

The Occult Explosion

What Does It Mean?



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Widespread occult interest has been both hailed as a breakthrough in knowledge and as a modern retreat into superstition. Some laud the occult as the only real hope in an age of technology and materialism; others lambast the occult as the most evil sign of the end of the age. What are the facts about this highly confusing, twentieth-century phenomenon?

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Why the Occult?

THE OCCULT is a study in contrasts.

Astronaut Edgar Mitchell, aboard the multi-million-dollar Apollo 14 — a symbol of the ultimate in scientific rationalism — attempts to mentally transmit ESP cards to a group back on earth.

At the Massachusetts Institute of Technology — the epitome of 20th-century science and technology — Professor Huston Smith describes a seminar with some of his best students: “I cannot recall the exact progression of the topics, but it went something like this: Beginning with Asian philosophy, it moved on to meditation, then yoga, then Zen, then Tibet, then successively to the Bardo Thodol, tantra, the kundalini, the chakras, the I Ching, karage and aidido, the yang-yin, macrobiotic (brown rice) diet, Gurdjieff, Meher Baba, astrology, astral bodies, auras, UFO’s, tarot cards, parapsychology, witchcraft, and magic . . . Nor were the students dallying with these subjects . . . they were eating brown rice; they were meditating hours on end; they were making their decisions by I Ching divination, which one student designated the most important discovery of his life; they were constructing complicated electronic experiments to prove that their thoughts, via psychokinesis, could affect matter directly.

“And they weren’t plebians. *Intellectually they were aristocrats, with the highest average math scores in the*

land, Ivy League verbal scores, and two to three years of saturation in MIT sciences."

What's happening?

Occult Revival in a Secular World

A wave of fascination with mysticism and the occult is noticeable throughout the country today. And, as strange as it seems, it's all taking place in the most scientific and rationally materialistic society in history.

Occult literature — books, magazines, articles — is a booming field. One of two general approaches to the subject is used. Those taking a documentary approach are basically scrapbooks of strange facts and wonders — "recipe collections" whose pages are filled with a miscellaneous hodgepodge of superstition, science, and "primitive horrors." Others take a religious approach. These tell the reader how to gain various powers on the way to "enlightenment."

On the surface, it appears that more people are reading about, are interested in, and are better informed about serious occult ideas than ever before. And more people than ever before in recent years are willing to agree that some claims of occultists may be valid.

In most of the elite universities in the country, horoscopes and the predictions of the future by the use of tarot cards are widespread. Only a minority of students are involved, but the majority react the same way they reacted to different political groups in the past: "We understand why they want to do it, even if we are not yet ready to do it ourselves."

It is paradoxical to witness the appearance of such "material" and "nonscientific" elements as the occult on college campuses, because it is the universities, the great bastions of reason, where you would have expected the process of rationalism and scientific secularization to have been the most complete.

Sigmund Freud, the founder of modern psychiatry, would be greatly surprised. He wrote in 1927 that religious concerns (including the occult) no longer had the same influence on people as before. He said that the increase in

the scientific spirit brings about widespread falling-away from religious belief. If Freud could be resurrected today, the revival of the occult at the very time when science and technology have reached their peak would surely astonish him.

The Failure of Science

Andrew Greeley, a sociologist affiliated with the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, cites the failure of science as the first reason young people give for the "return of the sacred." As one graduate student said, "Let's face it, science is dead. While the newspapers and magazines were giving all the attention to the death of God, science was really the one that was dying."

For years every child winding his way through the educational system heard it hammered home again and again that science would create utopia. A scientific society would bring an end to hunger, poverty, war, disease, and provide wonders equal to a person's most extravagant dreams and generally produce total happiness and fulfillment. But science has not lived up to expectations — and people are not happy.

A co-ed observed, "Science hasn't ended war, it hasn't ended injustice, and it doesn't respond to most of man's needs. Why should we take it seriously?" Said another: "Pure rationalism just isn't rational, because man is more than reason, and religion knows that, even if positive science doesn't." Another: "Science was something that we had to work through our systems. It only started with people like Darwin, and it's not surprising that for a while everybody thought it was the only thing that mattered. It's just now that we've come to know better."

What is resented and rejected is that a mysterious ritual called the "Scientific Method" is dogmatically cited as the only proper approach to human knowledge, and that science claims to be the only valid rationale for organizing society. The famous physicist Werner Heisenberg pointed out that there are still erroneous unknowns

in our understanding of the universe. He said: "All our knowledge hovers over an abyss of ignorance."

Forty years ago, Count Ernst von Reventlow foretold the dawn of an *age of magic*, because the longer men took a purely materialistic view of the world, the less it satisfied them. Today Huston Smith, analyzing his experience with the MIT students, states: "What I learned was that the human mind stands ready to believe anything — absolutely anything — as long as it provides an alternative to the totally desacralized echanomorphic outlook of objective science."

Forces Within Our Control

A second reason cited for the revival for the "sacred" is that it gives a person the feeling he has some control over his life and the way things are going in the world. One student described it, "Why use the I Ching in a world where you have the computer? The answer is easy. You can't understand the computer and you don't have much control over it. The I Ching says that there are powers that stand beyond and are more powerful than the computer, powers with which you can enter into a meaningful relationship when you can't do it with the computer."

At a time when Vietnam was still raging, one student said, "Most of us realize that other people make our decisions for us quite arbitrarily. Whether I go to Vietnam or not, whether I get killed there or not, doesn't depend at all on who I am or what I think. I'd sooner feel that my future was being shaped by the stars or by the turn of the cards, because these would represent powers that would be more concerned about me than would either my draft board or the Pentagon."

Students comment that interest in occult and religious matters is a response to alienation and to a feeling of unimportance in the larger society. "Religion makes you feel that you are important and that what you do does matter, and you can have influence on others."

A third reason mentioned for the return of the "sacred" is that it provides a sense of community. Like other groups in recent bygone history — such as the

radicals and the hippies — the “neosacralists” are in desperate search of something to belong to. The occult-religious groups are miniature communities, where a person is more than a file card. A co-ed said, “If you get into a group like that, you at least know that somebody will notice the difference if you’re murdered. Around this university, you could be dead in your room for days and nobody would ever know the difference.”

As many young (and old) people see it, we are trapped in an irreversible technological society that leaves nothing to chance. We have become cogs in a machine. The bureaucrat and the expert are the power brokers in our society, and “freedom” means submitting to the choices of these nameless men who run the technological machinery. Work becomes meaningless and empty; the culture has become grossly commercial, and all human values are up for sale.

There has been a loss of all personal uniqueness. For “the system” strips us of individualism to make us productive members in an assembly-line society. Community, love and brotherhood have been destroyed, and there is a profound sense of loneliness and alienation.

The solution, people see, is to recapture individual identity — to do your own thing; to be a human being, to reject rationality.

Writer Alan Watts so analyzes the occult explosion: “What is constructive and meaningful about the return of occultism is that for the first time, masses of young Americans are learning that life can have a goal of something else besides producing and consuming junk, that life should be directed at spiritual ends.”

So, the conversion to the irrational is a protest against the schizophrenic split between the intellect and the emotions, which is characteristic of Western culture. In Western tradition, the stress on the intellect and the rational structure of society has relegated the emotional life of man to a subordinate place.

Why aren’t these people with this view of society turning toward the traditional churches to fulfill their emotional needs and to find brotherhood and love? Simply

because they view such churches as part of the same society, operating to preserve the same system.

Therefore, a person with this approach finds a different religious style seems more fitting — and the occult cults provide the desired alternative. As Daniel Bell, the Harvard sociologist, says, their emphasis is “on *magic* rather than *theology*” and therefore puts “greater stress on the irrational components of religion to sustain adherence.”

Ultimate Meaning

The “sacred” also provides meaning. Full meaning, as those interested in the paranormal see it, involves understanding what the world is all about. It also involves having some sense of what you as an individual are all about. The occult, or the quasi-religious experience, is supposed to take a person “out of himself” and bring him into contact not only with other human beings, but also with the “creative powers” that presumably underpin the cosmos.

Victor Frankl, the Viennese psychologist, has stated that the search for meaning is the most vital function of the mind. Quite often people feel helplessly caught up in the bewildering momentum of the events of life. But Frankl points out that a man can stand almost any terrible situation, including torture, if he can see in it some kind of meaning and relate it to a larger purpose.

The Occult Establishment

It would be a mistake to assume that the broad majority of those (young and old) who have some interest in the occult are deeply involved. They are not. Marcello Truzzi concluded from his study that “most of those involved in supporting the current occult revival have a relatively superficial connection with it, a connection that is usually more one of play than one of seriousness. For most Americans, the involvement in the occult is a leisure-time activity and a fad of popular culture rather than a serious religious involvement in the search for new sacred

elements" ("The Occult Revival as Popular Culture," *The Sociological Quarterly*, Winter, 1972).

On the other hand, Nat Freeland, author of *The Occult Explosion*, writes that in addition to the "mass marketing of a fashionably commercial occultism," and "lots of cranks, kooks, charlatans, ignoramuses, and self-deluded neurotics," at the center of this "unique social phenomenon is a totally sane core of serious, open-minded people who are asking mankind's most important question — What is the meaning of human life and how does it fit into the universal design?"

Most reports in the popular press have dealt with fringe elements of the occult — often with deliberate sensationalism about drugs and sex, or stressing their ominous "satanic" character. But looking at the overall, commercial, and general interest in the occult, Martin Marty, in a recent analysis, states that "most of the energies of the occult and metaphysical groups go into what I call the 'Occult Establishment,' a safe and sane 'aboveground' expression, whose literature gives every sign of being beamed at what is now usually called 'middle America,' 'the silent majority,' or 'consensus-U.S.A.'" ("The Occult Establishment," *Social Research*, Summer, 1970).

In this light a 1969 survey of *Fate* magazine readers showed, for example, that 88% of them were over 34 years old, 38% being over 55 years old. Furthermore, the main audience of the established occult periodicals, Marty concludes, are "securely and safely home in middle America."

The main reason the current spotlight is aimed at youth is a matter of timing. The practice of occult arts became big business after World War II, when for the most part the market was composed of senior citizens. But in the late 1960s the occult developed great attraction for the under-25 generation and their folk heroes, and there began a shift in clientele from age to youth.

Science and the Occult

The word "occult" means "hidden" or "secret." Nothing more than that. What was "hidden" or "secret" in past

ages was information or knowledge. Hence, it is no wonder that the most basic law of believers in the occult is the Law of Knowledge: "understanding brings control" or "knowledge is power."

"Science" means "organized knowledge." P. E. I. Bonewits claims it is really impossible to separate the two realms of "science" and "occultism." "Originally all technical and scientific knowledge was occult. There is not an 'establishment science' today that cannot trace itself back to a time when its subject matter was part of 'occultism.'" (Bonewits made the news media in 1970 by graduating from the University of California with a major in magic.)

Something is judged "scientific" if it has been subjected to the scientific method of observation and experimentation. Occultism has to date consisted mostly of observation. But today there is the desire of serious occultists to put occult claims to experiment. There is an awareness that ritual and esoteric dogma should no longer be blindly accepted, but must be thoroughly examined in the light of present scientific knowledge.

Bonewits points out how the subject matter of occultism has grown smaller as different sciences have amassed organized bodies of knowledge. "We started out with the things furthest away from human minds, and as we gradually got closer to home, different sciences popped up as organized. Man went through astronomy, geology, physics, chemistry, paleontology, mathematics, biology and medicine till we finally got to anthropology, sociology, and psychology.... The last three named are among the youngest of the sciences, and not one hundred years ago there were people who claimed these studies were 'unscientific.' To date, we've gotten closest to the human mind with the infant science of parapsychology, only recently let in through the back doors of the halls of Establishment Science, when the Parapsychological Association was finally admitted into membership in 1969 in the American Association for the Advancement of Science....

"So we can quite accurately say that every modern

science has grown out of occultism (usually via technology). In fact, occultism is dwindling rapidly and today includes mostly such things as magic and mysticism, both of which deal with powers of the mind that psychology and parapsychology can only glimpse" (*Real Magic*, Berkeley Medallion Books, p. 44).

Dr. Israel Regardie, a magician of some renown among his peers, maintains: "Magic concerns itself in the main with that selfsame world as does modern psychology. That is to say, it deals with that sphere of the psyche of which normally we are not conscious, but which exerts an enormous influence upon our lives. Magic is a series of psychological techniques so devised as to enable us to probe more deeply into ourselves. To what end? First, that we shall understand ourselves more completely."

Bonewits concludes: "The science and art of magic deals with a body of knowledge that, for one reason or another, has not yet been fully investigated or confirmed by the other arts and sciences."

Obviously these men's definition of "occult" and "magic" differs materially from the usual definition. So it is important to realize what is meant by these terms.

Paranormal Phenomena

Occultists point to "paranormal phenomena" to scientifically verify the reality of the occult. Paranormal means "above the normal" or "other than the usual." Essentially, the term "paranormal" has been applied to anything that doesn't seem to be acting according to currently accepted scientific "laws." Such "paranormal" happenings are often divided into two parts: *Extrasensory Perception* and *Paraphysics*.

Extrasensory Perception, or ESP, is the term applied to the reception of data without using the normal sense channels. The human brain normally receives information from outside the body in only three different ways: by pressure (as in "touch" and "hearing"), by chemical interaction (as in "taste" and "smell"), and by receiving electromagnetic waves (as in "sight"). Information received any other way is classified as ESP. Two types of ESP are

generally defined: *telepathy* (communication of one mind to another otherwise than through the channels of sense) and *clairvoyance* (professed power of discerning objects not present to the senses).

Paraphysics is basically "mind over matter." For example, *psychokinesis* is the power to move physical objects through thought processes. Experiments in different places by different researchers, such as those by J. B. Rhine, have supposedly proved the existence of ESP and psychokinesis. Occultists look to such powers of the human mind as the basis of occult phenomena.

The Occult as a Religion

Is widespread occult interest a religious phenomena unique to our day, which is robbing the Christian churches of their rightful citizens? Should we search among occultists to discover the "false Christs" of which the apostles prophesied? What do occult groups represent religiously?

The belief grows in certain religious circles that interest in the occult is an apocalyptic sign of the "end time" or "latter days." Star-gazers, witches, satanists, and devotees of the Orient are viewed with devout alarm as the prophesied "false Christs," as Christian drop-outs, and as subverters of Western culture. Interest in the occult is to them the primary confirmation that Satan is real and healthy and well and living next door.

But what the occult groups really represent as a religious phenomenon is simply nothing more profound than the expansion of the religious supermarket, as a result of the social crises of our times. The groups represent a broadening of what Thomas Luckman called the "marketplace of interpretive schemes." New forms of the sacred are becoming *available* in the marketplace (though many of them are very old). These new religious forms are entering the marketplace, because, as with any produce, there is a bigger demand for them.

Eric Hofer, in his well-known work *The True Believer*, pointed out that new religious currents originate in periods of great social stress, frustration, or transition.

And that is what is happening today — not only in the form of the alternative reality form of the occult, but also in the more traditional form called Christianity.

Two general types of religious movements have traditionally emerged in times of rapid historical change. Each tries to deny the terror of the onward rush of historical time: the fright that comes from the fact that the world is becoming different day by day, and will never again be the good old world you had grown accustomed to. “The first is *mysticism*, which creates an interior psychological time so divorced from exterior clock or historical or ordinary human time that ideally it does not move at all, but remains in an eternal now of bliss. The second is *apocalyptic*, which lives for a moment when, by divine intervention from without, time in all its destructive aspects will be demolished, and a paradisaical condition established which is in effect without time because all potentialities are realized” (Robert Ellwood, Jr.).

Occult elements have lived in expectation of a new era, a new consciousness, or the dawning of the age of Aquarius. In professing Christian movements, the search for a world-transforming spiritual experience — or rather a personal experience which will seem to transform the world because it transforms the individual — has been replaced by the hope of a new Christian world. These groups wait for the Day of the Lord that will herald a new utopia, following an apocalyptic destruction of the current social structure. (All this is *not* intended to mean that the world tomorrow is not coming. *It is*. But it is also true that sitting around and waiting for the millennium — or an Age of Aquarius — could be nothing more than simple escapism. It depends upon you — and upon the attitude with which you approach the future.)

The Balanced Christian Approach

As the British author and common man's theologian C.S. Lewis wrote in 1941: “There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils [demons — the real source of much of mysticism

and the occult]. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them [dabbling in witchcraft, astrology, etc.]. They themselves [the devil and his demons] are equally pleased by both errors, and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight."

As we shall see in the following chapters, a genuine Christian has no need of occultism because the Holy Spirit imparts God's power, especially powers of attitude. That is why the Apostle Paul enunciated a general principle concerning non-Christian religious teachings: "But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, wherunto ye desire again to be in bondage?" (Gal. 4:9.)

Astrology and the Occult

ASTROLOGY is by far the biggest area of popular attention. Two thirds of the books recently printed on occultism deal with the subject of astrology.

Twenty years ago only about 100 papers carried horoscope columns, but today 1200 daily newspapers regularly carry such columns. Astrology has gained appeal through public endorsement by a wide variety of celebrities who range from Hollywood stars to members of the political and intellectual communities.

The popular musical *Hair* with its hit song of *Aquarius* and its own well-publicized company astrologist gave special impetus to the movement. In 1969 the Dell Publishing Company alone had some 49 horoscope publications in print and sold over 8,000,000 copies of its annual astrological dope sheet.

It is claimed that about 10,000 full-time and 175,000 part-time astrologers in the U. S. serve some 40,000,000 in their American audience. Shops carry astrological recordings, calendars, ashtrays, hairstyles, sweat shirts, and thousands of merchandise items linked to the zodiac. Astrology pulp magazines sell 2,000,000 copies monthly.

One leading occult figure said, "The stars may affect no one, but astrology affects everyone."

What does all this really represent?

Any meaningful discussion of astrology has to distinguish between different levels of astrological thought. On

the one hand is the marketplace variety which is seen in the newspaper columns and at the grocery store check-out counters. On the other hand there is the serious level of astrological theory.

Drugstore Astrology

Popular or marketplace astrology is primarily concerned with prophecy. Here we find the newspaper horoscope which pretends to tell all those born under a certain sun-sign — all Cancers, all Leos, etc. — what the day or week holds in store for them. Anyone who takes this nonsense seriously is doing something that no “professional” astrologer would ever do!

Derek and Julia Parker write that “there are certain things astrology cannot do: it is not a means for ‘foretelling the future. . . .’” (*The Compleat Astrologer*, p. 60. Julia Parker is Secretary of the Faculty of Astrological Studies in England and a consultant astrologer.) Even the noted newspaper-astrologer Sidney Omarr has been quoted as conceding that “daily columns provide entertainment rather than enlightenment.” Horoscope forecasts in the form of advice come across as bland common sense that would be good general advice for anybody on any day.

And, in truth, polls indicate that very few among the multitudes of readers actually take such horoscopes very much to heart. In this light, the statement that “40,000,000 people” are involved in astrology is grossly exaggerated, to say the least. The statistic of 40,000,000 basically represents the potential readership of the 1200 daily newspapers which regularly carry an astrological column.

This area of astrology is purely a commercial phenomenon, a business venture, on the part of those who sell information. These days, as someone pointed out, occultism is spelled occultism. But, why are people buying?

“The mass interest in astrological prophecy may be regarded in straightforward historical terms as the inevitable corollary of a society in the last throes of decline and

degeneration” (John Anthony West and Jan Gerhard Toonder, *The Case for Astrology*, p. 201).

West and Toonder state that pop astrology, like over-emphasis on other types of prophecy or “future research” betrays an “incapacity to live in the present.” It proceeds “upon the assumption that by forecasting the future it [the future] can be acted upon with miraculous wisdom despite the chaos and blundering so evidently prevailing at the time the actual forecast is made.” Three centuries of materialism, rationalism and technology have proven so unconvincing and emotionally unsatisfactory.

Hard-sell astrology ads promise knowledge of the future, knowledge about the real you, social success, contentment, the realization of hidden potential, and financial well-being. People buy the sales pitch because they are willing to *try* many things in order to gain one or some of these goals. There is always the hope that it *might* work. Of course, astrology cannot deliver such goods — but neither can any of the many other gimmicks which make the same or similar promises.

People pay money for such promises because they are less interested in pursuing truth than they are in fulfilling certain emotional needs. “Professional astrologers would not be in business for long if the truth began creeping into their advertisements,” West and Toonder report. “Their clients are interested in other things.”

Three Typical Levels

One can generalize about three “typical levels” of involvement in astrology. The first two levels represent areas we have been discussing.

First is the most superficial level of involvement. The typical person here is the occasional reader of the newspaper and magazine astrology columns. He knows next to nothing about the “mechanics” of astrology — about the theory, terminology and mathematics of casting a horoscope. *The overwhelming majority of those “involved” in astrology fall into this first level.* Most of the over-35 population who follow astrology are in this category.

At the second level of involvement are those with

The Origin of Astrology

Astrology as well as astronomy has its roots in the religion and science of the ancient Babylonians.

The Babylonians thought they could foretell the future by their observations of the stars. Five planets were considered especially fateful regarding the destinies of men. The names of the five most important Chaldean gods were applied to those planets.

A brief and concise description of the ancient Babylonian astrology and its origin is given in Langer's Encyclopedia of World History. We read: "The most characteristic and influential features of Babylonian religion, aside from its mythology, were the elaborate systems of magical practices [incantations] and the interpretation of omens [divination], *particularly the movements and position of the heavenly bodies* [astrology], the actions of animals, and the characteristics of the liver of sacrificial victims" (page 26).

In the three centuries before Christ, Babylonian astrology developed into a pseudo-mathematical science which, however, still retained its religious orientation toward worship of the powers of the stars. The whole of this pseudo- and proto-science then spread westward over the Hellenistic realm and finally over the entire Roman world.

Later, astrologers built up a strong practice in Rome. The Babylonian names for the stars were altered to suit Roman tastes. Thus the planet Marduk became Jupiter, Nabu became Mercury, Ishtar (the Babylonian name for Semiramis) was changed to Venus (the "Queen of Heaven").

Ultimately, as time went on, the objective, scientific part of the Babylonian study — the observation of the movements of the heavenly bodies — was put to good use. Man became able to predict eclipses. The general picture of the operation of the solar system, and of the earth's place in it, began to come clear. Out of the later Middle Ages the modern science of astronomy finally developed.

But the religious and superstitious part of the tradition had not died. From the body of Babylonian ideas, the Greeks had derived the notion of the zodiac and the division into 12 parts of the band of the ecliptic (the relatively narrow region in the sky within which the sun, moon and planets appear to travel). The 12 signs of the zodiac which persist in astrology today were developed to identify these 12 regions of the sky.

some knowledge of astrological mechanics. These people usually have their own personal horoscopes cast. Ways of doing this range from personal visits with a consulting astrologer to a computer analysis of their horoscopes. They are able to talk shop astrologically. Like those in the first level, they are looking for advice and predictions. People in this level are primarily those of college age, and this level has had the greatest relative increase during the current revival.

Astrologer Dane Rudhyar, who has been a prominent figure in the reformulation of astrological concepts in terms of contemporary psychology and philosophy, writes, "The young people . . . hope to find in astrology not only answers to poignant personal problems, but even more some sort of inner security. Many of them . . . refusing to participate in a culture increasingly dominated by a de-humanized and de-natured approach to knowledge, long to discover their place and function in a more-than-human, universal or cosmic order."

But he goes on to add, "Alas, the majority of astrologers are still too close to the fortune-telling category, too obsessed by telling 'what will happen,' to be able to answer the needs of the young . . ." (*The Astrology of the Personality*, pp. viii-ix).

What they really need is a true knowledge of what actually will happen, and what they should do about it. But they will never find this in astrology. Astrological prophecy is partly an attempt to escape the present by knowing (supposedly) the future. Astrology can also be an exercise in fatalism: the stars have determined your future, and there is not too much you can do about it. Most astrologers will deny that astrology is a means of prophecy, or that it teaches a predetermined future. Yet many of them go on *acting* as if it is and does. Certainly to the average astrology follower, prophecy is the focus of attention.

For those at a third level of involvement, astrology is a highly complex and symbolical structure which supposedly gives its believers a meaningful view of the universe and gives them an understanding of their place in it.

Astrology, for them, has passed beyond either entertainment or superstition and has plainly become a religion. They see astrology as "the result of man's attempt to understand the apparent confusion and chaos of his life-experiences by referring them to the ordered patterns of cyclic activity which he discovers in the sky" (Dane Rudhyar, *The Practice of Astrology*, p. 8).

Only a few thousand strong, these people have become really involved in the literature of the field and usually cast their own horoscopes. Until relatively recently, only a very small number of elderly people were involved — they now include many youthful advocates.

Astrology and Biblical Revelation

As with other superstitions of man, there may be some element of truth amidst the mass of astrological mythology. Astrology's contention that the universe influences human endeavors is perhaps not wholly erroneous. Recent scientific evidence suggests that certain astronomical relationships can affect living organisms on earth — e.g., some biological rhythms of plants and animals are regulated by phases of the moon, sunspot cycles, etc. Hitherto unknown influences — electromagnetic, gravitational, etc., from beyond the earth may even do the same. But any attempt to legitimize the wild claims of astrology is, to say the least, scientifically unprovable.

Certainly a God who could create both the astral bodies (Gen. 1:1) and the physical life on earth was able to have ordained many not so obvious interrelationships hitherto undiscovered by man. "He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names. Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite" (Ps. 147:4-5).

Furthermore, God did definitely intend that the stars should be studied by man and used for human purposes. Says the book of Genesis: "And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to *divide* the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years" (Gen. 1:14).

What Is the Zodiac?

The whole structure of astrology revolves around the "zodiac" — an arbitrarily arranged belt in the heavens. It includes the paths of the moon and the principal planets. It has as its middle line the sun's path — called the ecliptic. The zodiac, according to astrologers, has twelve divisions (or signs), each 30 degrees long, marked off eastward from the vernal equinox. The names of these divisions were originally the names of the constellations — groups of fixed stars — within them.

The signs of the zodiac were classified and used by ancient peoples thousands of years before the time of Christ. They were finally accurately established so that they would coincide with the twelve constellations in 100 B.C. But because of the precession of the earth's rotational axis, the signs of the zodiac are today separated about 30 degrees from their corresponding constellations. The sign of Aries, for instance, would actually occur when the sun is in the constellation Pisces. So, today's horoscopes actually represent the zodiac as it was 2000 years ago. In one very real sense, then, every horoscope is out of date!

The zodiac has also been used to describe the overall character of the particular age of history in which we find ourselves. Up to the time of Christ, astrologers tell us that we were in the age of Aries. For the next 2000 years the world supposedly experienced the Pisces, which typified sorrow. Sometime in the twentieth century the earth theoretically passed into "the dawning of the age of Aquarius" as the song goes. Aquarius is supposed to represent a time of new spiritual beginnings or universal brotherhood. However, present world conditions would indicate that the so-called age of Aquarius may be a bit premature.

And in any scientific understanding, what possible connection could there be between mythical orientation of stars, millions of light years apart, and the enormous complexity of human events here on earth?

But the same God absolutely forbade astrology.
Why?

Simply this: If a person looks to the stars for guidance — makes himself any form of astrological *religion* — he worships the created more than the Creator (Rom. 1:25).

He sidetracks himself from the *real* meaning of the universe and of life.

And he estranges himself from the very Source of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17).

Dependence on astrology for answers to life's problems, therefore, breaks one of the basic Ten Commandments — that against idolatry: "I am the Lord thy God . . . Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20:2, 3).

For this reason Moses also wrote:

Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves. . . . lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship and serve them . . . (Deut. 4:15, 19).

Violation of this law carried the death penalty in the theocracy of Israel (Deut. 17:2-5). This was — and is — the Word of God.

No true believer in the Bible can regulate his life by astrology — and remain loyal to his Creator. On the other hand, dependence upon and obedience to God prevents the evil effects of idolatry and produces a more abundant life here and now and eternal life in the World Tomorrow.

Biblical History

As an example for us today (I Cor. 10:11; Rom. 15:4), biblical history records the apostasy of the ancient House of Israel. Those peoples failed to follow the laws God designed to bring them peace, prosperity and happiness. Instead "... They left all the commandments of the Lord their God . . . and worshipped all the *host of heaven*" (II Kings 17:16). The House of Judah later fell into this same idolatry. Manasseh, King of Judah, "... worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them" (II Kings 21:3).

The Hebrew prophet Zephaniah received this Word from God (Zeph. 1:1): "I will also stretch out mine hand

unto Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, and the name of the Chemarims with the priests; and *them that worship the host of heaven...*" (verses 4-5).

This, and many other forms of idolatry, led to the captivity of both these nations.

Another Hebrew prophet, Isaiah, forecasts the ultimate penalty for stubborn continuance in the practice of astrology — at least in the biblical sense of the term.

Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the *astrologers*, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee. Behold... they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame... (Isa. 47:13-14).

We, ourselves, may not always be able to exactly determine whether or not many who practice some forms of what is called astrology today actually come under the biblical condemnation. However, it is far safer to simply avoid those who practice such things altogether.

The Biblical Test

One additional cautionary note: The fact that astrological predictions do, in some cases, come to pass as forecast, is beside the point. Such is not the biblical test of a true prophet of God. And there do exist false seducing spirits (of which we will say more later) who are willing to deliberately deceive mankind.

If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods [the stars, sun, and moon have been directly and indirectly worshipped as other gods], which thou has not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and

obey his voice, and ye shall serve him [for your good], and cleave unto him. And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; [Why?] because he hath spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God . . . (Deut. 13:1-5).

Chapter Three

Witchcraft and Magic

INTEREST in witchcraft is a popular focus of current occult attention. Those involved in witchcraft today look upon it as a religion of magical techniques — intended to produce paranormal psychic powers resident in the human mind.

“Witch” comes from the Anglo-Saxon *wicce*. *Wicce* comes from the German root *wic*, “to turn or bend.” The original connotation of *wicce* is possibly “someone with the power to turn [change] things.”

Sara Cunningham, a local Los Angeles witch, says: “Wicca [witchcraft] is really a method of enlarging your mind to develop ESP awareness. It doesn’t deny God and is meant to be used for helping others.”

Such an alleged difference between so-called *white* versus *black* magic is one major distinction discussed in much of occult literature. White magic is supposed to be the use of magic for socially beneficent ends. Black magic is supposed to be the use of magic for malevolent ends. Most magicians basically view magic as a value-free “technology-of-the-supernatural” (or “supernormal”). They believe that their own motive really determines whether their use of magic is for good (white) or evil (black). Most contemporary witches stress that they perform only white magic.

We asked witch Eleanor Pisan of the Hermetic Workshop in Hollywood about the difference between white and black witchcraft.

“What was that thing the Christians pulled?” she replied. “Remember when they were in Spain, and what did you call that?”

“The Inquisition?”

“Yes, that’s right. Then there must be white and black Christianity too . . . In the name of Christianity they killed thousands of people. We don’t kill anybody.”

Witchcraft focuses a great deal on ritualism — involving candles, magic circles and such like. But few witchcraft advocates today believe there is magic force in the ritual itself. Rather, they use props and a ritual as a means to focus what they feel are natural powers of the human mind.

Warlock (male witch) Paul Huson says, “The success of a spell depends on the emotion you put into it . . . It’s all a way of getting at your deep mind . . . contacting entities that are really forces dependent on your attentions.” Mrs. Luise Huebner says, “Witches use props to get in the mood . . . What you are actually doing is psyching yourself into believing that because you do one action another will result . . . I believe it is my own energies and the action only helps me.”

Most witches perceive witchcraft as a folk tradition of magical beliefs. Many, if not most of them, further perceive it as an ancient, pre-Christian pagan religion of nature worship that the Christian churches in Europe sought to suppress in earlier centuries. They hold this concept because British anthropologist Margaret Murray proposed it in her 1921 book, *The Witch Cult in Western Europe*, which led directly to the modern witchcraft revival. This theory of a pan-European nature religion, however, cannot be supported by available evidence, and has been rejected by historians.

It should be noted that for witches, the word “pagan” does not suggest — as it does for others — images of unbridled orgies and grotesque idols reeking with the blood of sacrifice. Rather, it suggests the religion of a romantic, living and changing world which is continuous with human fancy and feeling and is oriented toward nature.

On the other hand, many popular, and false, ideas about "witchcraft" stem from the excesses of the sordid era of witch hunts (from the 12th century to the early part of the 18th) in religious history.

Renaissance Witchcraft

"Witchcraft" has meant different things to different people. In the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries, the word took on a new and precise meaning. A representative definition was that of Martin Del Rio in 1599: Witchcraft is "an art which, by the power of a contract entered into with the Devil, some wonders are wrought which pass the common understanding of man." People today often think of historical witchcraft (indeed, of the whole field of occultism) similarly as performed expressly in opposition to Christianity and in service to the devil.

This type of "witchcraft" was partly, though not entirely, a creation of the Church. For anyone opposing the established religion was most easily persecuted for demonism. The Church spawned the concept of witchcraft as a competing religion to "Christianity" and burned "witches" from about the 12th century on.

And rather than ending with the Protestant Reformation, some of the severest persecutions of "witches" occurred in England — strangely enough — under the Commonwealth, which in other ways represented the most advanced political, economic and philosophical thought of the seventeenth century.

Both to the people and the judicial authorities, spiritual and secular, for over two centuries, the concurrence of a disliked neighbor and a dead cow or sick child often looked like simple cause and effect. It was a superstitious age. And so a "witch" was burned, because it was believed that power to cause such harm could only have been acquired through a pact with the devil.

During this time "witchcraft" was defined as the performance of evil acts with the help of "the devil." This inspired religious and civil authorities to do acts even more evil in the name of "God" — burning, hanging, beheading,

disboweling, breaking with the wheel, trussing, gouging out the eyes, cutting off the hand, flogging — all of which were many times inflicted on innocent people.

It is thought that between 1575 and 1700 about a million people were killed as witches, most of them women.

In the June 1970 *American Journal of Psychiatry*, Dr. Robert Anderson calls these witch hunts an "epidemic of mass psychopathology" stemming from the social breakdowns in the last period of European feudalism. Inquisitors were caught up in a caldron of complaints, lies, local quarrels, personal interests, and even self-accusations.

There was something pathological in the mentality of men like Heinrich Institoris and Jakob Sprenger who, in their book *Malleus Maleficarum* (Hammer Against Witches, 1489), laid down grisly methods for hunting out people and torturing them to death. They wrote, "All witchcraft comes from carnal lust which is in women insatiable . . . wherefore for the sake of fulfilling their lusts they consort even with the Devil." (*Malleus Maleficarum* was the standard textbook of inquisitors for two hundred years.)

Armed with such beliefs, authorities were able to confirm their suspicions time and time again through confessions obtained under torture. "The curiosity of the judges [at witch trials]," wrote Henry C. Lea, "was insatiable to learn all the possible details as to sexual intercourse, and their industry in pushing the examinations was rewarded by an abundance of foul imaginations." A combination of prurient inquisitors and hysterical young women — who had already sustained considerable abuse and who were about to be burned — produced an abundance of myth which purported to be documented accounts of witchcraft, but which was completely the product of erotic and neurotic imaginations.

How Many Witches?

In the world today there are perhaps 6-10,000 self-professed witches in the classical sense. Whatever may be

the problems of witchcraft, this is scarcely a cause for enormous alarm.

The vast majority of witches today belong to no organized group and have obtained their knowledge from their readings and conversations with others initiated into covens and their secrets. The typical person of this class is a young high-school or college-age girl who, for a variety of reasons, self-designates herself as a "witch" to her peers. This status supposedly makes her attractive to her friends, but elicits fear in her enemies.

Of the organized groups, the covens, "Great Britain and the United States probably can claim no more than 1950 coven members. These cultists represent a rather small part of the mass market currently devouring the many marketable witchcraft items and books. Coupling the number of coven members with that of the solitary witches (many of whom are not really very serious about witchcraft) still leaves us with a relatively small number of witches in the United States . . . the popular interest of the general public toward this form of occultism is very superficial" (Marcello Truzzi, cited previously).

Biblical Revelation and Witchcraft

To evaluate the subject of witchcraft and magic properly, we should read the primary dictionary definitions of the following words carefully. Webster's Unabridged Dictionary defines them with meanings reasonably close to their biblical usage.

Witch — "a. wizard, sorcerer b. a woman practicing the black arts: sorceress c. one supposed to possess supernatural powers esp. by compact with the devil or familiar [spirits]."

Witchcraft — "a. an act or instance of employing sorcery esp. with malevolent intent: a magical rite or technique b. the exercise of supernatural powers: alleged intercourse with the devil or familiar [spirits]."

Magic — "a. the use of means (as ceremonies, charms, spells) that are believed to have supernatural power to cause a supernatural being to produce or prevent a par-

ticular result (as rain, death, healing) considered not obtainable by natural means and that also includes the arts of divination, incantation, sympathetic magic, and thaumaturgy: control of natural forces by the typically direct action of rites, objects, materials, or words considered supernaturally potent.”

Sorcery — “the use of power gained from the assistance or control of evil spirits esp. for divining: divination of black magic: necromancy, witchcraft.”

One can easily perceive by reading these definitions that these terms are all closely related. While it plainly must be doubted that very many of the thousands burned or harmed in previous centuries for alleged practice of witchcraft, magic or sorcery were actually guilty, and while it may be similarly doubted that very many of today’s self-identified witches are in, or even mean to classify themselves in, that category, it is necessary to sternly warn those who are — and to warn other people against them. For the Bible frankly and firmly condemns these things *en toto*.

There is a blanket biblical condemnation in Deuteronomy 18:9-14 which gives us the wisdom of God to keep us truly worshipping Him and to protect us from possible harm from evil spirits. What God instructed ancient Israel is still applicable today:

When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits [demons], or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God. For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened [listened] unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee,

the Lord thy God hath not suffered [allowed] thee so to do (Deut. 18:9-14).

The Bible specifically mentions that some of these practices carried the death penalty in ancient Israel. "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," wrote Moses (Ex. 22:18).

Leviticus adds: "A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death . . ." (20:27).

The Prophet Samuel indicted King Saul of Israel for his direct disobedience to God's specific charges. Samuel said Saul's rebellion was "*as the SIN of witchcraft*" (I Sam. 15:23).

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul wrote to the Christians at Galatia: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, *witchcraft* [*magic*, Moffatt version; *sorcery*, Amplified Bible], hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:19-21).

Practicing witchcraft and related "arts" ultimately denies its participants the Kingdom of God. God simply has not changed His standard today.

Why does God so condemn the occult and its practices? Simply because it hurts individuals and damages society in the most destructive possible manner — by turning human beings away from their Creator and His laws.

The Potential Dangers in Occultism

THE visible part of the occult explosion is an economic creation (which says something about the spiritual state of our modern economy). It is part of the same mass-production and marketing machinery that gives us ball-point pens and soft drinks. The market is interested in money, not in truth, and so caters to appetites and dishes out stereotyped oddities in the classical traditions of superstition: astrological ashtrays, hexing kits, voodoo dolls, toy monsters and a sickening array of other items of pop culture.

Books with a hedonistic appeal answer questions like: "How can I win a lottery quickly?," "Which woman can be seduced?," etc. Magazines dish out reams of mediocre marital and business advice. The genre of occult movies and best-selling books add to the mounting trashheap of commercial-occult products that we could do without.

But, the most serious problem arises when the occult becomes an ultimate religious quest. Even if a person should learn something of the "rhythms of the universe," or tap into some supernatural source of power — yet, what has he? Where does it leave him in the great rush of eternity?

Evelyn Underhill writes, "Magic even at its best extends rather than escapes the boundaries of the phe-

nominal world." But that is "even at its best." What man really needs is the knowledge of obtaining immortality, power over death, and the ability to escape the limits of space and time.

It is perhaps the fundamental lesson of the Old Testament, of the Hebrew Scriptures, that man cannot of himself marshal forth the mental attitude and capacity to bring about a human millennium here on earth. He needs a new spirit (Jer. 31:31-34). And, in addition, he needs the power to conquer man's ancient and most persistent enemy, death. That power is possible — it comes from the same new spirit discussed throughout the Bible.

That new spirit is even *now* available to man — it is a God-given essence called the Holy Spirit. (For an introduction to this subject, write for our free article "How You Can Be Imbued With the Power of God.")

The purpose of God with mankind is to give us that spirit. But we must be warned of the prevalence of deliberate spirit counterfeits.

Evil Spirits

There is one area of reality we have not heretofore discussed at any great length. This has to do with the existence of spirit beings called *demons*. In Christ's day there were those who were possessed by demons (Matt. 8:16, etc.), or by evil spirits. Today there exist certain *spiritist sects* which are involved in a conscious effort to contact "higher beings," or "aliens," and who are constantly looking for ever greater signs and wonders. This kind of spiritism is often little more than an open invitation to demon-possession.

The reader may not be very familiar with these terms or the spirit world behind them. But this booklet would not be complete without an explanation. Because there definitely is a connection between many forms of the occult and the existence of certain varieties of spirit beings.

Many people today have been educated to think of God as an historical myth. They are infused with an antisupernaturalistic bias. They consider the concept of a

devil as ignorant and mythological. They consider a demonic spirit world to be a mere concept held by primitive people to explain away the presence of evil in the world.

But the Bible does reveal that there is both a real God and a real devil. The existence of God can be proved to a rational mind (write for our free booklet *Does God Exist?*). And the existence of a devil and untold millions of demonic beings will be plain to any who believe the Bible is the inspired Word of that God.

But, what are these spirits? And how did they originate?

The Origin of Angels

Long before the time of Adam, God created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1). This great Creator Being is ruler of all that exists in the vast limitlessness of space. He is supreme in power, wisdom and intelligence. And the Scripture reveals that God created all things through, or by, the pre-existing Christ Jesus. This includes the *creation* of myriads of angelic spirit beings (see Col. 1:13, 16-17 and Eph. 3:9).

The Apostle Paul wrote: "... Who *maketh* his angels spirits..." (Heb. 1:7). Even *before* the earth was made, God created the angelic beings of this vast spirit world (Job 38:4, 7).

At the summit of angelic authority God placed super archangels. Lucifer was one of these great personages. He was placed in charge of planet earth. But, as Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 show, Lucifer became exalted in his own estimation. He finally led one third of the angels in an insurrection against the very throne of God in heaven (Rev. 12:4, 7-10). Of course, God and His righteous angels crushed this angelic rebellion as shown by the above and other scriptures. Then God renamed Lucifer "Satan" (which means adversary) and the rebellious angels are now called demons.

The Apostle Jude says of those angels who followed Lucifer's rebellious leadership: "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation [the earth], he hath reserved in everlasting chains under dark-

ness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6). The same circumstance is alluded to by the Apostle Peter: "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell [Greek *tartaroo*], and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment . . ." (II Peter 2:4).

(This scriptural history of angels is very brief. You may obtain the intriguing details by writing for our free booklet titled *Did God Create a Devil?*)

Satan disqualified himself because of his disloyalty and rebellion. But one of God's principles of government requires that a ruler remain in office until a successor is both qualified and inducted into office.

Jesus has already qualified to take supreme rulership over the earth by His obedience to God under heavy temptation from that very same devil, but Satan must remain as invisible ruler of this world until Jesus' second coming when He will be inducted into office. At that time Satan and his demons will be banished from further influencing human beings for a full 1000 years (Rev. 20:1-3).

The "God of This World"

Now what is the position of Satan the devil? The Apostle Paul wrote: "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are [being] lost: in whom *the god of this world* hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (II Cor. 4:3, 4).

And in Ephesians 2:1-2: "And you hath he [God] quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the *prince of the power of the air* [Satan the devil], *the spirit* that now worketh in the children of disobedience."

Note particularly what the devil and his followers are doing: "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which *deceiveth the whole world*: he was cast out into the earth [after attempting to invade heaven], and his angels were cast out with him" (Rev. 12:9).

Not only do the devil and his army of wicked spirits indirectly influence the world in general — including its politics, religion, social and economic beliefs, etc., etc. — but they often find an avenue of very direct influence through the occult — witchcraft, sorcery, and spiritism in particular. This influence may — and this is a very real danger — go to the extreme of outright demon possession.

Scriptural Warnings About Wicked Spirits

Throughout the Old and New Testaments, the prophets and apostles of God condemned any human relationship with evil spirits. God commanded the children of ancient Israel: “Regard *not* them that have familiar spirits [demons], neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God” (Lev. 19:31).

God declared to any in the camp of Israel who would seek after familiar spirits: “And the soul that turneth after such as have *familiar spirits* [demons] . . . I will even set my face against that soul, and will *cut him off* [exile him] from among his people” (Lev. 20:6).

God further commanded the authorities to execute those who dealt directly with demons as a profession. “A man also or woman that has a familiar spirit [demon] . . . shall surely be put to death . . .” (verse 27).

One way an evil spirit can influence a human being is simply to inject evil thoughts directly into his mind, which, of course, a human being can resist with God’s help. But a second method is even more diabolically serious. It is the positive control of the mental and physical faculties or attributes of human beings — commonly called “demon possession” — which is then no longer resistible by the victim.

Several interesting case histories are recorded in the Bible. Notice in Acts 16:16-18, for example. “And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel [young lady] *possessed with* [or by] *a spirit of divination* met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: the same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us

Who Is of God?

Many write asking questions about crystal-ball gazers, fortune tellers, witches, mediums, hypnotists, so-called prophets such as Nostradamus. Some even wonder about individuals endowed with extrasensory perception. Often the questioner wants "our opinion" of a particular individual who claims to foretell the future.

We can give you the answer from the only source of truth on the matter in question — the Holy Bible. It explains how one can know if a person who claims to have "supernatural" powers is really a prophet, messenger or servant of God. It tells whether working of "miracles," fortune telling, prophesying or the like labels that person as God's messenger or not.

God gives us the basic criterion for identifying a servant or messenger of God in Deuteronomy 13:1-3 (RSV): "If a prophet arises among you, or a dreamer of dreams, and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or wonder which he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, 'Let us go after other gods,' which you have not known, 'and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or to that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God is testing you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul."

God further warns us in I John 4:1, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." We should "try" them as instructed in Isaiah 8:19-20: "And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

Here, then, is the true test of a servant of God. He will be telling people to obey the Word of God. God's servant will tell them to believe exactly what the Bible says. Real or imaginary miracle working is *not* — we repeat — *not* the test of whether an individual is a servant of God.

the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said *to the spirit*, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he [the evil spirit or demon] came out the same hour.”

Evil spirits “possessing” the mental and vocal faculties of human beings can *impersonate or pretend* they are human beings. They can manifest their powers in connection with religion to deceive further innocent victims — or to bring reproach upon the name of God by their misconduct, as in the previous example recorded by Luke in Acts 16.

In other instances they utilize human faculties in a violent manner. Read Matthew 8:28-33.

A Notorious Old Testament Sorceress

Did you ever wonder why so many occult phenomena and prophecies are concerned with *bad* news and *evil* occurrences — sickness, madness, injury, and often *death*? These simply reflect the personality, character, attitudes and desires of the demonic spirit beings who have “inspired” them. It is no wonder that the Eternal Creator, who wants to give us “every good and perfect gift” (James 1:17; Psalm 84:11), so forcefully condemns the occult and its maleficent practices.

Saul, king of Israel, knew God’s commands regarding familiar or evil spirits. He “had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land” (I Sam. 28:3). On other occasions, however, Saul was a very rebellious king. He would not obey the commands of God (I Sam. 15).

And since Saul refused to obey his Creator, God removed His protection from him. Thereafter, the Philistines gathered a mighty army to battle against Israel. Saul was terrified (I Sam. 28:4-5) and he tried to inquire of God concerning the outcome, but the Eternal would not answer because of Saul’s long-continued disobedience.

Saul then went to inquire of a woman who had a familiar spirit or demon. This evil sorceress contacted a

lying demon spirit. In vision this evil spirit caused a likeness of Samuel to be seen by this woman. The spirit, furthermore, revealed to her that on the very next day Israel would be delivered into the hands of the Philistines, and Saul and his sons would all be slain (verses 10-20).

Such necromancers, even today, profess to be able to communicate with the spirits of the deceased, but in fact they always contact a familiar demon spirit who impersonates the dead. The Bible clearly reveals that the dead are unconscious, and have no way of communicating with the living (Eccl. 9:5, 10; Ps. 6:5; 146:4).

Notice one further admonition to those who seek after familiar spirits. "And when they shall say unto you, 'Consult the mediums and the wizards who chirp and mutter,' should not a people consult their God? *Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living?*" (Isa. 8:19, RSV.)

No, of course not! But to what should we seek? "To the law and to the testimony: [for] if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (verse 20).

God expects His people to look to Him — through the Bible — to reveal those future events which He deems it wise or necessary for man to know (see Amos 3:7).

God does, however, sometimes permit demon spirits to obtain and reveal certain limited knowledge of the future to those unwise individuals who seek occult knowledge by consulting (through one means or another) familiar spirits. This is what happened in the case of King Saul and the Witch of Endor. But the kind of knowledge one obtains from a familiar spirit is only detrimental. How terrifying it must have been for Saul to learn that he would die the very next day on the battlefield (I Sam. 1:4-10).

Likewise, today, when people foolishly consult persons with "occult" powers, they are sometimes informed of calamitous happenings which will befall them.

Exorcism and Evil Spirits

Due to the movie *The Exorcist*, interest in exorcism and the devil is at an all-time high in twentieth-century America.

Exorcism is "the act or practice of exorcising." To exorcise is to "drive out or away (an evil spirit) by adjuration, especially by use of a holy name or magic rites" (primary definitions of *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*).

Jesus Christ Himself did cast evil spirits out of possessed human beings many times (Matt. 8:16, 28-34; 9:32-33; 12:22; 17:14-21, etc.), as did some of the Pharisees (Luke 11:19). God's true ministers today follow Jesus' example by casting out demons — but *always in His name* (Mark 16:17; Acts 16:16-18). They do *not*, however, employ any magical rites.

In some cases God does *honor* the use of Christ's name even when certain individual ministers *not* directly affiliated with the true body of Christ seek to help an unfortunate person afflicted by an evil spirit.

But the layman should rarely, if ever, be involved in such a dangerous practice as exorcism. Notice a striking biblical example: "Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded" (Acts 19:13-16).

So, as an overall principle, the practice of exorcism should be *completely avoided* by the Christian laity.

Does all this information, probably new to many readers, mean that we are to be suddenly in terror of evil spirits? By no means!

It is the person who fears demons who could become susceptible to them. But perfect love, wrote the Apostle John, casts out fear (I John 4:18). The true Christian spirit, the spirit of love and a wholesome and balanced life (expressed by faith, prayer, service and other Christlike

attributes) is the best protection against demon influence and possession.

More specifically, the Apostle James tells us what to do when the influence of wicked spirits is present: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. *Resist the devil* and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). If you obey God and stay away from all forms of the occult, neither the devil nor other demons can have any power over you. It is impossible for them because God rules over all, and no spirit being can do anything that God doesn't allow.

The most important chapter in all the Bible relating to human combat with evil spirits is found in Ephesians 6, beginning with verse 10.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness [wicked spirits — margin] in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth [Jesus said the truth, God's Word, shall make us free — John 8:32; 17:17], and having on the breastplate of righteousness [defined in the Bible as keeping all of God's commandments — Psalm 119:172]; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked [spirits]. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God [the Bible is the only sword which can vanquish evil spirits]: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints (verses 10-18).

Refuse to yield to satanic influence. Instead, ask God for help.

True Spirituality: God's Purpose for Man

SATAN is just not found in conventional clothes. Nor is he found exclusively among astrologers, sorcerers, and witches.

Satan has deceived — not only occultists, but *the whole world* (Rev. 12:9). The massive evidence around us of Satan's real deception is sickness and disease, famine in parts of Africa and India, war in Indochina and the Middle East, religious hatred in Ireland, oppression in Asia and South America, racial bigotry, crime in the streets, moral breakdown, etc., etc.

But the truth is that, to the majority, Satan generally appears not with horns and tail, but as an "angel of light," and his servants appear as "ministers of righteousness" (II Cor. 11:14-15). This is Satan's society — "lock, stock, and barrel" — but hardly anybody knows it.

The Search for the Spiritual

No doubt many of the occult's adherents are sincere — and correct — in their desire to escape from the materialistic and technological straightjacket in which 20th-century man has bound himself. The increasing interest in the occult, seemingly paradoxical in our day of scientific rationalism, bears powerful witness to the fact that the

fundamental essence of man transcends the boundaries of our physically oriented society.

It is *good* to search beyond the physical — to seek real meaning in the universe.

It is *good* to inquire into the fundamental essence of human life — to find reason for personal existence.

Your Creator intended that human beings search beyond the physical — we are indeed incomplete and unfulfilled when limited strictly to the physical.

Nevertheless, to dabble in occultism is to look in the wrong place. It is to expose oneself to spiritual dangers in a more direct manner than in any other of the religious, social and economic malfunctions resulting from the devil's general deception.

The occult and its practices are deeply injurious to human beings.

We are, of course, physical beings — but God created us with *spiritual capacities*. "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save *the spirit of man* which is in him?" (I Cor. 2:11.)

Man neither is nor has an immortal soul (Eccl. 3:19; 9:5, 10; Ps. 6:5; 88:10-12; 146:4; Ezek. 18:4, 20). (Write for our free booklet *Do You Have an Immortal Soul?*)

But man does have a spiritual essence in him — a "spirit in man" — created by God to empower human beings with a spiritual capacity and spiritual identity (I Cor. 2:11; Eccl. 12:7; Job 32:8; Zech. 12:1, etc.).

Real Spiritual Purpose

That we are not satisfied with pure materialism is completely logical. But to turn to the occult is *not*.

The occult claims to give some answers — but "answers" that will ultimately confuse and destroy are no answers at all.

The God that created us has the answers — answers that are *real* — answers that are *lasting* — answers that will ultimately satisfy and *fulfill*.

God did not create the universe by accident, nor was it for some capricious lark. God has formulated a great overall plan — a plan with an incomprehensible purpose — to

develop beings with Godlike character, to beget sons, to reproduce Himself, to expand the family of God!

The universe itself, for all its incomprehensible vastness and complexity, is but a tool for the great purpose God is working out with a few billion squabbling, insolent, seemingly insignificant conglomerates of cells we call human beings on this speck of universal dust we call earth.

Man, though now physical and mortal, has the God-given capacity to become spiritual and immortal. Life beyond the physical is a reality for the future.

But most important for the searching mind is that knowledge beyond the physical is a reality *right now*, "... Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God" (I Cor. 2:11).

The Spirit of God is the key to true spirituality.

The Spirit of God gives man his only real purpose.

It is the Spirit of God, when joined to our spirit in man, which answers the ultimate, fundamental questions of human existence. "The [Holy] Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit [spirit in man] that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8:16).

"*Children of God*," "*heirs of God*" (Rom. 8:17), "*sons of God*" (Rom. 8:14) — not just some pseudo-spiritual sentimentality. But reality! *The destiny of human beings is to literally become like God* (I John 3:2) — with a Godlike body (Phil. 3:21) and a Godlike mind (Phil. 2:5), equal with Christ (John 17:22; Rom. 8:29) who is equal to God (Phil. 2:6; John 5:18; I Cor. 10:4; Col. 1:16).

What a spectacular, incomprehensible future!

Overview

The occult fascinates and flourishes because it offers an alternative to dials, buttons, machines, formulas, and equations — it is an irrational solution to the problems of the rational, an escape from the confining shackles of materialism. The occult — if indeed it can break these shackles — in doing so must inevitably lead to ultimate darkness and unending despair far more confusing and limiting than the original materialism.

The Creator of the universe, the Designer of the

human mind, can and will break the shackles of materialism — and in doing so, He promises to go far beyond; He will expand your mental horizons far beyond anything you have ever dreamed possible; He will give you understanding far in excess of all human knowledge; He will show you the reason why the entire universe was created, why the earth is here, what man's history is all about, what human beings are, and perhaps most important, *why YOU were born.*

It is our commission to provide this information to all who desire it — without charge. This is our job — this is what we have been called to do.

We make no claims of great intelligence or understanding, of ourselves. We fully realize our own inadequacies as human beings.

It doesn't matter what we say; all that matters is what *God* says — the very God who originated, planned, designed, and created *everything* that exists has revealed it in His Word. Our responsibility is simply to make this precious knowledge available to those who sincerely desire to know.

Why Were You Born?

Perhaps more than any other of our publications, the booklet *Why Were You Born?* answers the fundamental questions of human existence, what man's goal must be, whether there is life after death, the purpose of your life.

If you read this one booklet, you will learn more ultimate knowledge — knowledge that is real, lasting, satisfying and fulfilling — knowledge that is far beyond the physical — than is contained in every occult book ever written.

That's quite a claim.

In fact, it's a challenge.

ADDITIONAL READING

The Worldwide Church of God publishes many colorful, informative booklets and reprints on a wide range of biblical topics. Three are listed below:

Why Were You Born?

Was humanity created and put here on earth by an intelligent and Almighty Creator for a definite purpose? And if so, what is that purpose — and why is humanity so totally unaware of it?

The Ten Commandments

Are the Ten Commandments obsolete in today's chaotic world? Or are they as applicable now as they were when God gave them on Mount Sinai? Here is a book explaining plainly this inexorable living law — soon to become the basic law of the peaceful, prosperous, joyful World Tomorrow.

How You Can Be Imbued With The Power of God

The Church in apostolic days was filled with power. Yet, today professing Christians are spiritually lifeless. Why? And how can you, yourself, be filled with the power that motivated the early Church — the power of God's Holy Spirit?

Write for your personal copies of these booklets. They are sent free as an educational service in the public interest. Worldwide mailing addresses are at the end of this booklet.

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