

The Unloosing Of Satan: An Essay On The Occult

[Essay delivered at the Winnebago Teachers' Conference at St. Matthew Ev. Luth. School
Appleton, Wisconsin on February 13, 1981]

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The apostle John in the 20th chapter of Revelation tells us that toward the end of the New Testament age, shortly before the last judgment and the end of the world, the devil will be loosed for a "little season," a relatively short period of time.

When we look at the overwhelming modern surge of interest in occult phenomena and the widespread and multiplied incidence of occult practices, we may be justified in concluding that we are living in the little season of which the apostle spoke. Devilish and Satanic activity of every imaginable kind, Satan worship, spiritism, possession, witchcraft, and fortune-telling all are rampant in our times.

It is possible that someone may object and say that these occult practices never died out but were practiced in secret through the centuries that have passed since God so clearly forbade them in the Holy Scriptures.

But it is significant that these things were usually done in secret. The Word of God, both as Law and Gospel, acted as a restraining force in keeping these practices from becoming respectable. Under the influence of Christianity witchcraft and fortune-telling were recognized as sinful. But of our generation it can be said also in this respect, "They parade their sin like Sodom; they do not hide it" (Is 3:9) To the credit of previous generations it must be said that they were still ashamed of the wrongs they did.

And even in those areas of the Christian world where witchcraft or "Hexerei" were practiced in a less secret manner, the depravity of such practices was often hidden under the sheep's clothing of the use of God's Word. Much of the Hexerei that was practiced in Germany, for example, made profuse use of Bible passages and the name of the Trinity in its magic incantations. But modern witches often openly invoke and worship the devil or at least gods and spirits that are clearly distinct from the God who has revealed himself in the Bible.

So it would seem that modern widespread, open and unashamed involvement in the occult might be considered as evidence pointing at least to the conclusion that the devil might be free from the chains with which the proclamation of the Gospel has bound him.

THE "OCCULT" AND THE "CULTS"

Before we discuss these occult practices in any detail, it may be well to define the meaning of the word "occult."

In the minds of many there is a tendency to confuse the present "occult explosion" with the rise in the number of so-called cults in our modern world. While some of the cults that have appeared on the ecclesiastical landscape in the last few decades have been involved in occult practices, and while some occult practitioners have established cults, yet there are essential differences between the "cults" and the "occult."

The word "occult" is derived from the Latin word "occultus," which means "hidden" or "secret." In our context the word has reference to what was in times past usually called the "supernatural." It is a blanket term for all efforts to obtain information or to cause events to occur by supernatural means, and, moreover, supernatural means that are less than divine in origin. In more scientific circles the various aspects of the occult or the supernatural are usually classified as parapsychological or psychic phenomena, all supernatural overtones being ignored.

The word “cult,” on the other hand, is derived from the Latin word “cultus,” which means “adoration” or “veneration” or “worship.” A cult is in reality a form of worship. In our time it has come to be the common name for new and strange religions that are for the most part outside the pale of Christianity. While some of these new cults, such as the cult of witchcraft, or wicca, and the church of Satan, definitely engage in occult practices, yet this is not true of all of them. On the other hand, however, one might very seriously question whether practices associated with some Pentecostal sects ought not to be classified as occult phenomena.

THE OCCULT EXPLOSION

The upsurge of interest and involvement in the occult in our time is all the more remarkable when we in this respect compare the world of 1980 with the world we knew a generation or so ago. The antisupernaturalist theologians of that generation viewed all occult phenomena as pure superstition. One of the leading spokesmen of naturalistic theology, Rudolph Bultmann, declared all belief in spirits whether good or bad to be hopelessly outmoded. Such naturalistic theologians were only echoing the dogmas of materialistic science, which ruled all metaphysical forces out of court. Who would have believed at the turn of our century that the time would come when secular universities would establish departments of what they call “parapsychology” and fund “centers for psychic research”?

It may be that this revived interest in the supernatural is little more than evidence of the incurable religiosity of the human heart. When the church became secularized and the Gospel of the crucified Christ was crowded out of the pulpits by the so-called “Social Gospel,” which called upon those sitting in the pews not to center their hopes on a world beyond this world and a life beyond this life but instead to look for a political, economic and secular kingdom of God in this world and in this life, the incurably religious human heart began to search for other avenues toward that invisible realm of which the human heart is aware from childhood. The secularized, scientific atmosphere, which modern man breathes from his youth, leaves unsatisfied man’s natural interest in the unseen world of which he is only dimly aware and which Shakespeare called “the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveler returns.”

But is it altogether impossible that the devil saw this lack of spirituality in the church as an opportunity to foist on the world of our time his type of spirituality with all its depraved corruption? Just as nature abhors a vacuum and rushes in to fill that emptiness, so the void left in the human heart by the prevailing apostasy in Christendom and the practical atheism of much of modern society may very well have provided a base of operations for the devil and his angels.

But whether or not the time in which we live is the “little season” of which the apostle spoke, the apparent freedom with which Satan seems to be operating in this depraved and corrupt world of ours in which even such abominations as homosexuality and abortion have become morally acceptable, ought to remind us that the day may not be far off when the quick and the dead will stand before the judgment throne of the Son of God, our Savior.

What has been called the “occult explosion” is part of this moral corruption and decay which is spreading like a cancer through modern society and which is making our world as ripe for destruction as were Sodom and Gomorrah and the Canaanites of Joshua’s day. Concerning those Canaanites, God said to Israel,

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 consulted with familiar spirits, 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 (Dt 18:9-12).

In the verses that follow this blanket condemnation of what we today call the occult the Lord draws a contrast on the one hand between these observers of times and diviners to whom the Canaanites looked for help and comfort as they faced the uncertain future and, on the other hand, the prophets through whom He would make His Word and will known to Israel. This same contrast between the pronouncements of occult practitioners and the revelation of God is found in the words of Israel who warned against these same practices when he told the children of Israel,

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 (Is 8:19,20).

GOD'S APE

This comparison which the Word of God makes between the Word of God and the oracles of fortune tellers and spiritistic mediums, exalting the former while denigrating the latter, may have been one of the things that moved Luther to speak often of the devil as "God's ape." By that term he meant to say that when God manifests His power and His concern for man's salvation in His Word and in His mighty acts, the devil seeks to imitate these works of God in order to lead men astray.

When we survey the manifold activities classified as occult phenomena it is not difficult to see in them the devil's mimicry of the divine words and works in and through which the Lord reveals Himself to us. It makes little difference whether these occult phenomena are truly supernaturally caused events or pure fraud and deception. The very fact that they have often been shown to be the result of fraud and trickery and yet have deceived many, demonstrates the power of the devil to blind the minds of men to the truth by means of even fraudulent claims. The devil is a liar, and prophecies that do not come true and "lying wonders" can also be inspired or caused by him for they also serve his purposes well.

FORTUNE-TELLING AS PROPHETIC MIMICRY

The predictions of fortune-tellers may be viewed, then, as the mimicry by which the devil seeks to imitate the prophecies of inspired spokesmen for the Lord. That men who were the instruments of the Holy Spirit correctly predicted future events is not questioned by orthodox Christians who take the Bible at face value. Modern Bible scholars are inclined to explain away all exact prophecies as *vaticinia ex eventu*, that is, as accounts of past events for which the fraudulent claim is made that they were written before the event occurred. Attempts are made to defend the Biblical writers against the charge of fraud by insisting that ancient criteria for truth were different than they are today, but this simply will not wash. One might well ask, for example, how the prediction of Mary, "From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed," could possibly be a *vaticinium ex eventu*. The predictions of the New Testament regarding the growth of the church and the indestructibility of the church might also serve as evidence.

There is no need really to cite such evidences. Anyone who accepts the Bible as the inspired and inerrant Word of God and reads the Bible on its own terms will be convinced that the prophets and apostles foretold future events, concerning which they could not possibly have had empirical knowledge. The question whether such supernatural knowledge is possible for human beings is thereby answered affirmatively. God has chosen to make some future events known to His people from time to time.

The related question of whether the servants of the devil can also receive knowledge

from evil spirits in a supernatural way and whether such knowledge can be correct is not so quickly and easily answered. However, the biblical evidence definitely points to an affirmative answer also here. The Bible speaks of a lying spirit who spoke through the prophets on whom Ahab called for advice prior to the battle of Ramoth-Gilead (I Kings 22:22). In the New Testament we read of a “spirit of divination” who possessed a slave girl in Philippi, and who evidently endowed her with what were apparent supernatural powers; for when the spirit was exorcised by the apostle Paul, her masters realized that she had lost her ability to tell fortunes (Ac 16:16-19). The NIV translates the Greek phrase {pneuma pythwna} (which the KJV translates as “spirit of divination”) with “a spirit by which she predicted the future.” Moulton and Milligan in their dictionary of New Testament Greek suggest that she was nothing more than a ventriloquist, but that hardly does justice to the whole context. Of some interest also is the observation that the Greek word modifying the word “spirit” is the word from which our English word “python” is derived. The word originally denoted a serpent. While there is very likely no connection with the serpent in the garden of Eden, yet the fact that the devil there was able to speak through the mouth of an animal, and an animal without vocal cords at that, would surely indicate also that an evil spirit would under certain circumstances be able to speak through and with the voice of a human being. We shall have more to say on that subject in connection with spiritism.

HOW CAN ONE DIFFERENTIATE

Modern fortune-tellers in Christian countries sometimes speak of their powers of divination as gifts of God. Jeanne Dixon, who may well be the best known fortune-teller of our time, is usually identified as a practicing Catholic in good standing with her church. She claims that her ability to predict future events is a gift of God. Such pious language, however, is sheep’s clothing which deceives some people who ought to know better.

The Bible gives us a definite criterion by which we can differentiate between prophets who are true spokesmen for God and false prophets. When God promised Israel prophets into whose mouth He would put His words, He also warned them against prophets who would make fraudulent claims to the power to speak in the name of the Lord. When the Israelites asked how such false claims could be recognized for what they were, God said through Moses, “If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken.”

This criterion follows also from the clear biblical teaching that only the Lord has full and exact knowledge of the future.

It is true that men can have some presumptive knowledge of future events. One of the purposes of scientific research is to discover laws and patterns of behavior that enable us to predict the future. Because we know what will happen, not one of us would light the fuse on a stick of dynamite in the basement of our homes. And while we regularly step out of the front door to wash first story windows, not one of us would ever consider stepping outside a third story window to wash it. We know what will happen in the next seconds. But even then we do not know for sure whether there will be any serious injury or not. We know only that there is a high degree of probability that we will break at least a bone or two. This tentative nature of even the knowledge of the future that the discovery of natural laws enables us to have has led to the axiom, “Probability is the guide of life.”

The greater the knowledge of all the governing factors involved in a certain situation the greater will be the ability to make reasonable guesses concerning the future that are likely to come true. There can be no doubt that the devil and his angels have access to information far

more extensive and detailed than that available to us. Such knowledge would make it possible for him to make educated guesses about many things that would by all normal channels be impossible for men.

Nevertheless even the devil can have no sure and accurate and comprehensive knowledge of the future. This is knowledge God has reserved for Himself. This truth is emphasized especially in the early chapters in the second part of Isaiah. In chapters 41 to 48 of that book we have many very eloquent descriptions of the helplessness of the idols of the heathen. In setting forth the sharp contrast between the true God and false gods, the prophet repeatedly alludes to the ability of Yahweh (or Jehovah) to predict the future. He emphasizes that the predictions of the Lord will come true not only because He has knowledge of the future but because future events are subject to His power. He will cause the occurrence of the events He foretells. The Lord says, "What I have said, that will I bring about what I have planned, that will I do" (Is 46:11) and He characterizes Himself as the Redeemer of Israel "Who carried out the words of His servants and fulfills the predictions of His messengers" (Is 44:26).

In accord with this, the God of Israel challenges the heathen idols to demonstrate their deity by predicting the future with accuracy. He says,

Bring in your idols, to tell us what is going to happen. Tell us what the former things were, (or, "earlier things") so that we may consider them and know their final outcome. Or declare to us the things to come, (or "later things") tell us what the future holds, so we may know that you are gods (Is 41:22.23).

It is very clear that Isaiah looked upon the ability to predict the future as a divine attribute which God shares with no one. Through Isaiah the Lord says,

"I am God, and there is no other.
I am God, and there is none like me.
I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come.
I say: My purpose will stand,
and I will do all that I please" (Is 46:9.10).

Because of this God will not allow fortune-tellers to be successful in their efforts to foretell what the future holds. Isaiah describes the true God as the Lord who "foils the signs of false prophets and makes fools of diviners" (Is 44:25). Because of this astrologers and fortune-tellers cannot profit their patrons. The Lord says, again through Isaiah,

"All the counsel you have received has only worn you out! Let your astrologers come forward, those stargazers who make predictions month by month, Let them save you from what is coming upon you.
Surely they are like stubble; the fire will burn them up.
They cannot even save themselves from the power of the flame" (Is 47:13.14).

APPLYING THE TEST

Because only God knows the future with any accuracy, therefore only the predictions of spokesmen for the true God can be relied upon, and because God cannot lie, therefore those whose predictions do not come true cannot be spokesmen for the true God. By this test even the most successful diviners are exposed as the servants of the devil. Just as one swallow does not make a summer, so the occasional prediction that happens to come true does not demonstrate a divine origin for the prophecy. On the other hand, every unfulfilled fortune told identifies the diviners as something less than a prophet of the Lord. Whether he is indeed a direct spokesman for the devil or a charlatan who is doing the devil's work or a weak Christian deceived by his

sinful flesh we may not always be able to decide with absolute certainty.

A famous seeress of our time claims that 75% of her predictions are fulfilled. By her own admission, then, she is wrong every fourth time. Yet she claims that her ability to foretell the future is a gift from God. But God says, "What I have said, that will I bring about" (Is 46:11). In stark contrast we may note that a famous astrologer, who claims that our futures are determined by the stars under which we are born, explains all his failures by saying, "The stars impel; they do not compel."

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Even the predictions for which fulfillment is claimed usually leave something to be desired. They are usually so general and so vague that dozens of events might be claimed as fulfillments of the prediction. Jeanne Dixon claims that she predicted the death of Robert Kennedy. What she actually said, prior to his assassination, was that there would be a tragedy in the Kennedy family. *Astrology Today* claimed that it had published a "remarkable" prediction of John Kennedy's assassination. The actual prediction was that there would be an outbreak of violence in November. The surest way to cure anyone not blinded by the devil that astrology and all fortune-telling is a fraud and a deception is to read a book of astrological predictions at the end of the year for which the predictions were made. Such an examination will illustrate the truth of the biblical statement that the Lord makes fools of diviners.

FALSE PROPHETS

The same passage in which that statement is made Isaiah also says that the Lord foils the signs of false prophets. (The Hebrew text here (Is 44:25) has only the word for "liars" but the context justifies the NIV translation.) We have already alluded to the possibility that Satan may make use of human beings to make known some secrets that could not be discovered by natural means. That fact may help us to a deeper understanding of some Bible passages in which spirits are spoken of in connection with false prophets.

When John calls upon us, for example, not to believe every spirit but to test the spirits to see whether they come from God because many false prophets have gone out into the world (1 John 4:1), many commentators are inclined to ignore the clear meaning of the word "spirit" in this connection and to treat it as a synonym for "false prophet." But it is certainly possible that John is speaking very literally and that he really believed that the false doctrines of these prophets were actually messages from the spirit world by which the devil hopes to deceive men and to lead them astray from the Christian faith and the salvation which it brings.

Paul seems to say this even more clearly when he writes, "The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons" (1 Tim 4:1). Those words clearly indicate that at least some of the false doctrines taught in this world are doctrines which have been, so to speak, inspired by the devil. We might therefore ask whether the angel from whom Mohammed claimed to have received the messages of the Koran was purely a product of Mohammed's imagination or whether this angel might not have been an emissary of Satan or even Satan himself. We may thus have in Mohammed's case an illustration of Paul's words in which he says that Satan is able to transform himself into an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14). While we would surely not be dogmatic about this it is certainly not inconceivable that the Koran has been inspired by the devil. The doctrine of salvation by works that characterize the Koran is the same doctrine by which the devil deceived Eve in the garden of Eden.

In that same vein we might ask whether the angel Moroni from whom Joseph Smith claimed to have received the Book of Mormon might not have been a demon again

masquerading as an angel of light. None of us can doubt that this book also does the devil's work.

SPIRITISM

These suggestions, whether valid or not, raise the whole question of messages from the spirit world, a phenomenon which has in modern times been repeatedly and widely revived, most recently by the folly of Bishop James Pike of the Protestant Episcopal Church.

We do not have the time to review the history of spiritism. But it should be emphasized that while that history is in large measure a record of fraud and deception, yet one can hardly be a believer in Scripture without accepting at least the possibility of establishing some kind of contact with the invisible intelligent beings that populate our universe. Whether it is possible to contact the souls of deceased human beings, however, will be a question that we must leave unanswered.

Nevertheless there can be no doubt that the witch of Endor established contact with someone from the spirit world, either Samuel himself or an evil spirit pretending to be Samuel. Lutheran Bible interpreters have never been able to agree whether she conversed with Samuel or a demon, but the wording of the text would seem to favor the first view. The arguments against that view seem to operate for the most part with the basic premise that God would not permit one of His departed saints to be disturbed in this way. But what God will permit or not permit is a subject about which we are not really qualified to speak.

These communications from the spirit world, whether real or pretended, would seem to be the devil's mimicry of the biblical process of inspiration. By His inspiration the Holy Ghost put thought into the minds of the holy writers and words into their mouths. The prophets and apostles were the willing instruments of the Holy Spirit in conveying God's Word to the world. In a similar fashion spiritistic mediums become the willing tools of evil spirits. In fact, spiritistic writers often seek to justify their wicked practices by claiming that they are carrying on the tradition of Pentecost and saying that Acts 2 is the account of the greatest spiritistic seance ever held.

Spiritism has become an organized religion in our day with male and female mediums acting as clergymen. A medium is considered to be a sort of mediator between the congregation and the spirit world. In heathen societies the medium is often a priest or priestess of the pagan religion. As organized religions, spiritistic groups generally prefer to be known as Spiritualists. That the religion of spiritism is demonic is not only evident from the fact that consulting the dead is specifically forbidden in the Bible, but the doctrines of Spiritualism are again the most blatant form of work-righteousness.

Mediums usually contact specific persons through the agency of so-called "Spirit guides." Usually each medium uses the same "spirit guide" in all the seances he or she conducts. It may well be that the rather vague term "familiar spirit," which is found a number of times in the Old Testament may be a designation for such a spirit guide.

Not all people who seek to contact the souls of the dead or other spirits make use of mediums, however. Glass moving or table tipping or spirit writing or Ouija boards are other common means employed in spiritism. Bishop Pike, for example, first tried to contact his deceased son by the use of a glass tumbler turned upside down on a smooth table. Table tipping is a spiritistic practice sometimes engaged in as a parlor game, and Christians ought to be warned that such games are definitely sinful and belong to the practices called an abomination by the Lord. When the practice is accompanied by actual prayers calling upon the spirits to make their presence known by moving the table in a certain way in response to requests for information the

practice is a definite form of gross idolatry.

Ouija boards deserve special mention because they too are often treated as a harmless parlor game. According to some reports Parker Brothers sell more Ouija boards than Monopoly sets. Not only theologians but also psychiatrists and practioners of the occult warn against this so-called game as a very dangerous device whose use has resulted in insanity or even in devil possession. We can therefore not warn against it too strongly.

In "spirit writing" the subject offers the use of his or her hand to a spirit for the purpose of gaining some message from occult sources. The subject sits with a pen or pencil poised over a sheet of paper and waits for the hand holding the pen to begin writing without conscious effort on the part of the subject. The process is very similar to the use of a Ouija board in which the message is spelled out by a pointer, called a planchette. "Spirit writing" is also sometimes called "automatic writing," which makes it sound more harmless, but the practice is also very dangerous and often results in psychological disturbances in the personality of the practitioner.

DEVIL POSSESSION

From spiritism and mediumship to devil possession is a very short step. The medium actually offers his or her mouth and vocal cords to an evil spirit for his use. Whether spirits actually make widespread use of the proffered instrument we will probably never be able to determine because all the instruments used in scientific laboratories are not competent to search out the answers to such questions. Firm answers to such questions can only be obtained by divine revelation.

But that devils sometimes take full possession of human beings and speak in and through them can not be doubted, because the phenomenon is amply attested by biblical evidence. That there were people possessed by demons in biblical times we cannot deny.

Whether there is such a thing as devil possession in our time is not so easy to establish. While the evidence is by no means conclusive there seems to be little doubt that there are cases of demon possession also in our modern world. While some psychiatrists insist that it is nothing more than a form of schizophrenic behavior, it seems to me that the evidence pointing to the reality of demon possession stops just short of being absolutely convincing. We can only thank God that we have a Savior who has redeemed us from the power of the devil and who has given us the promise in His word, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

Devil possession, too, may be regarded as another form of the devil's mimicry of God. We know from the Scriptures that when a person is born again his body becomes a temple of the Holy Ghost, who influences our thoughts and our words and our actions for good, as the Bible says, "It is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Php 2:13). In a similar way the devil seeks to establish his residence in a human body and to influence it for evil. One of the marks of devil possession listed by almost all writers on the subject that I have consulted is, for example, profane and obscene language. Sometimes it is observed that the profane and obscene words used by the possessed person are unknown to him in his normal state. Closely related to this is the fact that possessed persons are sometimes able to "speak in tongues," that is, they use languages that they have never learned and which they are able to speak only in periods of possession. This is of some significance for the study of modern charismatics.

POLTERGEIST PHENOMENA

Closely related to such personal demon possession is what is sometimes called "possession of places." Such places we knew in our childhood as haunted houses and when I was a boy it was customary to write off all stories about such places as the invention of overworked

imaginations.

Scientific study, however, seems to have demonstrated that such places do exist and scientists have come to call the unusual events associated with them “poltergeist phenomena.” Many of these cases go unreported for long periods of time because the people experiencing them often suspect that they have some kind of mental illness. While there is always the possibility that this may be the explanation in some cases, yet there is always an inexplicable residue of evidence for which there seems to be no natural explanation.

EXORCISM

Possession of places and people has once more become on the part of many an accepted fact. Coupled with this there has also been a renewed interest in exorcism.

Exorcism is the attempt to drive out the evil spirits that have taken up residence in a person or place. The practice is known to us from the Bible in which we have a number of examples of the practice on the part of Jesus and his disciples and at least one example of an attempt on the part of non-Christians to duplicate the feat.

Most of the exorcisms with which we have become familiar in modern literature and history have been performed by Roman Catholic priests. Every Roman Catholic diocese is supposed to have an official exorcist according to some Catholic writers, and no exorcism is to be performed except by permission of the bishop and then only by the men who are officially appointed for this service.

When one studies Roman Catholic exorcism practices one is struck by the great difference between such attempts at driving out devils and the exorcisms performed by Jesus and the apostles. In the Bible an exorcism is usually a very simple command to the demon to leave and the whole process is over in a very short time. A Roman Catholic exorcism, on the other hand, is carried out with elaborate ceremony and sometimes lasts for months with individual sessions lasting as long as the exorcising priest is able to stay awake.

Yet the evidence seems to indicate that such exorcisms performed with the mechanical repetition of Bible passages, prayers to the saints and holy water and votive candles sometimes are successful. Luther explained such successes as being a means which the devil uses to strengthen the hold which the false doctrines of the Roman Church have on men. Such an explanation is in accord with the biblical teaching that the Antichrist will be able to deceive men with his “lying wonders” (2 Th 2:9). The work righteousness of the Koran and the Book of Mormon and the tenets of Spiritualism has its counterpart also in Roman theology.

MAGIC AND WITCHCRAFT

Up to this point we have limited our discussion for the most part to the communication of information from occult sources. Such events are usually classified by scientific researchers as psi-gamma phenomena. The syllable “psi” is used to denote parapsychological or psychic occurrences. “Gamma” is the first letter of the Greek word for “knowledge.” In a rather general way, psi-gamma phenomena may be described as events that are associated with attempts to gain knowledge by supernatural means especially to predict the future.

Parapsychologists speak of another classification of occult practices, which they call psi-kappa phenomena. This kind of occultism is associated with attempts to control the future and to make things happen by supernatural means. The layman’s terms for such practices are magic and witchcraft.

Magic and witchcraft might be viewed as the devil’s mimicry of the biblical miracles. Just as the prophets in the Old Testament Jesus and the apostles in the New Testament did many things that could not be accomplished without supernatural power, so true magicians, wizards

and witches seek to enlist the supernatural help of evil spirits to perform similar acts.

White magic in distinction from black magic often employs the name of the Triune God in the practice of witchcraft. This is a blasphemous and perverse use of the name of God because it is an effort on the part of men to bend the Almighty to their own will.

This effort to control the future also demonstrates a lack of trust in the wisdom and love of God. Christians who know that the God who loved them enough to offer up His Son for us all know also with an unshakable faith that He will with His Son freely give us all things of which we have need. We have no need to try to control the future because we know that our times are in His hand and we have learned to trust his providential control over all of history. We also have no need to know the details of the future because we know that all things will work together for our good. Trusting in His love and in His power we commit ourselves and all that is ours to His gracious care and keeping because we know that He will do all things well.

I know not what the future hath
Of marvel or surprise;
I only know that life and death
His mercy underlies.

I know not where His islands lift
Their froned palms in air
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care. Amen.