wonder if it represents a subtle overturning of God the Creator's will for males and females?

ASSIGNMENT

A. Read the following excerpts from articles about homosexuality.

L.A. Times, May 30, 1993, concerning the revocation in Moscow of a law punishing homosexual acts:

"Breaking with repressive Stalin-era morality that made homosexuality a crime, Russia's legislature has revoked a law that punished sex between consenting males with a prison term of up to five years....The legislation was part of Stalin's mania for regulating the behavior of Soviet citizens, even in its most intimate details."

L.A. Times, May 17, 1993, on lifting the ban on homosexuals in the military:

"What's so striking about the Senate Armed Services Committee's hearings on the gays-in-the-military issue is the deftness with which...Sen. Sam Nunn...has commandeered television for his own purposes. An outspoken foe of President Clinton's state plans...Nunn has proved himself a shrewd media manipulator, doling out photo opportunities, for example, that television has been unable to resist....So Nunn got largely what he wanted, along with pictures - of sailors squeezed together in their bunks -- that surely fed wild, irrational fears and panic about straights and gays serving together in close quarters...."

What attitudes do the authors have? How do you know? Underline the words which communicate high emotional content or "bias." How can a Christian combat the influence of a liberal press?

- B. Think about the problem of single mothers. Why do you think today's women can't find suitable husbands? What problems might arise in society, in the family, in the church and for the individual raised in a single parent structure? What would the apostle Paul have to say to single mothers? To their boyfriends?
- C. Collect as much information as you can concerning the revolution in women's roles in the last thirty years. Try to discern which elements are valid and which go against the Creator's design. In your discussion, ask whether such issues are important and if so, how they might undermine the preaching of the Gospel of God the Father and Jesus the Son.

LESSON NINE

(See pages 71-86 of GESB)

THE NEW AGE IS HERE TO STAY

Our role as Christians is always twofold, as defensive and as offensive soldiers.

1 Peter 3:15 tells us, "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have." Our hope in the years of struggle which probably await us is that we have the "Spirit of love, of power, and of a strong mind." May the Lord give us power to discipline our minds as we speak out in the darkness.

1. How would you answer the accusations listed on page 85 that Christianity is:

sexist: _____

racist: _____

anti-semitic: _____

patriarchal (in the negative sense - see glossary): _____

chauvinistic (see glossary): _____

homophobic (see glossary): _____

2. What do Romans 11:35b-38 and Romans 12:4 teach us to expect as Christians?

3. How do you reconcile Romans 11:13-16 with a sense of patriotism? Do you believe that God has chosen your country for a particular job? Why? Why not?

4. Do you think we as a church should develop a sense of being "aliens" to this world? In what way? How?

5. What elements of the list in Romans 1:28ff would be encouraged by New Age beliefs? Why?

6. What difference is there (Romans 1:32) between doing wicked things and "approving those who practice them?" Can you find evidence in today's society of those who are teaching and encouraging others to commit the evils in this list?

7. Do you think there is a parallel notion of approving those who practice good? How can we participate in doing good in this way?

ASSIGNMENT

A. Go to the children's library in your town. Look through the children's magazine section looking for New Age influence. Find the new arrivals section. Browse through these books. Do they differ from the books you knew as a child? How? Check out the

Berenstein Bears series and read them. Analyze the family structure, discipline, and attitudes towards the male/female roles. What do you notice?

- B. Each person in your group should buy a magazine this week. Try to see New Age philosophies evidenced in the advertising, articles, or humor. What changing cultural attitudes do you notice? Try to think of the major themes mentioned in this book -- cosmology, theology, christology, sexuality, etc.

LESSON TEN

(See pages 87-94 of the GESB)

A NEW CANON

As long as the Bible is the accepted source of truth and authority, we can appeal to it to structure our lives and our churches. When the texts of the Bible are put in doubt, Christians naturally fear ruin. It is important to understand how our Scriptures were written and how they became an accepted body of authoritative teaching. The New Age attack on the Gospels may lead many weak Christians astray.

1. On what basis were the Gospels included in the canon?

2. What place might the Old Testament play in determining the authenticity of various gospel

accounts of Jesus? (Remember the gnostic rejection of the OT.)

3. How can we prepare for the battle between Bibles? What does Jesus give as the reason why the Sadducees have been led to believe that there is no resurrection? (See Mark 12:24 and John 5:39-40.)

4. How might the church's abandonment of regular study of the Old Testament weaken it in its struggle against a New Age "New Testament Canon?"

5. What does Deuteronomy 12:30 say should be our attitude toward other religions? Does this mean we ought not to study them? What about including their study in a Christian

high school curriculum?

6. How might our attitude toward scholarship be affected in the light of the attack mentioned on pages 93-94?

7. Should this battle change our educational goals for children? What do you think of the suggestion made by a recent Christian educator that we teach Greek and Hebrew to our grade school children?

ASSIGNMENT

A. Research the establishment of the canon. What were the specific principles used for inclusion or exclusion of certain books? Suggested reading: H.N.Ridderbos, *The Authenticity of the New Testament Scriptures*, Presbyterian and Reformed, 1963.

B. Read through the book of Colossians. Find and comment on passages which specifically relate to each of the following areas:

cosmology (creation): _____

redemption (salvation): _____

christology (who is Jesus?): _____

theology (who is God?): _____

sexuality: _____

knowledge: _____

LESSON ELEVEN

(See pages 95-102 of GESB)

PERSPECTIVES FOR THE CHURCH

The church in each century, in each country faces its own battles. Though the truth which it uses never alters, and though "there is nothing new under the sun," we are still called as Christians to be "wise as serpents and gentle as doves." We ought, by the power of the Spirit to be more cunning than the evil one. Jesus Himself met the questions of His opponents with such stunning lucidity that they stood in awe of His authority. May our prayerful reflection and desire to serve our Lord prepare us to fight the battle of our time.

1. How can we as Christians resist the two-fold goal defined on page 98?

2. Write out a two-fold opposing goal for the Christian Church: Incorporate scriptural

backing. Try this individually first, then as a group.

3. How is your own church tempted to conform to the pressure of New Age or Gnostic philosophies? Remember to consider the following:

ecology, abortion, feminism, multi-culturalism, the nature of sin, self-esteem, techniques of spirituality, redemption from within, Eastern mysticism, or any of the manifestations mentioned in the book.

4. Do you feel the attack personally? In your family life? In your children's school? What defense measures do you need to take?

5. What are you, your church, your Christian school doing to prepare your children to live in the Age of Aquarius?

6. The maxim is: "The best defense is a good offense." How can the church go on the offensive in order to strangle the weeds of the New Age movement before they can take root?

7. Do you or does anyone in your group have friends influenced by the New Age? How can you best help these people?

8. What do you think the coming days will bring for the Church of Jesus Christ? What encouragements can we find from the example of the New Testament Church and the believers of the first few centuries, as well as believers who today in other countries are suffering for their faith?

9. If the Church in the West were to encounter persecution in the days to come would that mean that Christ had abandoned His promise to build His Church and be victorious over "the gates of Hell" (Matthew 16:16ff)?

ASSIGNMENT

A. This week, keep a notebook beside you as you watch T.V. or read the papers. What evidence do you see of the following:

rejection of God as Creator

worship of the creation rather than the Creator

goddess worship

witchcraft

child sacrifice

an undermining of the scriptural pattern for the family

a search for secret knowledge

a one-world religion

persecution of Christians

silencing of the Gospel's claims

contemporary persecution of Christians in other lands

B. In a notebook, mark down any slanted language you hear which denigrates the Christian faith and the Christian world and life view.

LESSON TWELVE
NEW AGE RESOLUTIONS

Each year some of us make New Year's resolutions, hoping to lose those few pounds, or write home more often. What New Age resolutions do you need to make as an individual, as a church, depending not on your own weakness to accomplish them, but rather on the strength of the Lord?

Try to think of areas in which you need to be alert and on the defensive, but also ways in which you can move beyond the security of your walls to go on the attack. Remember that the Gospel gives us "the Spirit not of timidity, but of love, of power, and of a disciplined mind." (2 Timothy 1:7).

1. In light of a New Age believer's credo, what problems do you think he might have in his own personal life?

2. What Gospel truths give the believer experiential and intellectual stability which the New

Ager could never have?

3. What would you say to the person who said this to you: "I've found new meaning to my faith since I read *A Course in Miracles*. For the first time I feel free. My faith is no longer dead;" or, "I have found a new sense of release after practicing meditation?"

4. Look at the list of weapons, offensive and defensive, which Paul speaks of in Ephesians 6:20ff. How might each of these be particularly useful in the battle against Gnostic/New

Age thinking?

ASSIGNMENT

A. In each age, the church has spoken out against the heresies of its time. Sometimes this has led to the writing of confessions. As an individual, or as a class, try writing up a "confession of faith" for the twentieth century including specific doctrines undermined by New Age philosophy.

B. Try some role-playing. Identify one member of the class as a New-Ager, and the other as a Christian. Possible openers:

Ecology: I'm going to join an ecology movement. I'm so excited. I really feel a communion with the earth. I've been going to lectures at the zoo. Do you realize that if we don't do anything to save the endangered species of the world, we might become endangered ourselves?

Feminism: I don't understand you, Elaine. How can you just sit home when you can see you need the money! Why you can't even afford to put little Sue in a swimming class. What harm would it do to go out to work?

Or: I can't stand it! It's always the men who decide everything in this world. Even to get an abortion I have to go crawling to some doctor. And the church is the worst. You'd think women are dirt. Somebody told me the Bible says women have to shut up and do what their husbands tell them. You won't catch me with a religion like that!

One world religion: I'm not saying I have anything against Jesus, really. I believe in Jesus. But He's taken on so much more meaning since I've taken a class in Hindu meditation. I come out of there so peaceful and calm and happy. That's where I really learned to love Christ, the same Christ everybody knows in his own way, I suppose.

Feel free to create your own imaginary conversations. If you have some particularly gifted members, you might want to try a skit or a play.

GLOSSARY

accretion: accumulated additions.

androgyny: the mixing or confusion of both male and female characteristics within the same person.

Age of Aquarius: the astrological age of two thousand years following the "Age of Pisces," which is supposedly to begin in A.D.2000 or thereabouts.

Age of Pisces: one of the astrological ages of two thousand years roughly corresponding with the history of the Church. Ironically, the fish (pisces in Latin) has traditionally been one of the symbols of Christianity.

aggregate: the sum total of things.

anthropomorphic: the use of human images and forms to describe the divine reality.

anthropology: the study of Man.

apocalypse: "revelation" or an experience of revealing.

asceticism: the refusal to engage in the activities and pleasures of the body, a refusal arising from the belief that the body/matter is evil.

astral travel: the experience of the liberation of the spirit from the body whereby the spirit may travel throughout the universe.

Athanasius: (A.D. 296-373) Bishop of Alexandria in Egypt who was exiled by the emperor

Julian the Apostate. At Julian's death in 361, he returned to lead the Church to a clear

formulation of Orthodoxy against the Arian heresy which denied the true divinity of Jesus Christ.

biblistic presuppositions: a somewhat supercilious and condescending way that liberals employ to describe those who hold to biblical inerrancy, and who accept Scripture as their ultimate authority.

canonical: belonging to the collection of books recognized by the Church as authoritative Scripture.

channeling: the process whereby "spirit entities" from the occult world communicate with mankind through a human medium or channel.

chauvinistic: originally, an exaggerated form of patriotism or blind, unthinking support of any cause: male chauvinism is chauvinism as applied to questions of sexuality and gender roles as understood from the perspective of a patriarchal world and life view.

cosmology: the theological study of the origins of the universe.

deicide: the killing of God.

Demiurge: a Greek word meaning "craftsman" used by the Gnostics to refer to the Creator God of the Bible as Creator of the visible, inferior world.

denigration: to verbally misrepresent or pull down.

dyad: composing of two elements. In Gnosticism, a combination of divine emanations.

ecclesiology: the study of the Church.

epistemology: the study of how one knows, or the study of the process of knowing.

eschatology: the study of the end times.

Gaia: Greek goddess of the earth, it is now a term used to describe the relatedness and divine nature of all things, animate and inanimate, on planet Earth.

Gnosticism: a heresy in the first few centuries of the Christian Church which consisted of blending ancient paganism with Christianity.

hellenistic: an adjective describing the ancient Mediterranean culture that spans the ancient world from the 4th century B.C. to the Turkish conquest of the Greco-Roman Empire in the 7th century A.D. It is marked by the blending of ancient Greek/Western rationality and Eastern religion and spirituality, all this as the result of the conquests of Alexander the Great in 333-322 B.C.

hermaphrodite: a human being possessing both male and female sexual characteristics.

hermeneutic: the theory of interpretation and meaning which determines how one looks at texts, especially the texts of the Bible.

Hippolytus: (A.D. 170-236) a theologian of the Church at Rome whose famous work, *The Refutation of All Heresies*, denounced the heresy of Gnosticism.

homophobic: fear of homosexuals and homosexuality.

hypostasis: a Greek word meaning "substance," "being" or "person."

imprimatur: stamp of approval.

monotheist: someone who believes there is one God.

Irenaeus: (A.D. 130-200) Church Father and bishop of Lyon, France, who sought to denounce Gnosticism as a false version of Christianity.

karma: the law of retribution which determines the fate of one's soul at death.

kinesiology: most often called "applied kinesiology," a form of "bodywork" using acupuncture, chiropratic, and Chinese diagnosis of the meridians, or pathways in the body of *chi*, "universal energy."

libertinism: the engaging in immoral acts and the excesses of the flesh based on the belief that since the body/matter has no true value, whatever is done in the body has no ultimate moral significance.

liturgies: formal and traditional orders of worship.

logion: literally a "saying": generally used of the sayings of Jesus preserved in the Gospels.

matrilineal: a social system where inheritance and genealogy is based on the mother rather than the father.

multiculturalism: the celebration of many cultures. The danger of multiculturalism involves the relativization of Christian values and the introduction of polythesim - the many gods of all these cultures. In this sense, multiculturalism is a deliberate deconstruction of "Christian" America.

Nag Hammadi: the place in Egypt where some fifty documents of a large gnostic library were found in 1945. The collection dates from the fourth century A.D., though individual writings may be earlier. Such a discovery gives us first-hand access to gnostic thought through the movement's won writings.

paschal: having to do with Easter.

patriarchy: the social system whereby final authority resides in the father who is seen as the representative of the family.

pedophile: a man who is sexually attracted to young boys.

phallic: having to do with the phallus, the male organ of reproduction.

pluralism/pluralistic: acceptance of the relative character of truth, a situation in which no one can claim ultimately to know the truth and therefore state that others are in error.

political correctness: the attempt to determine what is acceptable speech according to the latest norms of victim status and the new liberal orthodoxy concerning social liberation.

reincarnation: the idea that our spirits are imprisoned in our bodies and at death either take on another bodily form for a further round of testing or finally reach a degree of spiritual progression where they are assimilated into the divine (see karma).

shaman: the holy man or witch doctor of pagan religions reputedly to be in touch with the spirit world.

sodomy: the practice of homosexuality.

syncretistic pantheism: pantheism sees God in every thing. Syncretism joins all the pantheistic religions into one essential religion.

Tertullian: (A.D. 160-225) Raised a pagan in Carthage, North Africa, and trained as a lawyer, he took up the defense of Orthodoxy over against gnosticism.

vicarious atonement: the biblical teaching that Christ, in the place of sinners, bore their sins and the penalty for their sins in His death on the cross, thus satisfying (making atonement for) the righteous demands of God to punish sin with death (see Rom. 4:25; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 4:4; Eph. 2:13-17).

Comments concerning *THE GNOSTIC EMPIRE STRIKES BACK***John MacArthur, Jr.**

I happily recommend this book. It explains so much of the underlying forces behind our decaying culture. It is fresh, presenting new insights really for the first time. Every Christian should understand what is driving our society and this book is certainly foundational to that understanding. I found it loaded with dynamic sermon material and hasten to preach it to my people.

Charles W. Colson

Jones demonstrates in a thorough and engaging way that the New Age is not new at all...the church desperately needs to hear Professor Jones' call for a clearer comprehension of the truth.

R. C. Sproul

Essential reading...Dr. Jones does a masterful job...I highly recommend this work.

D. James Kennedy

What I like about this book is its frontal attack on the self-deification of the secular humanist....Peter Jones, without equivocation or apology, places his finger precisely on the sore spot and tells how to heal the wound that is grievously hurting our society once more.

Jay E. Adams

...a remarkable work....these findings throw a flood of light on a dark subject.

James M. Boice

Peter Jones' **The Gnostic Empire Strikes Back** is a popular, penetrating study of New Age thinking (actually the age old heresy of gnosticism)...I recommend it as valuable reading.

Steve Brown

"You want to know the truth about the New Age? This is your book! Without all the shallow frenzy one often encounters in books that critique the New Age, Dr. Jones carefully and clearly demonstrates the roots of the movement. This book will make a major difference in your understanding and perception of the New Age....If you want to know the truth, this book is must reading."

George Grant

"Old heresies garbed in new raiment -- like wolves in sheep's clothing -- are even now wrecking havoc in the Christian community. That is why I am so grateful for this remarkable new work from the pen of Peter Jones. He ably demonstrates how the antiquated dogmas of the New Age have become tenured aspects of the the modern church, and how we can - and indeed - must respond."

Tal Brooke

Spiritual Counterfeits Project

Peter Jones unearths a critical yet often ignored ingredient -- gnosticism -- in the on-going debate over the effects of New Age thought upon our civilization (that) superficial exposés have missed...leading to naive and unsound conclusions....Professor Jones shows that to ignore the past may be to seal the future in the same cataclysmic fate that befell the ancient world.

Herbert Schlossberg

Peter Jones provides something the Christian public has badly needed since the New Age phenomenon became a popular movement in the mid-1980s....Jones helps us see the symptoms of the disease in our own ranks, even within our own minds.

E. Michael Jones

(Editor, *Fidelity* (a Roman Catholic magazine):

Peter Jones does a masterful job...in a style that should be understandable to even the most obtuse reader....Jones' book...gives explanation enough for that uncanny feeling one gets when confronting the similarities between the "other gospels" which have appeared throughout the ages.

Dick Staub

(radio talk-show host of WYLL, Chicago, an ex-talk-show host on a non-Christian NBC affiliate:
This is a book that should be doing cross-over because it is capable of speaking to non-Christians.

Gary DeMar

American Vision/Biblical Worldview

Documentating how Gnosticism...has returned with a vengeance, Jones goes beyond the silliness and hyper-paranoia found in many New Age critiques.

T. E. Wilder

Contra Mundum

This topic demands attention....Jones is to be commended for not pulling his punches....He understands that the very existence of a society in which Christians can participate is at stake....His book is intended for a very popular readership....Thus, you can distribute it to those people whom you usually despair of getting to read anything important. In fact: seriously consider buying a case of them for distribution to your church and family circle. Finally, the book is lively and readable. The reader is constantly kept moving and engaged, making for effective popular treatment.