

A PRIMER ON OCCULT PHILOSOPHY

A Christian Appraisal

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Today the tentacles of occult philosophy embrace every area of our society. Police departments request psychics to solve crimes. College students are addicted to fantasy games (Dungeons and Dragons) which introduce them to

the world of the occult through role-playing.<sup>1</sup> Well-known science fiction writers mask occult doctrines in their works through pseudoscientific language.<sup>2</sup> Colleges and universities offer graduate degrees in esoteric thought. Occult themes provide popular material for TV shows and movies. A leader of the women's movement urges her followers to return to the ancient religions in which female deities were worshiped (witchcraft). Even the American Medical Society endorses the search for the "new" powers to aid the healing process.<sup>3</sup>

In apparent mockery of the waning influence of the church, one occultist in California quipped: "The second coming has already come--only J. C. didn't show up, Satan did."<sup>4</sup> This current interest and growth of occultic teaching certainly gives evidence that the bright light of the fire of Christian civilization is burning low. Once again, as in the Dark Ages, the evil eye of the demonic is moving in on us, offering Satanically inspired substitutes.

This movement from light to darkness gives solemn testimony to what happens when the church is intimidated by humanistic philosophy. Instead of resisting, being the "salt of the earth," and setting the standard for society and culture, much of the church at the beginning of the twentieth century gave up hope in the battle against modernism. The result was a renewed interest in prophecy and a resolve simply to await the Lord's return. This was the moment the Archenemy had anticipated. He and his counterfeiting demons moved into this spiritual vacuum with ideas

spawned during the "Enlightenment" -- but which until then had had little influence on the man in the street. Those ideas were rationalism, the supremacy of man, and a denial of the supernatural or spiritual dimension. Under the nurture of these philosophies, science and technology flourished. More wealth was shared by more people than in any other previous civilization, but man lost the meaning of his humanity and his context in the world. These ideas led to despair, as the philosopher Nietzsche had predicted. The denial of a creator and revealed meaning led to a secular search for meaning. The pendulum then swung in the opposite direction toward irrational answers and the world of the mind. This set the stage for the current revival in eastern religions and occult philosophy.

In the sixties, young people rebelled against an establishment that had given them more knowledge (facts) than ever before in history, but no meaning. Rationalistic humanism with its one-dimensional view of life (all is material) just did not seem to account for all of reality. Today the young gaze toward the East, which offers a new (to the Western mind) definition of reality. The presuppositions of these ancient Eastern ideas subtly condition people at all levels of our culture to deny the personal God of the Bible and to accept the belief that man is inherently divine. Because of the deep penetration of this new occult/mystical way of thinking,<sup>5</sup> man becomes increasingly prepared for the ultimate deception--Antichrist. Indeed, we now face an encroaching occult theocracy in which occult philosophy becomes the foundation for social order. Marilyn Ferguson thoroughly documents this in her book, **The Aquarian Conspiracy**. The book's subtitle is **Personal and Social Transformation in the 1980s**. What she describes in this book is an ecumenical movement of epic proportions taking place among groups of an Eastern bent. This movement is called "The New Age Movement," "The Human Potential Movement,"

"Cosmic Humanism," "Mind Science," and "The Aquarian Age." She describes the movement as a conspiracy which "is using its widespread outposts of influence to focus on the dangerous myths and mystiques of the old paradigm. . . . We conspire against the old, deadly assumptions."<sup>6</sup> She makes no bones about the fact that the main enemy to progress as she defines it is our Judeo-Christian roots.

One of her more notable observations is the impending murgence of science and physics with the new age movement.<sup>7</sup> For current proof of this our readers need look no further than **Omni** magazine or **Science Digest**.<sup>8</sup>

In the light of this alarming trend two things are needed: (1) an appraisal of the major tenets of occultic philosophy and (2) a means to combat it.

## **DEFINITION:**

### **The Enemy's Core Beliefs**

The word "occult" comes from the Latin occultus which means "concealed." In its usage today, it means "beyond the bounds of ordinary knowledge--the mysterious, the concealed, or that which is hidden from view." It involves such practices as magic, divination, incantations, paranormal experiences, and the so-called expansion of consciousness. Brooks Alexander of the Spiritual Counterfeits Project writes that "**occultism in all its forms consists of secret techniques of consciousness-alteration, coupled with secret doctrines which explain the inner meaning of the experiences thereby attained.**"<sup>9</sup> There seem to be four major ingredients in occult practice and philosophy:

The paranormal -- Experiences that are beyond the five senses, extra-sensory and mystical. An occultist will often refer to a sixth sense (or a third eye) which enables the person to see a distant accident or enables a medium to sense a "presence," usually claiming to be the spirit of a deceased loved one.

The supernatural -- The actual manipulation of natural law from the beyond such as psychokinesis (movement of objects for no apparent physical reason) or levitation. The world of the supernatural, like the Venus fly trap, attracts many to itself only to swallow them up into an occult system.

The esoteric -- That which is hidden or secret; the use of symbols and allegories to hide truth from the uninitiated. Many occult sects advertise that initiated newcomers will become privy to knowledge that has been hidden for thousands of years. Historian John Warwick Montgomery says: "Occult theosophy and the Eastern faiths from which it derives intentionally state their teachings in language which will convey truth solely to the faithful believer and close the door to the profane."<sup>10</sup> Some commonly-used occult symbols are the signs of the zodiac, a pentagram within a circle, a goat's head, an ankh (a type of cross), sunwheels, a beetle, the great pyramid, and the mystical, all-seeing eye.

Philosophical monism -- the doctrine that there is only one ultimate reality. All is one and the one is God. Therefore, I am God, or God is within me. This is a foundational belief of occult philosophy and Eastern religions.<sup>11</sup> An infinite-personal God is a totally foreign idea. The primary goal of this religious monism is to experience this oneness. The method of attaining this state of cosmic consciousness may vary but the goal is always the same. It will involve some kind of consciousness expansion or alteration.

Evolution. Contrary to what most believe, evolution did not originate with Darwin. The concept of evolution is an ancient occult doctrine (the concept of avatars). Again Brooks Alexander writes: "Much new age and occult "aquarian" philosophy is based on the belief (or hope) that humankind is now experiencing an evolutionary metamorphosis to a new, improved level of functioning -- spiritually, socially, and politically."<sup>12</sup>

## TYPES OF OCCULT ACTIVITY: WHAT DOES THE ENEMY DO?

Students of the occult frequently divide occult phenomena into three areas: (1) forms of divination, (2) types of mystical experience, and (3) magical manipulation.

Forms of divination (also known as fortune-telling, soothsaying, or augury). A diviner predicts future events, finds lost articles or people, locates underground water, or reveals hidden knowledge. Perhaps the most common example of divination in America today is astrology.<sup>13</sup> Other common types are: palmistry, waterwitching, ouija boards, numerology, biorhythms, pyramidology, the reading of crystal balls, auras, tarot cards, or tea leaves, use of pendulums, interpretation of dreams, and many others. Forms of divination are strictly forbidden in the Scriptures (see Deuteronomy 18:10-14,20). The sinfulness of divination lies in the fact that it demonstrates a lack of trust in the One who holds the future (see Hosea 4:12). Isaiah 47:13-14 predicts an end of the astrologers, while Proverbs 3:5-6 gives the proper response for the believer (trust in the Lord).

Types of mystical experiences. These are experiences that transcend the bounds of the ordinary physical world or the five senses. Seeing events as they are occurring hundreds of miles away or an event still in the future, communicating with the dead, and soul travel (out-of-body experiences) are examples of paranormal experiences. Other examples of mystical experiences are: seances, necromancy, telekinesis, some forms of glossolalia, levitation, automatic writing, clairvoyance, trances, materializations, visions, psychic healing (including acupuncture),<sup>14</sup> remembrance of past lives (reincarnation), Eastern forms of meditation such as T. M. (transcendental meditation) or yoga, altered consciousness, and mental telepathy. We are not implying that all mysticism is

evil. Christianity has its mystical elements. Our relationship to Christ is a mystical one. However, the mystical experiences in Christianity are always tied to the objective word of God. We are always to try the spirits.<sup>15</sup> (See I John 4:1.) A valid mystical experience is always parallel to the propositional revelation of scripture. A red flag of caution should always be raised when one purports to have received new or additional revelation that is contradictory to scripture.

Magical manipulation (not to be confused with the art of illusion).<sup>16</sup> By employing hidden or outside forces in the spiritual realm, occultists say they can manipulate people or nature to conform to their will or the will of the gods. Various rites and ceremonies are often used. Sometimes they are public, but mostly they are accomplished in private. Often they involve very complicated formulas and specific materials. Then the rites are carried out according to astrological calculations.

One who practices magic is known by many terms, some of the most common being sorcerer, witch, wizard, or witch doctor. Several notorious practitioners of magic are mentioned in Scripture: the magicians of Egypt (Exodus 8); King Manasseh (2 Kings 21:1-9); Jezebel (2 Kings 9:22); Simon (Acts 8:9-24); and Bar-Jesus (Acts 13:4-12). Involvement in magical practices was forbidden and punishable by death under the Mosaic Law (see Exodus 22:18; Deuteronomy 18:10-11; Isaiah 47:9-15), and also in the New Testament (see Galatians 5:20; Revelations 18:23-24). The city of Nineveh was destroyed for such abominable practices (Nahum 3:4). When the Messiah comes again, the occult practitioners and their works will be destroyed (Malachi 3:5; Micah 5:12; Revelations 21:8; 22:15). Occult involvement involves giving recognition and allegiance to a power or force other than God. For that reason Scripture defines it as evil and condemns it thoroughly.

## ORIGINS OF OCCULT PHILOSOPHY:

### WHEN DID THE BATTLE BEGIN?

Occultists often make the claim that their religion predates Christianity and is indeed thousands of years old. Here we can agree. Astrology and witchcraft began in the ancient city of Babylon in excess of 5,000 years ago.<sup>17</sup> But occult philosophy predates ancient Babylon. It began in the mind of Lucifer (Satan) and was first whispered to Eve in the garden.

It is the opinion of many Bible scholars that Genesis chapter three contains the plot for the Conflict of the Ages and the Drama of Redemption. What we also find in this chapter is the essence of both occult doctrine and the truth about redemption. Satan's lies, "You surely shall not die!" and ". . . your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" are the bases for false religion. In these lies are embedded the doctrines of reincarnation, gnosticism, and **samadhi** (a recognition of oneness with being itself). Some theologians believe these occult doctrines were propagated on earth before the flood by fallen angels (see Genesis 6).<sup>18</sup>

The ensuing results were the violence and bloodshed which prompted God to judge the earth with a universal flood. After the flood, these infernal ideas were somehow secretly passed on until Nimrod, a great-grandson of Noah, created his religio-political system known as the Babylonian mystery religion.<sup>19</sup> It is the thesis of this writer that if a genealogy of all false religions could be drawn, all would be traceable to "Babylon, the mother of all harlots" (Revelation 17).<sup>20</sup> New religious cults spring up every day, with different terminology and techniques but with the same old Eastern-occult beliefs. The best modern example is the religion of scientology. Its doctrines are nothing but Eastern cosmology clothed in pseudoscientific language.



## THE APPEAL OF THE OCCULT:

### HOW DO THEY GAIN RECRUITS?

The lure of the occult seems to be two-fold.

First, as one occult advertisement claims, "You will be privy to knowledge that has been secretly maintained and passed down by **adepts** (masters) for thousands of years and is now available to only a few initiates. You will be in the know while the rest of the unenlightened will have to suffer in ignorance."

Secondly, you will have power--the ultimate aphrodisiac. You will be given secrets to harness a power that will enable you to manipulate and control an environment that may seem out of control. For any person frustrated in the areas of sex, romance, vocation, or self-aggrandizement, the occult poses as a shortcut to success.<sup>21</sup>

How do people actually get involved in the occult trap?

For many, an affinity for the occult is apparently inherited from parents or grandparents. For an example of this, see the tragic case of the late Bishop James A. Pike in **The Haunting of Bishop Pike** by M. Unger, pp. 77ff.<sup>22</sup>

A second method of occult enslavement is by conscious subscription--that is, by paying dues and undergoing initiation.

Third, many people come into occult bondage by participation in what they consider innocent parlor games or entertainment. Their involvement may begin by playing with ouija boards, automatic writing, the pendulum, seances, levitation; or they may be intrigued by the martial arts, Eastern forms of meditation, submitting to spiritistic healing, drugs, hypnosis, and acupuncture.

## THE CURRENT INTELLECTUAL CLIMATE:

### WHERE IS THE BATTLE TODAY?

Twenty or thirty years ago dabblers in the black arts would more often than not be found among the poor and uneducated, or among the idle wealthy. At that time, the black arts were not taken seriously among the intelligentsia. Not so today!

One can now receive graduate degrees from several universities in various areas of occult study. The nomenclature has changed, but not the content. Though the courses are listed as Altered Consciousness, Parapsychology, Past Lives Therapy, Esoteric Studies in Transcendental Chimeras, Transpersonal Counseling, and Holistic Healing, they remain, nonetheless, occultic in nature.

What are some of the factors which precipitate such an interest in the occult in our "enlightened" twentieth century? First is the decline of confidence in rational empiricism. According to Francis Schaeffer, today's philosophical trend is toward the irrational and the mystical.<sup>23</sup> The Existentialist says, "Your mind is your enemy." Today's attitude on the campus reflects this distrust in science as evidenced by the following quotes by prominent academicians: "Science as we know it has outlived its usefulness" (Harvard biologist Everett Mendelsohn). "Reason is a limited skill . . . there is also spiritual knowledge and power" (historian Theodore Rozak). "Equally important are mystery, ambiguity, illogical contradiction, and transcendent experience" (psychologist Abraham Maslow).<sup>24</sup> Whereas these men are to be applauded for their recognition of the insufficiency of rationalism to answer the great questions or to satisfy the human heart, the answer is not to cast aside the mind, but to humbly use the mind and heart to look for truth.

A second reason people are turning to occult philosophy is a reaction to materialism and a search for a transcendent experience. Through this search,

many seek proof that man is more than the machine the behaviorists suppose him to be. The reaction has taken many forms: drugs, meditation, Eastern religions, and a search for evidence of life after death.<sup>25</sup>

Third, the influence and increasing popularity of Eastern religions has heightened occult awareness because both occult practice and phenomena are integral parts of most Eastern religions.<sup>26</sup> Some music forms undoubtedly deserve a great deal of credit for the sudden fascination with Eastern thought. (A prime factor was the Beatles' conversion to Hinduism.) Charles Reich, author of **The Greening of America**, commented in **Rolling Stone**, "Rock today is a medium that can communicate almost anything any of us feel or experience. The new music is the chief language and means of communication for people of the new consciousness."<sup>27</sup>

The acceptance of parapsychological research as a valid academic endeavor is certainly another factor in the present popularity of the occult. This field of study is in fact becoming the most popular on campus. It began with the work of J. B. Rhine at Duke University. Today, even the Soviet Union, a nation with a purely materialistic view of reality, is reported to be outspending the West in parapsychological research.<sup>28</sup>

Finally, the complexity and chaos of our modern society has created a spiritual vacuum. There seems to be a great longing in our society for the old ways, the simple, the less complicated, and for many, the old and pagan religions. In an essay entitled "The New Black Magic", **Time** magazine makes this comment: "As organized religion loses its appeal through stuffiness or sterility, people seeking faith increasingly turn to mystical religions . . ."<sup>29</sup> According to some of the nation's foremost thinkers, science seems to be on the verge of a major conceptual shift such as the Copernican or Darwinian revolutions. With the startling evidence of UFOs and sub-atomic particles

(quarks), science fiction is again proving to be prophetic. Some scientists are already moving toward mysticism and postulating the existence of a non-material reality.

## **AN ENCOURAGING WORD:**

### **IS IT POSSIBLE TO WIN THE WAR?**

Surveying the extent of occult penetration in our society can be a discouraging and frightening experience for a Christian. On the positive side, we know Satan has been defeated and that he and his demons, along with the Babylonian mystery religions (occult systems), will be destroyed. On the negative side, the Scriptures tell us that right now Satan is the god of this world, the prince and power of the air, and that the whole world lies in wickedness. In the meantime, how do we cope with Satan and his forces while he is still "free on bail?" Several suggestions:

1. The more familiar we are with God's truth (through the study of His word), the more discerning we will be of the counterfeit. Bankers can instantly spot counterfeit bills because they are so familiar with the real thing. Know the enemy, but be careful not to become too preoccupied with a study of the enemy. Remember the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge (Proverbs 1:7). Try the spirits (1 Corinthians 12:3, 1 John 4:1-2).

2. Resist Satan by denouncing him and all his works (James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8-10).

3. Destroy all occult books and paraphernalia in your possession (Acts 19:8-20). Confess and repent of all occultic involvement.

4. The spirit-filled believer has greater power within him than is in the whole world's system (1 John 4:4). Through the Holy Spirit, the bonds of the occult can be broken (Luke 10:17-20).

5. When it seems as though the forces of evil are winning, read the books of Habakkuk and Daniel. When afraid, read Psalm 91 and 1 Peter 5:6-7. Seek the

fellowship and prayers of fellow believers and the counsel of the spiritually mature. To do battle, put on the whole armor of God (study Ephesians 6:10-12).

6. Be encouraged. Jesus prophesied to His disciples that the gates of Hades would not prove stronger than the church (Matthew 16:18). The picture Jesus paints is a walled city in which Satan and his kingdom have taken refuge. The gates and walls however, are no match for the battering rams of the Kingdom of God. Many times Christians read this passage and get the figure reversed. Jesus is not saying that the church is huddled behind the walls with the forces of Satan trying to kick in the gates. It's the other way around. The gates of hell are not strong enough to prevail against the force of the gospel. We can be optimistic. We must begin to think in these terms, and of taking the offensive.

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2. I refer here especially to the popular writer Arthur C. Clarke of **2001** fame. Perhaps his most occultic book is **Childhood's End**.
3. See the "Holistic Health" issue of **Spiritual Counterfeits Project Journal** 2, No. 1 (August 1978), P. O. Box 4308, Berkeley, CA 94704.
4. "Evil in California," **Esquire**, March 1970.
5. See Robert M. Pirsig, **Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance** (New York: Bantam Books, 1974).
6. Marilyn Ferguson, **The Aquarian Conspiracy: Personal and Social Transformation in the 1980s** (Los Angeles: J. P. Tarcher, Inc., 1980), pp. 34-35.
7. **Ibid.** See Chapter 6.
8. In reading these magazines one should be especially alert to attempts to "scientize" ancient occult philosophy.

I also recommend **The Tao of Physics** by Fritjof Capra, published by Bantam Books and **The Dancing WuLi Masters**, by Gary Zukav (William Morrow and Co.). These books attempt to reconcile Eastern philosophy with

Western science.

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9. See the Spiritual Counterfeits Project pamphlet, **Occult Philosophy and Mystical Experience**, P. O. Box 4308, Berkeley, CA 94704.
10. John Warwick Montgomery, **Principalities and Powers** rev. ed. (Minneapolis: Dimension Books, 1975), p. 23.
11. See Gary North's discussion in **None Dare Call It Witchcraft** (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1976), pp. 26-28.
12. Brooks Alexander, "The Rise of Cosmic Humanism: What is Religion?" **Spiritual Counterfeits Project Journal** 1, no. 5 (Winter 81-82), p. 3. This is an excellent article in that it shows the connection between cosmic humanism and secular humanism.
13. The best refutation that this author has seen is the little booklet by Robert A. Morey, **Horoscopes and the Christian** (Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany Book House, 1981).
14. There are those who believe that acupuncture may be scientifically based. While this cannot be totally disregarded, one should consider the following articles: Kurt Koch, **Satan's Devices** (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Publications, 1978), pp. 5-11; Bob Larson, **Acupuncture** (Box 26438, Denver, CO 80226) 1975; and "A Critical Look at Acupuncture" by Michael E. Debakey in **Reader's Digest**, September 1973.
15. Jesus told the Samaritan woman that we are to worship God in spirit and **in truth** (John 4:23, emphasis added).



16. When we are confronting the occult world we should always be skeptical and suspicious of fraud. However, we must be careful not to jump to false conclusions as many magicians have done in the past. The great Houdini and the modern magician Milbourne Christopher (see his book, **Mediums, Mystics, and the Occult**) exposed the fraudulent techniques of many occultists. But it is a mistake, we believe, to conclude that because a magician can duplicate an occult phenomenon, that all is an illusion. It is a mistake of overgeneralization. Some well-meaning Christian magicians are likewise guilty. (See **The Fakers** by Danny Korem and Paul Meier, Baker Books, 1980).
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19. See Alexander Hislop, **The Two Babylons** (Neptune, N. Y.: Loizeaux Brothers, 1916). We do not necessarily endorse the conclusion of this book.
20. For some startling examples, see Bob Larson, **Babylon Reborn** (Carol Stream, Ill.: Creation House, 1976).
21. Satan's temptation of Christ involved a shortcut -- a temptation that would have bypassed the cross (Matthew 4).
22. See also Kurt Koch's explanation in **Christian Counseling and the Occult** (Grand Rapids,

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23. Francis Schaeffer, **Escape From Reason** (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1968).
24. "Reaching Beyond the Rational," **Time**, 23 April 1973.
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26. See Os Guinness, **Encircling Eyes**, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1974), p. 15. This pamphlet is a revised and updated version of chapter eight from his book, **The Dust of Death** (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 1973).
27. **Rolling Stone**, 4 February 1971.
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