

The World Of The Occult

Introduction. The word “occult” is derived from the Latin *occultus*, which means “hidden or secret or mysterious.” It almost always has to do with the spiritual, unseen world, the world where the devil and demons hold sway and bear influence.

People’s interest in the occult is growing. In some countries in the world, it has become the fastest growing religion. Millions of people are involved. In this country, “pagan societies” exist in a number of cities. One can hardly turn on the television or watch a movie without seeing something that has been influenced by the world of the occult. Because of this involvement and because of the time of year, it is beneficial for us to study the subject.

There is a basic assumption behind each of the areas of the world of the occult that we will study. The assumption is that the spirits possess knowledge or power desired by men and that they are willing to impart it to men under certain conditions. This knowledge or power is desired either for the person’s protection from evil, or for his own well-being.

I. Four Areas Of The World Of The Occult

A. Mantics.

1. This area of occult practices has to do with obtaining knowledge from the occult powers. It is the area of the occult sometimes called “divination” or “soothsaying.”
2. Examples of mantics.
 - a) Impersonal methods of divination.
 - (1) Astrology — the belief that man’s destiny is determined by his horoscope, and that the pattern for life is found in the pattern of the stars at birth.
 - (2) Crystallomancy — the use of a crystal ball, mirror, or a pond of still water to “see” the events of the future.
 - (3) Bibliomancy — the study of “secret messages” found in books, especially the Bible.
 - (4) Numerology — the analysis of the hidden, and supposedly prophetic, meaning of numbers.
 - (5) Cartomancy — the use of card-laying for divination. Tarot cards is an example of cartomancy.
 - (6) Cheiromancy — the use of reading the hand for divination.
 - (7) Tea leaves — the use of tea leaves for divination.
 - (8) Lots — foretelling the future by throwing arrows, using a divining rod, or a pendulum.
 - (9) Hepatoscopy and haruscopy — divination by cutting an animal open and inspecting the liver and entrails.
 - (10) Ornithomancy — the study of the activity of birds for divination.
 - (11) Graphology — character analysis based on handwriting.
 - (12) Pyromancy — the use of flames of fire to blank the mind so spirits can communicate with the practitioner.
 - (13) Omens — the use of signs to tell the future.

- b) Personal methods of divination.
 - (1) Oneiromancy — a form of divination in which through dreams one can learn the will of the gods.
 - (2) Necromancy — contact with the souls of the dead for the purposes of learning about the future.
 - (3) Clairaudience — the “hearing of voices” which gives the practitioner information about the present or the future.
 - (4) Clairvoyance — the ability to “see” and know about objects or events that are taking place a long distance away.
- B. Magic.
 - 1. This area of the occult world has to do with gaining power from the spirit world. It is the area of the occult sometimes called “sorcery” or “witchcraft.”
 - 2. Examples of magic.
 - a) White magic.
 - (1) Witch — a male or female who uses occultic powers for what he or she considers to be good or evil deeds.
 - (2) Coven — this is analogous to a “brotherhood” or “congregation” of witches, presumably 13 or less.
 - (3) Book of Shadows — the “Bible” used by the coven containing charms, chants, spells, and incarnations.
 - (4) Esbath — the name given to the meetings of the coven.
 - (5) Sabbat — a “witches sabbath” at the beginning of each season.
 - (6) Magic circle, altar, and tools — a table with various items of the craft, such as knives, candles, the “witches’ ladder,” the sistrum, a chalice and a bowl, which stands at the north end of the circle.
 - (7) Thaumaturgy — “supernatural” powers such as telekinesis and levitation.
 - (8) Amulets — a charm, worn like jewelry, said to possess certain powers that will protect the wearer from harm, disease, witchcraft, and other perils.
 - (9) Talisman — an object marked with magic signs which brings positive benefits to the wearer.
 - (10) Charms — a book of spells and magical procedures.
 - (11) Cabala — Hebrew mystery lore based on an occult interpretation of the Bible.
 - (12) Hexagram — the six-pointed star known as the Seal of Solomon. It is commonly used both as a talisman and for conjuring spirits and spiritual forces in many forms.
 - (13) Pentagram — the five-pointed star which can have one or two points in an upward direction. Based on Renaissance-era occultism, the pentagram found its way into the symbolism of modern occultists. The orientation of the symbol with two points up is considered evil and associated with the triumph of matter over spirit.
 - b) Black magic.
 - (1) Black mass — the antithesis of the Roman Catholic mass.

- (2) Esbath — a meeting of the coven usually in parks or forests during the nights of the full moon.
- (3) Hex — the invocation of demonic powers, also known as cursing.
- (4) Incantation — a chant or song used in pagan rituals to invoke the blessing or curse of the gods.
- (5) Voodoo — the West Indian brand of black magic which includes charms, conjuring, snake worship, and witchcraft.
- c) Four ways to become involved in magic.
 - (1) Heredity — magical powers are passed on by families that practice the rituals.
 - (2) Devil's subscription — a blood ritual counterpart to baptism.
 - (3) Occult experiments — experiments taken from "how to do it" books.
 - (4) Occult transference — the black magical equivalent of "laying on of hands."

C. Spiritism.

- 1. This area of the world of the occult has to do with getting both knowledge and power from the spirit beings. Spiritism, sometimes called spiritualism, has been defined as "a spiritual activity, grounded in the persuasion that people can by means of certain mediums make contact with the deceased, and to acquire revelations and help from beyond."
- 2. Examples of spiritism.
 - a) Seances (necromancy).
 - (1) Seances are meetings at which communication with the "other side" is attempted through a medium. They are usually held around a circular table in a dimly-lit room.
 - (2) Some common terms need identification.
 - (a) Medium — the male or female who is in charge of the seance.
 - (b) Control spirit — the spirit which is the first one with whom the medium always makes contact.
 - (c) Familiar spirit — the spirit of the deceased person which manifests itself at a seance.
 - (d) Trance — the state of semi-consciousness into which a genuine medium lapses during the seance.
 - b) Phenomena produced by spiritists.
 - (1) Materializations — forms in which spirit beings make themselves visible to human beings. Usually the form is the likeness of a deceased individual.
 - (2) Apport — objects being fetched over great distances and through solid walls by the power of demons.
 - (3) Spirit writing — writing done unconsciously by a medium while in a trance.
 - c) Ouija boards.
 - (1) An ancient device for discerning the will of the spirits. It consists of a flat wooden board with each letter of the alphabet as well as ancient symbols and a "yes or "no" area.

- (2) Seekers place fingertips on a triangle which then moves as it spells out its message. It is believed that an unseen intelligence moves the pointer.

D. Demon possession.

1. Demon possession and exorcism is a major part of the world of the occult. Ever since the release of the movie "The Exorcist" in 1973, there has been renewed discussion about the subject of demon possession. Scores of people began to believe that they were possessed of evil spirits. Numerous articles regarding these alleged experiences were published.
2. The Bible not only teaches the existence of the devil but also of a great company of his followers known as demons or evil spirits. The worship of these demons occurs or is alluded to several times in the Bible (Deuteronomy 32:17; 2 Chronicles 11:15; Psalm 106:37; Matthew 4:9; 1 Corinthians 10:20-21; 1 Timothy 4:1).
3. Examples of demon possession in the Bible.
 - a) Abimelech and the men of Shechem (Judges 9:23).
 - b) Saul (1 Samuel 16:14-23; 18:10-11; 19:9-10).
 - c) The man in the synagogue (Mark 1:23-26; Luke 4:33-35).
 - d) Two men of the Gadarenes (Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:2-20).
 - e) The mute man (Matthew 9:32-33).
 - f) The blind and mute man (Matthew 12:22; Luke 11:14).
 - g) The daughter of the Syrophenician woman (Matthew 15:22-29; Mark 7:25-30).
 - h) The child with seizures (Matthew 17:14-18; Mark 9:17-27; Luke 9:37-42).
 - i) Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2-3).
4. These demons have certain characteristics revealed in the Bible.
 - a) They are spirits without bodies (Ephesians 6:12).
 - b) They are numerous (Mark 5:8-9).
 - c) They are organized (Matthew 12:24).
 - d) They are knowledgeable of God (Matthew 8:29).
 - e) They can inflict sickness (Matthew 9:32-33).
 - f) They can possess or control animals (Mark 5:13).
 - g) They can possess or control human beings (Luke 8:2).
 - h) They know that Jesus Christ is God (Mark 1:23-24; James 2:19).

II. What Does The Bible Say About The Occult?

- A. Whenever the Bible mentions any aspect of the world of the occult, it is universally condemned (Exodus 22:18; Leviticus 17:7; 19:26-28, 31; 20:6, 27; Deuteronomy 18:9-13; 1 Samuel 28:3, 9; 2 Kings 9:22; 23:24; 2 Chronicles 33:6; Isaiah 8:19; 19:3; Nahum 3:4; Zechariah 13:2; Malachi 3:5; Galatians 5:20; Revelation 9:20-21; 18:23; 21:8; 22:15).
- B. Various elements of the world of the occult were practiced by many groups in the Bible.
 1. The magicians (Exodus 7:11, 22; 8:7, 18).
 2. The Egyptians (Isaiah 19:3, 11-12).
 3. Balaam (Numbers 22:6; 23:23).

4. Jezebel (2 Kings 9:22).
 5. Astrologers (Jeremiah 10:2; Micah 3:6-7).
 6. False prophets (Jeremiah 14:14; 27:9; 29:8-9; Ezekiel 13:6-9; 22:28).
 7. The Babylonians (Isaiah 47:9-13; Ezekiel 21:21-22; Daniel 2:2, 10, 27).
 8. Belshazzar (Daniel 5:7, 15).
 9. The Ninevites (Nahum 3:4-5).
 10. Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:9, 11).
 11. Elymas (Acts 13:8).
 12. The young woman at Philippi (Acts 16:16).
 13. Vagabond Jews (Acts 19:13).
 14. The sons of Sceva (Acts 19:14-15).
- C. In the Bible, only those with miraculous powers were able to cast out demons.
1. Jesus (Matthew 4:24; 8:16; Mark 3:22; Luke 4:41).
 2. The disciples (Mark 9:38; Luke 10:17).
 3. Peter (Acts 5:16).
 4. Philip (Acts 8:7).
 5. Paul (Acts 16:16-18; 19:12).
 6. If there are none with miraculous powers who have the ability to cast out demons, could we still have demon possession now? The gospel is God's power to save (Romans 1:16-17). This would be negated if demon possession could condemn someone.
- D. It is plain from the scriptures that anything related to the world of the occult is a "work of the flesh" and we should not have contact with it (cp. Galatians 5:20).

III. The Origins Of Halloween

- A. The day witches celebrate above all others is October 31st, which is All Hallows Eve or Halloween. It is believed that on this night Satan and his witches have their greatest power.
- B. The origin of Halloween goes back 2,000 years before the days of Christ to a practice of the ancient Druids in Britain, France, Germany, and the Celtic countries.
1. The celebration honored their god Samhain, lord of the dead. The Celtic people considered November 1st as the day of death because it was the end of autumn and the beginning of winter for them.
 2. The Druids believed that on this particular evening the spirits of the dead returned to their former home to visit the living in search of bodies to possess for the next year. It was believed to be their only hope for the afterlife. The Celts believed all laws of space and time were suspended during this time, allowing the spirit world to intermingle with the living.
 3. Naturally, the still-living did not want to be possessed. So on the night of October 31st, the Celts wore animal skins and animal heads to hide from these evil spirits, and Druid priests burned sacrifices to appease the spirits. Villagers would also extinguish the fires in their homes in order to make them cold and undesirable.

4. The various traditions of Halloween, including trick-or-treating, bobbing for apples, dressing in costumes, and jack-o-lanterns, all evolved from differing customs down through the years.
- C. Halloween has been associated with the occult throughout its history, and to a degree that stigma still exists today. But Halloween is largely considered a secular holiday today. Like any other day, one can make it as evil as they wish. For some, they believe that they should not participate in any way in Halloween. Others have come to the conclusion that they can celebrate it without some of its darker overtones.

Conclusion. Playing around with the occult can lead to serious repercussions, both psychologically and spiritually. Pope Benedict XVI said, "As faith diminishes, superstition increases." Although I do not believe that there is any power within the occult, it is a successful tool of the devil because it draws one away from God and encourages one to put their trust in something other than God.