

The Occult Connection – A Christian View

Occult philosophy has permeated nearly every area of our society. I believe that Christians need to think clearly about these issues and apply a biblical worldview to them.

Consider the pervasive influence of the occult. Students are involved with role-playing fantasy games that introduce them to occult concepts. Universities offer courses in paranormal and occult science. Occultic themes provide popular material for television shows and movies. Police departments are beginning to realize that many of the crimes they investigate have occult origins. Everywhere we go, it seems that the occult is present.

The word *occult* comes from the Latin *occultus*, which means “concealed.” In its ordinary usage, it means “beyond the bounds of ordinary knowledge—the mysterious, the concealed, or that which is hidden from view.” The occult involved such practices as magic, divination, incantations, paranormal experiences, and the New Age concept of the expansion of consciousness.

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

The most common form of divination is astrology. Other examples of divination would include palmistry, ouija boards, tarot cards, biorhythm, crystal balls, and interpretation of dreams. Divination is evil and is strictly forbidden in Deuteronomy 18.

Types of mystical experience would include any paranormal attempt to transcend the bounds of our physical world. The out-of-body experiences reported by psychics fit into this

category. Other examples would be telekinesis, clairvoyance, and psychic trances. This would also include seances, necromancy, and psychic healing.

The final category would be magical manipulation. This is not to be confused with the art of illusions used by professional magicians. By contrast, occultists say they can use hidden forces in the spiritual realm to manipulate people and circumstances.

Practitioners would include sorcerers, witches, and witch doctors. Many of these practitioners are mentioned in the Bible. In the Old Testament we find Jezebel as well as the magicians in Egypt. In the New Testament are Simon (Acts 8) and Bar-Jesus (Acts 13).

Finally, let me address how Christians should respond to the occult. We should be equipped to counteract its influence in society. First, Christians should know God's word. The best way to discover a counterfeit is to know the real thing. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Know God's word and put on the whole armor of God.

Second, resist Satan and all of his influence in your life. If we resist the devil, the Bible teaches that he will flee from us. Third, destroy occult books and paraphernalia in your possession. Confess and repent any involvement you have had with the occult.

Fourth, submit your life totally to Jesus Christ. As we yield to Him and allow the Holy Spirit to dwell within us, we are fortified for spiritual warfare. The Bible teaches that greater is He who is in you, than he who is in the world. Lean not on your own strength but on the strength of the Lord. You can have victory over the forces of darkness if you know the enemy and marshall God's spiritual resources for the battle.

Halloween

Next I would like to focus on Halloween. Most people see Halloween as nothing more than a harmless festival that allows kids to collect candy. Yet Halloween is much more than a harvest festival. Its origins are deeply rooted in the occult, and the various practitioners of the black arts identify Halloween as a significant event in the pagan calendar. The following questions and answers should help you be more aware of the occultic nature of Halloween.

The date, October 31st, has long been known as “The Festival of the Dead.” The Celtic tribes and their priests, the Druids, celebrated this day as a marker for the change from life to death. Today, the modern celebration of Halloween is usually performed by adherents of witchcraft who use the day (and especially the night) for their rituals.

Witches celebrate Halloween as the “Feast of Samhain”—the first feast of the witchcraft year. Being a festival of the dead, Halloween is a time when witches attempt to communicate with the dead through various forms of divination.

Witches believe that this day marks the time when the Mother Goddess (also known as Mother Nature, Goddess of the Earth) returns to the underworld to sleep under a blanket of snow. In her place comes another god—the Horned God—who emerges to begin his reign of death. Witches believe this is a time when the life of summer is replaced by the death of winter. Halloween is a high feast day to celebrate the end of summer and the coming of winter.

In later centuries, the Catholic Church attempted to redeem this pagan holiday by designating it as “All Saints Day.” Protestant churches during the Reformation chose not to celebrate this day, seeing it as an attempt to Christianize a pagan holiday.

For example, let's look at the practice of dressing up on Halloween. During most of the 20th century, children in America have been dressing up on Halloween so they can go out and "trick- or-treat." This tradition has been self-perpetuating for decades, but if we go back to the origins of Halloween, we can again see the occult connection.

Occultists who revered Halloween as a pagan holy day saw this day as a time of transition between life and death. They believed that during this transition from life to death, the two worlds were momentarily in contact with one another. The veil between these two worlds (the land of the living and the land of the dead) was very thin, and so many believed they would come in contact with the spirit world.

Some occult practitioners practiced divination and believed one could learn the secrets of life and wisdom by lying on a grave and listening to the messages from the long-departed. Others taught that spirits and ghosts left the grave during this night and would seek out warmth in their previous homes. Villagers, fearful of the possibility of being visited by the ghosts of past occupants, would dress up in costumes to scare the spirits on their way. They would also leave food and other treats at their doors to appease the spirits so they would not destroy their homes or crops but instead move on down the road.

Another technique used to scare away the spirits was to carve a scary face into a pumpkin. People hoped this horrible visage would move the spirit on to another home or village and spare their home from destruction. Sometimes the villagers would light a candle and place it within the pumpkin and use it as a lantern (hence the name "Jack-o-Lantern"). Then they would walk from the local grave yard to their homes in an effort to scare off evil spirits that might be walking down the road after leaving the grave.

Within witchcraft there are four pagan festivals celebrated

throughout the year. The first festival in the witchcraft calendar is Halloween (October 31). This is the celebration of life and death. It is also known as Hallowmas. Second is Candlemas (February 2) which honors the "God of Death." This festival gives thanks to him for keeping them from sickness and wishes him well as he journeys back to the underworld. The third festival is Beltane on May eve (April 30). This celebration welcomes new life and involves fertility rituals. A final festival is Lammas (August 1), which is a festival of the harvest. Witches give thanks to the Goddess of the Earth for making the crops grow.

The pagan origins of Halloween should be sufficient to cause Christian parents to question the wisdom of allowing their children to participate in a witchcraft festival. Given this information, parents really have only two choices: fight the celebration of Halloween and provide alternatives.

At a time when schools are removing any religious significance from Christmas (now often merely called winter break) and Easter (spring break), it is ironic that most public schools still celebrate Halloween. Responsible parents should ask school administrators to restrict Halloween celebrations. Pictures of witches, haunted houses, and other occultic practices in the public schools are a promotion of pagan, religious practices.

Many churches have begun to develop creative alternatives. Church youth groups hold bowling or skating parties. Some groups spend the night going out and witnessing to those in the streets. Other churches hold a Fall Fun Festival and have children come to the church facilities in biblical costumes. Such programs keep children safe and focus their attention on the Bible rather than on a pagan, occultic ritual.

Astrology

Less conspicuous and more insidious than Halloween is the

practice of astrology. Even occupants of the White House have failed to see its occultic connection.

Former White House chief of staff Don Regan said in his book that "virtually every major move and decision the Reagans made during my time as White House chief of staff was cleared in advanced with a woman in San Francisco who drew up horoscopes." The friend was later identified as Joan Quigley, a San Francisco astrology author.

When Ronald Reagan scheduled the signing of the INF treaty for the afternoon of December 8th instead of during prime-time television hours, many were puzzled. Former chief of staff Don Regan said it was performed in the afternoon because Nancy Reagan said that was when "the stars were right."

The Reagans were hardly the first national leaders to be interested in astrology. Teddy Roosevelt mounted his natal horoscope on a chessboard so he could study it each day. During World War II, Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Adolf Hitler shared at least one thing in common: they were all interested in horoscopes. And even Charles DeGaulle quoted a pre-war horoscope predicting he would rule France.

Even though astrology is unscientific and illogical, it is still very popular. Over 1200 daily newspapers carry horoscopes, and there are 12,000 full-time and about 175,000 part-time astrologers. Many people make it a daily ritual to consult their horoscopes, and some hire professional astrologers to help them make business and personal decisions.

Astrology had its beginnings in the fertile crescent in Mesopotamia. During the period from the Sumarians through the Chaldeans, astrology gained prominence and developed into the formalized occultic structure found today.

Astrology is based upon the questionable assumption that the fixed stars, sun, moon, and planets have an influence upon people and historical events. This influence can be determined

once one knows the exact hour of one's birth. In fact, the word *horoscope* means "a consideration of the hour." Once the time and place of birth are known, the stars can be consulted and a forecast can be made.

There are good scientific reasons to question the basis of astrology. First, it is based upon a geocentric solar system rather than a heliocentric one. The basic premise of astrology is that the sun and planets rotate around the earth. Yet science tells us that the earth and planets rotate around the sun. Thus, the science of astronomy undermines the quackery of astrology.

Second, astrology is based upon the assumption that there are seven planets. Moreover it identifies the sun and moon as planets. Lacking telescopes and other astronomical instruments, the founders of astrology incorrectly identified some heavenly bodies as planets and were unaware of other planets. Thus, a second assumption of astrology fails to square with scientific data.

Third, astrology mixes and matches stars that should not be grouped together. The 12 signs of the zodiac are quite arbitrary. They mix together stars in one constellation that are actually quite far from each other—often in entirely different parts of our Milky Way galaxy. Moreover, since the stars are in motion, some of the constellations change shape over time. In essence, the zodiac of astrology is arbitrary and subject to change and hardly reliable as a guide for one's future.

But in addition to the scientific problems with astrology, there are also logical problems. First is the well-documented fact that different astrologers sometimes cast different horoscopes for the same person. If astrology were an objective science, we would expect different astrologers to cast the same horoscope for the same person. Instead, they make vastly different predictions about the same person. If we can

determine our destiny from the stars, we should not find such vastly different predictions. Since we do, we must conclude that astrology does not lead to logical conclusions.

A second logical problem related to the previous one is that if astrology were true, then twins would have the same destiny. Being born in the same place and at approximately the same time should ensure that twins would have the same destiny. Yet the history of twins shows that although there are similarities, there are also significant differences not readily predicted by astrology.

A third problem is the inability to predict accurately the future of people with known destinies. In order to test this idea, one researcher put together what he called a "test of destinies." He gave astrologers 40 birthdates. Twenty belonged to known criminals and 20 belonged to peace-loving citizens. He asked them to separate the birthdates into the two categories.

None of the astrologers separated them correctly. The researcher said, "The result is always great confusion: the astrologers invariably select a mixed bag of criminals and peaceful citizens in about the same proportion that a machine would pick randomly."

Finally, in addition to scientific and logical problems with astrology, there are also scriptural problems with astrology. In Deuteronomy 18:9-12, God lists five categories of detestable practices. These range from witchcraft to child sacrifice. They also include divination, which is the attempt to predict the future through such methods as reading the stars. All of these are listed as detestable practices.

Unfortunately we live in a society that sets up a dichotomy between hard-core occult activity like witchcraft and satanism and so-called soft-core occult such as reading horoscopes and playing with ouija boards. All are considered detestable

practices and should be avoided. Don't be tempted to dabble in these activities. Instead, resist Satan and he will flee from you.

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