

## THE OCCULT DIVINATION

The past decade has seen a veritable explosion of interest in the occult and a remarkable change in attitude toward the occult. The scientific research in the field of parapsychology made popular by J. B. Rhine at Duke University and now being carried on in many scientific laboratories has helped to prepare the way for the acceptance of many occult phenomena and has made interest in the subject academically respectable. The repeal of the laws against witchcraft in England a quarter of a century ago has also encouraged many practitioners of the occult to admit openly to what was once generally considered to be deviant behavior.

The amount of literature being produced in the area is stupendous and the varieties of occult phenomena is surprising, at least to those of us who can still remember what the attitude of society toward the occult was only about a generation ago. In 1948 Rudolf Bultmann could write, "Now that the forces and laws of nature have been discovered, we can no longer believe in spirits, whether good or bad."<sup>1</sup> When the French scholar Jules Michelet in the middle of the nineteenth century wrote what at least one edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica is reported to have called "the most important work on medieval superstition yet written,"<sup>2</sup> he could treat witchcraft as a crime invented by the church as an excuse for burning poor women who tried in the only way they knew how to find some alleviation of the miseries to which the feudal society and the church of the middle ages subjected them and their families. And even in 1961 the Spanish scholar Julio Caro Baroja could still write, "A world which accepts magic is, above all, a world that accepts slander."<sup>3</sup>

Before we begin the consideration of the various types of occultism it might be well for us to consider the options that are open to men when they come face to face with these phenomena. It is possible, of course, to write the whole business off as fraud and trickery from beginning to end. The other extreme is to consider all occult events as perfectly normal happenings which are not understood as such because we have not yet discovered the laws of nature that underlie them and that they could, therefore, be duplicated by anyone who is a partner to the secret involved. Between these two extremes lies the view that occult occurrences are real but supernormal and therefore limited in their performance to those who have special gifts which are still part of the natural world or that they are truly supernatural events that can come to pass only by the intervention of spirit powers.

While it is possible that any one of the four views may apply to a specific case, yet the one option that is not open to a Bible-believing Christian is the view that all occult phenomena must be cases of fraud and deception. At the very least he will have to grant that there have been real cases of devil possession, at least in the days of Jesus' visible sojourn here on earth. A Christian can not, therefore, accept the absolute impossibility of occult events in principle as is done by the materialistic philosophy which has dominated our modern world for so long. There are clear indications in the Bible that the forces of the spirit world may be able to have a far more direct influence on human behavior than we often suppose possible.

In this connection I sometimes wonder whether Gausewitz's translation of the second commandment was not influenced by the view that occult occurrences are impossible, at least at the present time. The word superstition, at least in modern American usage implies a belief that has no connection with objective reality. When Luther used the word "zaubern" he certainly had reference to the use of magic and sorcery, about the reality

of which he seems to have had no doubt. But very likely a generation ago few people expected to have to deal with actual cases of witchcraft in twentieth century enlightened America.

Today, however, we must once more deal with the problem and Luther's words telling us not to profane God's name by using witchcraft are very much in place. It is not our business to determine whether instances of occult involvement are real or fraudulent deception. Actually, aside from the kind of divine inerrant revelation we have in the Bible, it is probably impossible to decide with certainty the question of whether we are dealing with evil spiritual powers that have intruded into our physical world or with a clever trickster. Or could it be both?

It is enough for us to know that all involvement with the occult is a violation of God's holy law. It may, however, occasionally be of some pastoral value for us to be acquainted with the various forms of occult involvement so that we may recognize the enemy when we meet him and be competent also in this area to counsel the souls committed to our care. Moreover, we must be careful to distinguish the truly occult from what we do not understand.

When the various aspects of the subject are studied, one is often reminded of the fact that the occult is the devil's mimicry of the mighty works of God or, as Luther says, that the devil is God's ape. God sends His prophets into the world to guide men on the way to heaven and the devil sends his messengers to lead men astray by divination. God empowers Moses to do miracles in order to persuade the people to believe God's Word and the devil apparently empowers the magicians of Pharaoh to help harden the king of Egypt in his unbelief. God inspires holy men to speak His Word and evil spirits from hell speak through trance mediums. The Holy Spirit comes to live in our hearts and to move to lead sanctified lives and the devil takes possession of the souls of men to lead them to blaspheme God and spit out obscenities. God seeks our worship and asks us to honor Him in our lives, and the devil seeks that worship and honor for himself and gets it from the proponents of Satanism in our time.

These are also the five areas into which we have chosen to divide our discussion of the subject of "The Occult." In the time remaining to us today we shall consider the matter of divination or fortune-telling. In the following lectures, God Willing, we shall turn our attention to witchcraft and magic, spiritism, devil possession, and Satanism.

## DIVINATION

Divination, which is derived from the Latin word divinare, to foresee or foretell, is the art of discovering without the use of the five normal senses information about secret things that are far removed from our senses in time or space. Just where one is to draw the line between what is called extrasensory perception and divination is sometimes very difficult to establish. There are people who question whether such a line should be drawn at all, but it would seem that there are instances of telepathy and clairvoyance that are perfectly natural even if they might be called paranormal and others which must be denounced as the kind of divination which is clearly forbidden in Scripture.

Unbelieving scholars have the habit of classifying the activity of the prophets with heathen divination. To them Samuel's words about the asses of Kish are on the same level with the revelations of a gypsy fortune-teller. The visions of Daniel, if they are not pure invention, are no different qualitatively from those produced by the clairvoyance of Jeane Dixon. But the Bible makes clear that there is a difference. The one is forbidden while the other is viewed as a gracious gift of the Lord, and even the magicians of Pharaoh

must admit that the power behind the miracles of Moses is the finger of God (Ex 8:19). The devil is truly God's ape, as Luther says, but we know from the infallible Scripture that the difference between true prophecy and false divination is as great as that between heaven and hell.

## ASTROLOGY

Probably the most popular form of divination in the world today is astrology, which is also often called the first step toward involvement in the occult. Of the 1700 or so daily newspapers in America over 1200 carry regular astrology columns, and the same practice is followed by many of the popular magazines. It is estimated that over \$150,000,000 is spent per year on personal horoscopes,<sup>4</sup> that more than 10,000 men and women in America make their living by casting horoscopes and that 175,000 part-time practitioners of astrology are active in the United States.<sup>5</sup> Magazines devoted wholly to astrology, Horoscope and American Astrology each have about a half million subscribers.<sup>6</sup>

Astrology is the art of predicting the future on the basis of the belief that the stars to a greater or lesser degree control or at least influence the character, the lives, and the destinies of men and nations.

The origin of astrology is hidden in the distant past. It is, however, generally agreed that its beginnings are found in Babylonia. When the NEB calls the wise men from the east "astrologers" it evidently does so on the premise that all the wise men from that area of the world were practitioners of astrology, and at least one German critic of the New Testament, Ethelbert Stauffer of Erlangen, has suggested that it was astrological doctrine that formed the basis of their conviction that the king of the Jews had been born.<sup>7</sup> Stauffer says that in the summer of 7 B.C. Jupiter and Saturn were in conjunction in the sign of the Fishes and he writes,

Jupiter was regarded as the star of the ruler of the universe, and the constellation of the Fishes as the sign of the last days. In the East Saturn was considered to be the planet of Palestine. If Jupiter encountered Saturn in the sign of the Fishes, it could only mean that the ruler of the last days would appear in Palestine. Such were the passages that prompted the Magi of Matthew 2,2 to go to Jerusalem.<sup>8</sup>

Strangely enough, Stauffer believes that in this way he has demonstrated by the use of the historical-critical method that, as he says, "the star of Bethlehem, too, is a historical fact."<sup>9</sup>

The basis of all astrological prediction is the zodiac, a word derived from the Greek word for "animal." The zodiac is an imaginary belt in the sky about fifteen degrees of arc wide with the ecliptic, or the apparent path of the sun in the center of the belt.

The zodiac is divided into twelve sections, or "houses," each of which is named after a constellation which occupies or governs the houses. These constellations are also called the "signs" of the zodiac. The whole belt of the zodiac moves around the earth once each year, so that each house occupies a position on the eastern horizon at sunrise for approximately one month, or, as it may be stated in another way, it takes the sun approximately one month to move from one house to another. The planets likewise move from one house to another at varying rates. Each planet is said to be "at home" in two houses and the sun and moon in one house each.

A horoscope is constructed on the basis of the position of the planets in the various houses at the moment of a person's birth. The most important astrological influence is

that of the sun and one's astrological sign is determined by the position of the sun at the moment of birth. Lesser influences proceed from the moon and the planets. A horoscope is cast only after the exact position of the sun, moon, and the planets has been established. Not only the position of the various planets in the houses is important but also their position in relation to each other. Planets are said to be in conjunction when they are situated in the same house within five degrees of each other. They are in opposition when they are six houses or 180 degrees apart, squared when they are three houses or 90 degrees apart; they form a sextile when they are two signs or 60 degrees apart and a trine when they are four signs or 120 degrees apart.

The rules for constructing a horoscope are very ancient, although astrologers have found it necessary to make some adjustments because since the rules were first laid down, three new planets have been discovered. The first point considered in all horoscopes is the position of the sun at the time of the candidate's birth. If the sun was in the house of the lion, for example, he will move with catlike grace and have as his most striking physical characteristic a heavy head of hair reminiscent of a lion's mane. One text on astrology says, "Leos love to be the center of attention and are driven by a desire to be in command."<sup>10</sup> For those who would like to test the accuracy of those statements it might be mentioned that Leos are people born between July 23 and August 21.

The basic activity of the astrologer has remained unchanged since biblical times. The word "astrologer" is used eight times in the King James Version, once in Isaiah and seven times in Daniel. The word translated "astrologer" in the Daniel passages really means "enchanter" or "magician." But the Isaiah passage (47:13) is most interesting. The KJ translation says, "Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee." Literally the "astrologers" are "those who divide the heavens," which in this context clearly refers to the houses of the zodiac. The "stargazers" are those who observe the position of the stars in these divisions of the heavens. The "monthly prognosticators" are literally "those who give knowledge for the month," again an obvious reference to the fact that the sun spends approximately one month in each house of the zodiac every year.

The reading of the various rules for casting horoscopes will confirm the opinion that it is amazing what people are willing to believe just as long as it is not taught in the Bible. For example, although it is obvious that a connection is made between the zodiac sign of the lion and the characteristics of those born when the sun is in the house of the lion, it would certainly appear that the naming of the constellation is so arbitrary that the stars making up that constellation could just as readily have been named the "Lamb."

Moreover, the scientific fact is that people born between July 23 and August 21 are not born while the sun is in Leo. The sun arrives at the eastern horizon on March 21 a little earlier each year and therefore does not remain in the same house on the same date. This phenomenon is known as the precession of the equinoxes. In 25,800 years the sun will actually move through all the twelve houses on March 21, which means that the sun will rise on March 21 in the same house for about 2,140 years and then will rise for the same length of time in the previous house of the zodiac. For people born in the last two thousand years the zodiacal signs have all been wrong. People classified as Aries, for example, who are born between March 21 and April 20, are not born while the sun is in the house of Aries but in the house of Pisces. This will no longer be true of those born on those dates in the future, for during the so-called Age of Aquarius the first date of spring will come while the sun is in the house of Aquarius and those who are classified by astrologers as Aries will actually be Aquarians.

Moreover, the boundaries of the houses are so ill-defined that astrologers are not really sure in what year the sun will begin to rise in Aquarius on the first day of Spring. Some say it began in 1904, others date its beginning in 1936 or 1962, while still others insist that it has not yet begun.<sup>12</sup>

While astrologers are not sure just when the new age of Aquarius will be ushered in, if it has not already begun, they all seem to agree that a new star age means a new beginning for the earth. They often point to the fact that Jesus was born near the beginning of the age of fishes.<sup>13</sup> When the new age of Aquarius begins new types of government, new forms of worship and new philosophies will come into existence. Sybil Leek, for example, says that in the age of Aquarius, "There will be a completely new set of values--moral, religious, personal, and national."<sup>14</sup> Some astrologers evidently believe that Christianity will go out of existence and that humanism will be the religion of the future.

There are other difficulties involved in this whole theory that the stars influence life on earth. Why should only the constellations in the narrow band of the zodiac exercise such influence? Moreover, in eastern countries where astrology is even more widely practiced than in the west, other symbols are used which have different meanings from those given to the various signs of the zodiac by those who follow the Ptolemaic system.

It is also strange that the moment of birth should be chosen as a determining factor in constructing a personal horoscope. It would surely seem that the moment of conception would be more reasonable if there were any truth in the system.

In spite of all these difficulties astrologers insist that their art is a science and they point to the fulfillment of their prophecies as proof for their claims. When these claims are examined, however, they often demonstrate rather the folly of the art. As an impressive instance of the fulfillment of an astrological prediction, one astrologer cited the magazine Astrology Today which prior to the assassination of Pres. Kennedy printed a horoscope for that November in which it was said, "The powerful Mars influence incites much social unrest of the sort that erupts blindly into retaliative violence."<sup>15</sup> As a specific prediction of the Kennedy assassination those words clearly leave much to be desired. Moreover, they are so general that dozens of events that happened during that November, or for that matter, during any month of any year, could be cited as a fulfillment.

At the beginning of this year I noticed that the copy of the National Enquirer of Jan. 6, 1976, displayed in the supermarket contained astrological predictions for this year. Because I knew that I would be writing on this subject in September I bought a copy and placed the astrology page into my files. Although the year has not yet ended it seems pretty much of a foregone conclusion at this time that we will very likely not see the fulfillment of the predictions on that page which tell us that "Nelson Rockefeller finally will become president" and that "President Ford won't run this year because of a personal upheaval in his family" ... "health problems, political problems and domestic troubles." William Petersen cites a research project in which the predictions of leading astrologers for one day were compared, and his conclusion was "that if you want to keep your faith in astrology, you better not compare one against the other."<sup>16</sup> Walker Knight says that "when astrologers are followed up, almost complete disappointment results."<sup>17</sup>

Isolated instances of fulfilled astrological predictions can truthfully be cited. But if dozens of horoscopes are cast dealing with the same person, some of them are bound to be correct. Many astrologers claim that they predicted President Kennedy's death. Kurt Koch says that prior to November of 1973 one horoscope predicted the president's impending death, another predicted his reelection in the following year, and still another that he would be forced to resign in 1964 for reasons of health.<sup>18</sup> Under such conditions, fulfilled predictions ought to occasion no surprise.

On the other hand scientific studies have clearly demonstrated the folly of astrology. Paul Couderc, of the Paris Observatory, investigated the birth dates of 2,817 musicians to see whether any pattern could be discovered that would show a correlation between the signs of the zodiac and musical ability. According to astrological theory there ought to

be such a correlation, but Couderc concluded that the position of the sun has no influence whatever and that musicians are born throughout the year on a chance basis. Couderc's conclusion was that the value of astrology is "zero."<sup>19</sup> A similar study of the birth dates of scientists listed in Who's Who produced the same results, and the conclusion arrived at was that the birth dates of scientists are just as random as those of the rest of the population.<sup>20</sup>

Yet, in spite of everything, millions of people believe in the system. On May 24, 1976, U.S. News and World Report published an article on the subject which alluded to a Gallup Poll that showed that about 32,000,000 people in America took astrology seriously and that as many churchgoers as others said that they believed in astrology."<sup>21</sup>

Dr. Joyce Brothers explains the popularity of astrology by saying that "astrologers know what their clients want and they dish it out. This feeling is further reinforced by what psychologists call 'the self-fulfilling prophecy'--the likelihood that saying a thing is going to happen will actually bring it about."<sup>22</sup> It might be said also that much of what is written in the daily astrology columns is good advice. If a man is told that on a certain day it is especially important for him to be careful not to let his temper get out of hand he can hardly go wrong in following that counsel. Time magazine some years ago pointed out how difficult it is to demonstrate the incorrectness of many astrological assertions by saying, "Break a leg when your astrologer told you the signs were good, and he can congratulate you on escaping what might have happened had the signs been bad."<sup>23</sup> It has been said that successful astrologers are good psychologists.

When this whole business is examined just on the basis of human reason alone, we find that, even if we can not fully agree with the judgment on astrology pronounced by the Astronomical Society, yet it is basically true, as the Society said in 1949, that "Whatever lies behind the title of astrology...is nothing more than a mixture of superstition, duplicity, and business."<sup>24</sup> The Roman poet Ennius was right when he said that horoscopes cost one drachma each and are one drachma too expensive.

Some astrologers admit this openly or indicate unconsciously that they are aware of it. Johann Kepler, the famed astronomer, practiced astrology because his livelihood depended on it; but he said,

Astronomy is the wise mother and astrology is her whoring little daughter, selling herself to any and every client willing and able to pay so as to maintain her wise mother alive.<sup>25</sup>

And in the Milwaukee Journal about two months ago an astrologer who claims that he is consulted by many important leaders in business and politics said that many people would be shocked if they knew how many decisions are guided by the stars and he confessed that he himself was frightened at the thought. If he truly had the confidence in his craft that he professes to have, he would not need to fear the consequences.<sup>26</sup>

## ANCIENT DIVINATION

While astrology is the most popular form of divination practiced today, there are countless other ways in which men seek hidden knowledge in ways that are unlawful. Many of these methods, like astrology, are thousands of years old and are referred to already in the Bible. Ezekiel, for example, refers to one of the most common types of Mesopotamian divination when he says that the king of Babylon "looked in the liver" (Ezek 21:21). Close examination of the liver of a sacrificed animal was made the basis of predictions concerning the king, and clay livers have been found in Mesopotamia that were used to teach the art. The Greeks called this practice hepatoscopy and they also practiced it. The same passage

in Ezekiel says that the king shook the arrows, a reference to another mode of divination among both Babylonians and Greeks. The Roman custom of consulting augurs and haruspices, who divined by examining the entrails of animals as well as the flight and feeding of birds is a similar practice. It is very likely that Moses was referring to activities similar to these when he spoke of observers of times, enchanter, and charmers in Deuteronomy 18,10,11. Keil-Delitzsch says that in these verses Moses groups together all the words used in Hebrew for the different ways of discovering what the future had in store.

#### ROD AND PENDULUM

Similar practices are still prevalent today. One ancient mode of divination still very common in Germany today, according to Kurt Koch, is the use of a rod or pendulum. They are used in various ways to point out the answer to the question being asked. In using the rod and pendulum to discover information useful to sick people, for example, the rod is passed over the body until it responds and points to the area that is supposedly affected. The pendulum is used in the same way until it begins to circle over the affected organ. Sometimes instead of passing the rod or pendulum over the body itself the diviner uses a chart of the body instead. Others use the rod or the pendulum in a similar way to select the proper medicine from a group of remedies or drugs. In some respects this method is similar to dowsing for water, of which a little more will be said later.

#### CARD LAYING


Cartomancy or card laying is more common in America. While some fortune-tellers who employ this method of divination use a regular card deck, it is more common for those who take this business seriously to use the Tarot.

The Tarot is a deck of cards that was invented in Italy early in the fourteenth century. A full deck consists of 78 cards, which are divided into the Lesser Arcana (or Trumps Minor) and the Greater Arcana (or Trumps Major). The Lesser Arcana is very similar to a bridge deck except that it has a fourth face card called the page. The Greater Arcana consists of 21 numbered face cards, many of which depict religious symbolism, and one "fool" or joker.

The cards are shuffled until the practitioner "feels" intuitively that they have been shuffled enough, after which a number of cards are laid out in one of several standard patterns. Each card has its own significance and, as in astrology, the position and combination of the cards has special meaning.

Advocates of fortune-telling by means of cards say that significant readings are given only if the reader enters into a trance state and it appears at times that we are dealing here with something that comes very close to possession by the devil,<sup>27</sup> and one writer with a favorable attitude toward card laying says that the Tarot cards "have a special magic of their own as any sensitive person who has handled a pack can perceive."<sup>28</sup> Kurt Koch says that some forms of card laying are based on genuine mediumistic abilities and he tells of one fortune-teller who under questioning admitted that when she was actually in the process of telling fortunes she found herself controlled by a strange power that actually forced her to say things of which she had no previous knowledge.<sup>29</sup> Merrill Unger also says that "mediumistic abilities are often present in card-laying,"<sup>30</sup> and we shall have more to say of this when we discuss the subject of spiritism.

## I CHING

Another type of fortune-telling becoming more popular in America is I Ching, or the Book of Changes, translated from the Chinese. In using the I Ching, Chinese people work with fifty yarrow stalks, but in America usually three coins are used. The coins are tossed six times and according to the way the coins fall either a broken or solid line is drawn until you have six lines one above another (e.g. ). This same pattern will also be found at the beginning of one of the chapters of the Book. The chapters are very short and very obscure, but those who use it find the answers to their questions in them. In some ways it is similar to the practice of pointing blindfolded to passages in the Bible to find guidance.

## PALMISTRY or CHIROMANCY

A far more common and well-known type of divination is palmistry or chiromancy, telling fortunes by examining the hands, which is also a very ancient practice.

It would seem that palmistry operates with principles and rules similar to those used by astrologers but its connection with paganism is even clearer. The user of astrology may speak of Jupiter, Mars, and Venus exclusively in terms of the planets which bear those names, but palmistry still uses the name of Apollo as the name of the sun. Just as astrology depends on the position of the sun, moon and the five planets which bear the name of old Roman gods, so various areas of the hand are named after the gods Mercury, Apollo, Saturn, Jupiter and Venus, and the patterns of interpretation is very similar to that followed in astrology. For example, the little finger is assigned to Mercury, the god of travel, and if the fleshy area in the palm just below the little finger, called the mount of Mercury, is pronounced, this indicates a love of travel. The shape and length of the fingers, the conformation of various areas of the palms, and the various lines of the hand are examined as a basis for the reading. But again it might be said that the more successful chiromantists are those who exhibit mediumistic gifts.

## PSYCHOMETRY

A few words might also be said about psychometry. Those who practice this type of divination operate with some object worn or used by the person concerning whom information is desired. Occasionally we come across newspaper articles concerning psychics who have found missing persons or identified murderers in this way. Kurt Koch tells of a diviner who was able by the use of the man's socks to point to the exact spot where the body of a suicide could be found.<sup>31</sup> But the device is also used to describe the characteristics of the person involved and to see something in his or her past, present, or future. For what it is worth, it might be mentioned in this connection that Kurt Koch testifies that he met a clairvoyant in Switzerland who used psychometric powers and whose statements were 100 per cent accurate. For example, he could diagnose illnesses correctly if an object belonging to the sick person was placed before him. The Dutch psychic, Peter Hurkos makes extensive use of this device in his work with police departments.

There are also many other types of divination which we can not discuss. Crystal gazing, numerology, the reading of tea leaves or coffee grounds, and oneiromancy or the interpretation of dreams are some of the more familiar.

## CLAIRVOYANCE

A word should, however, be said about clairvoyance of what is commonly called "second sight," the ability to see things more or less vividly that are far away in space or time.



In many cases this would appear to be very closely related to mental telepathy. It often occurs spontaneously in people who have no desire to traffic with the occult.

However, it is a gift which is easily abused in the interest of divination. Jeane Dixon is a case in point. She uses some of the methods described above, astrology, dreams, a crystal ball or a deck of cards, but often does not look at the cards and only holds them in her hand for the "vibrations."

I suppose, however, that a number of us could cite cases in which such clairvoyant experience came to people who could hardly be accused of being involved with the occult world of evil spirits. A very close friend of mine, while waiting for a plane in the O'Hare terminal, saw his dog jump up at him and heard him barking at the same moment that the dog died at his home.

Such experiences make it very difficult to draw the line between psychological mysteries and occult practices. But the ease with which some people pass from such passive experiences to involvement with the occult ought to teach us to exercise great caution in this area.

#### WATER DOWSING

A related practice is that of dowsing, or divining for water. This, too, is a very old practice. In ancient Rome they were called aquileges. It seems rather well established that there are people who have the ability to walk over an area with a forked stick in their hands and locate water under the ground. Some of them can even tell exactly how deep the water is below the surface. I have been told on rather good authority that at one of our Lutheran high schools several attempts were made to drill a well without success. Finally one of the board members took his niece, who was a dowser, to the high school grounds one evening, and today the school has a good supply of water from a well drilled at the spot marked by the girl.

In my younger years I used to ridicule all such stories as nonsense, but the evidence pointing to the success of this method of finding water seems to be overwhelming. Up to 1975, for example, the town of New Sharon in Maine suffered from a chronic shortage of water. The town spent \$180,000 for geologic studies and drilled several wells that produced nothing. Finally, in desperation they hired a dowser for \$500 and today the town has all the water it can use as a result of his efforts.<sup>32</sup>

I would find it very difficult to condemn the practice. Certainly God's name is not being taken in vain and no evil spirit powers are being summoned to give their aid. And yet when I read that there are dowsers who can hold the divining rod over a map and locate water in this way hundreds of miles away, I am not so sure that in at least some cases there are occult powers involved. Kurt Koch finds a very close connection between dowsing and the use of the divining rod for fortune-telling, and yet he says that in his pastoral counseling he has not found any evidence of any psychological disturbance that has resulted from dowsing on a purely physical level.<sup>33</sup>

#### THE DANGERS INVOLVED

The same can not be said of truly occult practices. Kurt Koch, who seems to be well aware of the need to avoid credulity in the area of the occult, has cited literally hundreds of cases in which tragedy, psychological disturbances, and even insanity have resulted from occult practices. He tells, for example, of a young German mother with two children who was told by two card layers that her husband who was missing in action was dead. After

the second visit she killed herself and her children with gas. The next day her husband came home from a Russian prison camp.<sup>34</sup>

One story like that, of course, does not make a case. However, even those who are heartily in favor of divination recognize that such events are not at all unexpected results of fortune-telling. In preparation for these lectures I read two books of instruction in the art of divination, and both of them warn against revealing what they have learned from card laying or other methods of divination if it will have a tendency to upset the person having his fortune told. One of the authors writes, "To predict death, illness, accidents, and catastrophe can cause many to worry unnecessarily."<sup>36</sup>

The same author speaks of the danger that threatens the fortune-teller. He writes, "Because of the dangers that can attend trance meditation, it is well, to begin with, to submit to direction from a virtuous and well-instructed adept."

A Christian student of the occult quotes a German psychologist who said, "We can see how dangerous it is by the way in which serious psychic disturbances, a fear of life, despair and derangement are produced by it in sensitive people. Astrology paralyzes initiative and powers of judgment. It stupefies and encourages shallowness. It molds the personality into receiving an underground movement that thrives on platitudes."<sup>37</sup>

#### THE SINFULNESS OF DIVINATION

Christians, however, really do not need to prove the dangerous nature of divination. Nor is it necessary for them to answer the question of whether it is fraudulent or real. Even those who advocate the practice admit that there are many charlatans who have given divination a bad name. And those who seem to have truly "miraculous" powers of prediction do not claim inerrancy for themselves. The many mistakes made by even the most successful psychics demonstrate beyond question that this type of prophecy is not from God. When the children of Israel asked how they could distinguish a false prophet from a spokesman of the Lord, Moses told them that the prophet whose predictions do not come true is not from God (Dt. 18:22).

On the other hand, if the prophecies do not come true, this does not prove that the fortune-teller is a complete fraud and dissembler. The devil is the father of lies and he tells the truth or lies as it suits his purposes to do so. The lying spirits in the mouth of the prophets of Ahab led him to his death (I Ki 22:1-38).

What children of God need to remember is that all divination is directly forbidden by God (Dt 18:10,11; 44:25; Lv. 19:26). It is a violation of the first commandment. The Christian believer who knows that God has loved him with an everlasting love in Christ and who says, "My times are in Thy hand," does not need the assurance offered by those who are charlatans at best and direct agents of the old evil foe at worst. Astrology at least made sense when heathen men believed that the planets were intelligent gods who could influence the lives of men. Today it is only another example of the irrationality of unbelief, and at yet the same time a form of idolatry that is every bit as evil as open paganism. Merrill Unger is right when he says, "The upsurge in astrological interest is unmistakable evidence of moral and social decay."<sup>38</sup>

The kind of interest in the future displayed by those who use divination to discover what lies before them manifests a lack of trust in the wisdom of God who has revealed to us what we need to know and who promises that all things will work together for our good. Divination, however, is not only destructive of faith. The attitude toward morality that is inculcated by it is destructive of Christian living. When one reads the advice of the astrological columns it becomes clear very quickly that the morality of astrologers is

pure pragmatism. The fundamental questions that are always involved are, "Will it benefit me?" The Christian, however, ought to ask, "Is it right?" The astrologers often excuse their mistakes by saying that "the stars impel, but do not compel," and that astrology is only an aid to guiding us in making our decisions. God has given us the only guide we need. In questions of morals, He has given us the law. In questions that deal purely with decisions concerning this present life He has given us human reason. Astrology subverts both.

Divination in all its forms is therefore to be avoided by all Christians. We do not drink poison to see what it tastes like. In the same way we ought to warn our people against any kind of involvement in these practices, even if it is done only for entertainment. To the argument that it is just in fun or for curiosity's sake Kurt Koch answers, "Whether it is out of ignorance or curiosity, whether as a joke or in all seriousness, when I release the catch on a hand grenade, the result is always the same."<sup>39</sup> In the Lord's commands against all manner of fortune-telling we have only another evidence of His love which desires that we avoid all those things that can in the end only bring grief and suffering with them.

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