

COMBATTING CHRISTIAN OCCULTISM (PART 2)

BY: John Ferrer

5-14-05

Introduction

In last season's article *Combating Christian Occultism (Part 1)*¹ we surveyed what the occult is, showing how it represents a certain worldview geared towards secret knowledge or power and typically characterized by certain categories of practice. These practices include fortune telling (divination), sorcery (magick), and communication with spirits (spiritism). We also saw how some beliefs that are parallel to the occult are readily found in Christian circles, namely 1) magickal thinking, 2) self-worship, and 3) depersonalization of God. While these beliefs do not necessarily mean someone is practicing occultism, they are not consistent with Christianity and can serve to blur the line between the Christian faith and the black arts. In this sequel we will look at some practices among Christians that represent an occult corruption and are thus very dangerous.

As we advance it will become obvious that occult practices and Christian practices, while very different, do have some similarities. This fact is no accident. Just as Satan can masquerade as an angel of light, it is to be expected that the occult will try to earn a hearing by counterfeiting its more respectable counterparts (2 Cor. 11:13-15). Fortune telling practices such as astrology, palm reading, and crystal gazing are a counterfeit of God's omniscience. Magickal practices such as spell casting, incantations, and the use of charms are a counterfeit of God's omnipotence.² Communication with spirits is a counterfeit of a prayerful relationship with God. The witches coven—a counterfeit of the church. Eastern meditation—a counterfeit of Christian meditation. Most every Christian belief or practice has a corrupted counterpart in the occult. As such, both have similar appeal playing to the same universal human needs such as the need for love, meaning and purpose, interpersonal fellowship, peace, fellowship with God, security, and hope. The occult, like any false religious system, is a parasite of the truth. While opposed to the truth, it depends on truth for its own existence. It represents shortcut answers to real and pressing questions that every human needs answered. And it is because these counterfeits are so deceptively close to the original that they are so dangerously alluring.

Magickal Prayer

There is little need to comment on the fact that Christians can and should pray.³ Prayer is a normative practice of the Christian faith. Occultists and Christians agree that prayer can be an effective means of healing, blessing, and affecting change in the world. A core difference however is that Christians believe the real power of prayer lies in the object of prayer, God. It is an occult deviation to believe that the power is in the person praying or in the prayer itself. Christian prayer views man as the lesser vessel calling upon the omnipotent person of God. God is the real source of power.⁴ This act of prayer is first of all a relational activity. Neither the words, nor the person praying can coerce or manipulate God into acting. God is wholly independent with no one lording over Him. In contrast, observe how Dorothy Bomar and Robert Bradley, in their book *Psychic Phenomena*, speak of the power of prayer; "I personally feel that sincere prayer directed toward healing the afflicted can be effective in three ways: first by direct psychokinetic power; second indirectly by telepathy, and third, directly via intercession of the Supreme Being."⁵ Only the last route even comes close to Christian thought. The previous two, psychokinesis (direct mental interaction with objects) and telepathy (awareness of a person's

thoughts without sensory aid), put the locus of strength on secret realms of human and natural power. Occult views on prayer tend to lump it in with mental manipulation, psychic energies, and visualization techniques. Prayer, in that sense, is little more than spell casting or mental magick.⁶ It is not the right words that bring a desired answer but a right relationship with God wherein we seek what He wants. Matthew 7:21, for example shows how crying "Lord, Lord" does not obligate God to man. God makes prayer effective, not the words nor the person praying them.

Occult prayer may also error in the form of idolatry. Some occult streams implore the practitioner to call upon spirits such as angels, ancestors, gods, or other forces. But if anyone besides the one Yahweh God is the object of prayer then that prayer is idolatrous (Ex. 20:3). Prayer is a form of worship, and Scripture shows that when people attempt to worship angels or men they are to be denied because God alone should be the object of worship (Acts 10:26; Rev. 19:10; 22:8). Of all 150 Psalms, not one includes a prayer to anyone other than God. When Jesus Himself is asked about how people should pray he begins His model prayer addressing God, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name." (Matt. 6:9). In Philippians 4:6 Paul instructs, "in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests *be made known to God*." Scripture nowhere demonstrates nor condones prayer as being addressed to anyone but God. Neither angels nor demons, self nor Satan, dead saints nor dead scoundrels, none of these are to receive or even relay our prayers. Christ Jesus, being glorified man and God, is the lone intercessor between man and God (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 7:25; 10:19-21).⁷

So far, what has been described is a difference between Christian prayer and non-Christian prayer. And while any idolatrous prayer is a step away from Christianity, what would make such errant prayer specifically occult is its combination with the pursuit of "hidden knowledge" or the use of "secret power." All attempts at contacting deceased spirits, angels or demons are occult in orientation. Likewise any attempt to cause change in supernatural⁸ ways apart from God's will and power is occult magick. In summary, occult prayer errs in its locus of power, its non-relational orientation, its presumptions about man, its denigration of God, and in its objects.

Meditation: Strong Minded or Weak Willed?

Like prayer, meditation is a Biblical concept and is a normal Christian practice. It should be a regular spiritual discipline for Christians (Josh. 1:8; Psalm 4:4). Scripture portrays meditation as being a filling of the mind with Godly contemplation such as Scripture, a Godly principle, or thoughts about God Himself (Ps. 1:1; 19:14; 63:6). With the strong influence of eastern thought on contemporary culture, the occult has accordingly incorporated forms of meditation that are Buddhist and Hindu in nature. Occult meditation then refers primarily to eastern forms of meditation where people empty their minds, center themselves, and concentrate their energies. This meditation can be for the purposes of peace and relaxation, religious rites, or as preparation towards other occult practices like séances and spell casting. The idea of emptying your mind may sound permissible, but as Christians a crucial distinction exists between that and the Biblical teaching on peacefulness and trust (See Matt. 6:25-34). Ultimate peace is not found in an empty mind, or in a "centered state of consciousness" but in trusting and obeying God (Isa. 26:3; Phil. 4:6-7). Furthermore, to leave our minds unguarded is spiritual suicide.⁹ Perhaps the most dangerous lie of occultism is the idea that after you open its door you will be able to shut it. To leave one's mind empty and open is an invitation to sinfulness, oppression, and demonic possession (the last applying only to non-Christians).¹⁰ Examples of occult corruptions of

meditation include Yoga, contemplative prayer, visualization, and centering techniques.

Occult Bible Study

Another normative practice for Christians is Bible study. This too has its occult deviations. Bible study should be a sensible practice of observation, interpretation, and application within a literal historical-grammatical method of interpretation.¹¹ The text speaks as plainly as the morning newspaper, though the Bible's message is inspired and inerrant. A little consideration for historical, textual, and cultural context usually provides enough equipment to access the meaning of the text. And just as common communication admits the use of symbols, figures of speech, round numbers, and exaggerations, so Scripture is written in the common language of the people and should be allowed the same leeway (Koine Greek–NT; Hebrew and Aramaic–OT). Symbolism and allegory should not however be allowed to run rampant overpowering what would otherwise be objectively discernable literal meanings. It is a huge concession to occultism to assume that God intends to speak through hidden messages encoded in Scripture (*The Bible Code*) or that beneath its literal objective meaning lies a "deeper spiritual meaning." Scripture is rich enough in its literal meanings and applications to occupy mankind indefinitely. However people can still slip into occult interpretation through several paths.

1) Silence. Scripture does not speak directly on many issues, and those who are determined to find a word from God on such issues may understand that silence to be grounds for occult interpretation.

2) Difficult teachings. Scripture presents numerous hard teachings which conflict with individual conscience, cultural norms, and family expectations. When we prize these positions over the message of Scripture we may cede to a mystical interpretation to make Scripture fit to our purposes.

3) Bad theology. Some believe that God does not reveal himself in propositional language, therefore a subjective experience is needed for Scripture to become the word of God (Karl Barth, Neo-orthodoxy). Such mysticism is a major step towards occultism. Others think that God is elusive, not wanting to be encountered or known. Therefore they read Scripture as if God were trying to keep His truths from ever being discovered. By looking under every rock for some key to knowledge they overlook the bedrock foundation that is Scripture. Still others study Scripture as functionalists, not looking to know God or learn from Him, but rather to extract and reconstruct self-centered principles from its words. They are not looking to submit to the truth and purposes of Scripture, they only want to use Scripture for their self-centered purposes. What usually results is a message that has nothing to do with that of Scripture and commits the sins mentioned in the introduction: depersonalizing God, deifying man, and magickal thinking.

4) Excitement. Still others are looking to be more entertained by Scripture. They see in its pages experiences, puzzles, magical formulas, and mysteries. The plain message of Scripture for all its force and beauty is seen as boring and stuffy, especially since we would expect the Word of God to be "exciting and grandiose." By viewing Scripture as ultimately enigmatic, they can scour the Biblical text for clues to answer an equation which Scripture in no way proposes. It is true that Biblical stories may involve an element of mystery (the mystery of Christ's Identity in the book of Mark) or proverbial enigmas (Proverbs 26:4-5). But such riddles are proposed by the text itself. To understand Scripture as boring is to misunderstand Scripture. Just as a baby may prefer to eat a diamond ring rather than wear it, so people out of spiritual immaturity may grossly misuse the Scripture as a puzzle box rather than rightly interpret it allowing its latent relevance and truth to shine with its full beauty.

I Must Be Dreaming

Scripture has numerous examples of God communicating with man through dreams and visions. Much debate exists today about whether dreams and visions from God even occur today. Laying that debate aside, we will assume for the sake of argument that dreams and visions still occur in the Biblical sense today.¹²

In the book of Ecclesiastes we can see that not all dreams are divine. Some are explainable through natural causes (Ecc. 5:3). For the Christian who cannot identify a divine cause for their dream, it may still be explainable in natural terms and be in agreement with Scripture. Scientifically speaking, dreams are a natural phenomenon, and visions, are usually explainable through natural means as well such as drugs, sleep deprivation, extreme stress, dehydration, exhaustion, abnormal psychology, or even simple imagination. But when a dream or a vision resists such explanation several key differences should be born in mind to distinguish a Biblical theology of revelation from occult dreams and visions.

First, man of himself cannot prophetically foretell or interpret dreams. The prophet Daniel himself would say to King Nebuchadnezzar about his dream, "As for the mystery . . . neither wise men, conjurers, magicians, [nor] diviners are able to declare [it] to the king" (Dan. 2:27).

Second, it is God who foretells and interprets dreams. Daniel adds, "However, there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days." (Dan. 2:28). Joseph would echo this truth when the Pharaoh called on him to interpret a dream, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer." (Gen. 41:16). If a person does foretell someone else's dream or correctly interpret that dream then: it is either explainable by natural causes such as guessing and psychoanalysis, they received their information from God, or they received their information from some other non-human source and it is of the occult. Therefore, whenever a dream or vision disagrees with the greater revelation of God's word it can be safely discarded as ungodly since God does not defy Himself (Num. 23:19; Mal. 3:6). And even if a dream is not obviously opposed to God's Word the burden of proof is on the dreamer since to claim "thus sayeth the Lord" is a weighty claim meriting weighty evidence and weighty judgment if falsified (Deut. 18:20-22; 1 Pet. 4:11; see also James 3:1).

Third, Christianity rejects the view common to the occult that dreams and visions come from a living and divine Nature seeking to express itself in supernatural ways. This idea flows out of the commonly occult belief in pantheism (IE: everything is God).¹³ Christianity claims that only Yahweh is God, and all of nature, man included, is created and separate from God (Gen. 1-2; Num. 23:19). Only when prophecies come from Yahweh God do they align with Christianity.

Fourth, Christian prophecy is distinguished from occult prophecy by its purposes. Prophecy is truly a miracle, and as Dr. Norman Geisler explains, miracles are always for the purpose of glorifying God (John 2:11), accrediting certain persons as God's spokesmen (Acts 2:22; Heb. 2:3-4), and three, providing evidence for belief in God (John 6:2,14; 20:30-31). Meanwhile, many supposed miracles, while appearing to be supernatural, fail these tests for Biblical consistency. Either they prove to be too petty, too random, or not glorifying to God.¹⁴

Fifth, Christianity reveres Scripture as wholly sufficient for faith and practice over and above any other potential means of revelation.¹⁵ It is adequate for equipping Christians; "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training

in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Among the spiritual armor listed in Ephesians 6 are salvation, truth, righteousness, readiness with the Gospel, faith, Scripture and even prayer. But, prophecy, dreams, and visions do not appear in the list. Even though the warfare for which this soldier is being fitted is indeed a spiritual warfare, all the armaments mentioned are conventional and otherwise ordinary instruments.

Preoccupations with prophecy tend to survive only by starving people of the plain message of Scripture. As such, it is spiritually dangerous if not deadly to pursue prophetic knowledge apart from what has already been revealed in Scripture. This point I know is a contentious one, but it must be said despite the popularity and prevalence of "prophetic ministries" among many of our contemporary churches. Much of contemporary prophecy is but a mystical replica of what is already known more plainly and more reliably in Scripture. Is there any real question that there will continue to be trouble in the Middle East, that much blood will be shed in religious conflicts leading up to the Last Day, or that America (or the Catholic Church, the Protestant church, the European Union, or any influential force) will face a great judgment for her share of wickedness, or that any given person will have a death in the family? No form of mysticism is needed to arrive at these safe conclusions. Furthermore much of contemporary prophecy, within the Christian church, has failed proving itself to be an unreliable and often a dry well.¹⁶ But even when prophecies are not so deceptive, they can prove equally dangerous by being distracting. And here is the occult tie-in. Fascination with new prophecy is indistinguishable from the seductive appeal of hidden occult knowledge. Remember that "occult" refers to either hidden powers or hidden knowledge or both.

Those fascinated with new prophecy tend to find themselves scowring their normal dream life for "hidden messages." They may also make special note of glancing daydreams, mirages or illusions. And they may be quick to draw connections between otherwise unrelated events calling them "signs."¹⁷ Such habits are simply magickal thinking and are fostered by a discontentment with revealed Scripture.

Miracles or Magick?

The last topic brings us to the issue of miracles. Miracles are a reality throughout Biblical history though they are concentrated around a few points in Biblical history: creation (the biggest miracle of all), the Exodus, the ministries of Elijah and Elisha, and the ministry of Jesus together with the early apostolic ministry. And granting God's sovereignty and omnipotence, the Christian must admit the possibility for miracles today whether or not one agrees that miracles do indeed happen today. But while some parallels do exist between miracles and magick, considered fairly, they are vastly different.

According to Scripture, miracles operate by God's power with or without human agents.¹⁸ There is no "internal divine" power latent to humans which enables them to exercise magick powers. Second, there is no impersonal divine force in nature that can be manipulated in miraculous ways. It is true that God performed many miracles through people using complex rituals (Joshua and the fall of the Wall of Jericho) and through people using simpler unrelated actions (Moses striking the rock for water). And sometimes he does not even use people (creation). But miracles, like prophecy, come by God's prerogative not from human manipulation of natural forces or from a coercion of the divine. Where no instructions are given to the human agent in a miracle God is still the identifiable source of power with the human serving only as a conduit (1 Kings 17:17-24; Acts 3:6; 9:34, 40-42; 19:11-12). Third, the miracles are set within a

relational context where the human agents are agreeing with God's character and revelation. The depersonalization of the Divine common to occultism defies Biblical miracle theology. Fourth, God is ultimately glorified by this demonstration of His power. Miracles should not deify man, but glorify God. Fifth, in Scripture these miracles occur sporadically and only rarely with repetition such as with the feeding of the multitudes and the parting of waters. And sixth, the sole supernatural element is God, not some impersonal force conjured through a mechanical manipulation of nature's elements. In fact, occultism in many cases denies the possibility of miracles. Occultists often ascribe to pantheism wherein everything is a divine unity. Therefore nature is viewed as all-encompassing leaving no place for a supernatural realm. Since miracles are sourced in supernature, they cannot exist within pantheistic occult belief.

Having roughly identified a Biblical basis for miracles we can further clarify the differences between miracles and magic. The foremost distinction is that miracles affirm God. Just because something defies natural explanation does not mean it is of God. Such an event may be an anomaly explainable by random chance, slight of hand explainable upon deeper investigation, or it may be a confounding event revealing our ignorance of nature. Just because something is under the pretense of being "in God's name" does not mean it is of God (Matt. 7:21; Acts 19:13-17). And just because something which seems to be supernatural (or supernormal) affirms belief in the true faith does not mean it is of God. Magic shows (not *Magick*) happen all the time, but these should incite nothing more than entertainment. Sometimes a miracle can be faked so as to incite belief. Taking the wrong road to the right destination does not justify taking the wrong road. The ends do not justify the means, and such practices run the risk of making all of Christianity look like a hoax.

Second, magick is fundamentally fallacious. Magick may achieve desired results. And it may function according to the expectations of the practitioner. But magick is nonetheless false in its underpinnings. It is false in the sense of defying Him who is truth by appealing to power sources apart from and contrary to God. It is false in that it implies man is more powerful than he is. It is a classic lure of the occult to promise power and authority to the initiate only to discover that the forces wielded will later backfire and imprison the practitioner. It is false in that it is built upon a false understanding of reality including any combination of pantheism (God is all), panentheism (God is in all), and polytheism (many gods). The framework wherein Magick is justified is itself unjustified.¹⁹

Third, miracle claims can be found among mutually exclusive belief systems. If one defines miracles as anything that hints at special providence (an anonymous check in the mail when the rent is due), or hints at supernatural intervention (being cured from cancer) then this soft definition leaves open the possibility for mutual exclusion of conflicting claims to truth. The skeptic and philosopher David Hume builds one of his proofs against religion on this line of reasoning.²⁰ The answer to this dilemma however is to use a stricter definition of "miracle" and to weigh the different miracle claims against each other (see above: **I Must Be Dreaming**). While most every cult and world religion makes miracle claims, only Christianity stands the full gamut of scrutiny and testing. The Christian Bible, Creation, and the Resurrection of Christ for example provide an evidentialist schmortgasbord by which their respective truth claims can be tested.²¹

Fourth, while miracles do serve to confirm divine truth, God's use of miracles hardly affirms sensationalist fascination with new miracles. In the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus, God through Abraham declines to raise a man from the dead since it would prove no more useful in stirring faith than the prior testimony of the Scriptures (Luke 16:19-31). When tempted by

Satan in the wilderness Jesus did not use miraculous powers but Scripture to rebuke Satan (Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13). And Jesus in His ministry usually reserved his miracles of healing for the faithful rather than playing down to doubters who just want a magic show (Matt. 10:8-13; 9:22, 29; 13:58; 15:28; Luke 23:8-11). Jesus would even say, "an evil and adulterous generation asks for a sign" thus rebuking the Scribes and Pharisees who sought miraculous confirmations (Matt. 12:38-39; 16:4). God can do miracles, but He also knows our tendency to become captivated by miracles rather than the miracle-worker.

Fifth, Scripture indicates that there will be false miracles and persuasive deceptions (Matt. 24:24; 2 Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:13-14). It must be borne in mind that miracles are tangents. True or false, supernatural or supernormal, miracles are secondary to the plain truth of God's established revelation in Scripture. Paul would go as far as to say, "even if an angel from heaven should preach a Gospel other than what we preached, let him be eternally condemned." (Gal. 1:8). To have direct revelation from an angel would indeed be supernatural, but a supernatural context does not make a proposition true.²² Healings, prophesy, tongues, ecstatic utterances—none of these guarantee the truth of their accompanying message. Supernatural activity does not guarantee truth.

Sixth, whenever tools and instruments are used in Biblical miracles the greater context sets it apart from a magickal uses of tools. In the case of the Bronze Serpent in Numbers 21, Moses followed God's direct order in making the serpent. And implied in the scenario was repentance and faith in God's (temporally) salvific power. Indeed, when Israel would retain this serpent for idolatrous purposes they did so against God's will and to their own detriment (2 Kings 18:3). The same is true of Elijah's ceremony on Mount Carmel with the prophets of Baal (18:20-35). Just before God's majestic demonstration Elijah would pray saying, "O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that Thou, O LORD, are God" (1 Kings 18:36-37). Here again the elaborate ritual was ordered by God, and it is for His glory. Further miracles by Elijah and Elisha may appear at first to use tools in a magickal way. But upon closer inspection the use of tools is shown to be incidental so that God's power is the true source and God's glory the ultimate objective (2 Kings 2:14, 21; 4:27, 44 cf. 1 King 4:29-32).

Seventh, the only humans to wield miraculous powers in Scripture are Prophets (by office, such as Elijah and Elisha), Jesus with the Apostolic founders of the early church, and those possessed by the spirit of the antichrist (2 Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:13-14). The previous two categories are too exalting to fit contemporary miracle workers. The latter category, too debasing.

Eighth, the pursuit of miraculous powers is implicitly rejected in Scripture (Acts 8:9-24).

Ninth, while Scripture does portray parallel miracles even using replicated formulas, as stated already, Biblical miracles are more often sporadic and diversified.²³ There is hardly ground for the belief that miracles can be deliberately and consistently replicated through formulaic repetition. God's glory is the objective, not the manipulation of reality—hence diversity is fitting to demonstrate God's creativity and to keep the focus on God and not His manner.

Tenth, even when the occultist calls on the powers of a deity, their understanding of deity is entirely different from Christian theism. In one sense Occultism tends to depersonalize God as a result of pantheistic theology. God is not a Divine other but is rather a principle or force unifying all of reality into a single divine whole. Nature is therefore manipulated mechanically (since god is a force and not a person). The personal God and His glory are ignored. And man

gets the glory. But occultism may also err by appealing to a lesser god within a pantheon of gods (such as Hecate or the Horned God). This point is where the Christian and the occultist overlap the most because both often call out to wimpy little gods with little mind for the true depth and greatness of the one true God. Whenever Christians prays to God as if he were a cosmic vending machine, a divine Santa Clause, an insecure CEO, or an old man in the sky—they are praying to a false God.²⁴ Poor theology is idolatry and it sets us in partnership with the world of false religions, the occult included.

In summary, miracles and magick are worlds a part. The Christian obviously, should not participate in magick. To avoid such practice one should remember: 1) who is the source of power, 2) who is to be glorified in it, 3) how it should confirm God's previous revelation, 4) how the message of truth is the filter and judge over impressive displays, and 5) how tools and instruments are incidental. Otherwise we may end up trying to manipulate reality in magical ways seeking power apart from God and glorifying ourselves. But even when operating within a Biblical definition of miracles, one should still be wary of sensationalism and distraction lest the miracle itself steal God's glory.

Christian Superstition

Superstition can be defined as a magical belief which has outlived the religion or belief system in which it was originally situated.²⁵ But, the more common usage of the term is in reference to "petty" or "small scale" magical practices believed to bring good luck or ward off bad luck. Some superstitions include knocking on wood, throwing salt over your own shoulder, not opening an umbrella indoors, or wearing the same athletic socks for every game of the playoffs. All manners of "luck" fall somewhere under the category of superstition. For the Biblical Christian, there is no such thing as luck since God is sovereign over everything having determined all that is in time, space, and eternity (Acts 17:26-28; Rom. 11:36; Col. 1:16-17). Therefore all manners of superstition should be crushed beneath the weight of God's sovereignty.

However, superstition persists. Its appeal is the same as that of magick and all of occultism. The *Encyclopedia of Magic and Superstition* explains this point well saying, "whenever [one's] modern gods fail . . . when his faith wilts and he becomes afraid [then] superstition offers the comforting assurance that it is possible to influence one's fate for good and evil by will-power reinforced with ritual."²⁶ Christians slip into superstition when they pray rote repetitious prayers, without sincerity, thinking that the words alone can conjure protection or blessings. Sacraments such as communion, last rights, wedding ceremonies, and baptism can likewise be misused to try to force a blessing from God—as if God were obligated to respond to man at all, much less to insincere hearts. The use of icons can also fall under the category of superstition when it is believed that God is obliged to protect or bless people who have a religious tattoo, cross jewelry, statuary, religious art, religious artifact, WWJD bracelet, holy water, anointing oil, the *shema* written above their doorframe (Deut. 6:4-5), or any other ornamental change that does not trace back to a genuine relationship between man and God. Certain phrases are also exploited superstitiously such as "in Jesus' name," or "the blood of Christ" (pleading the blood). These words have no latent power. Even demons can profess verbally that Christ is Lord (James 2:19; Matt. 8:29; Mark 5:7; Luke 8:28). Man can do nothing to force God's hand. And even when man is most faithful, tragedies still may happen because God's purposes on earth are not simply to make man happy, healthy, or wealthy but to make him holy (Job; James 1:2-4).

The world is a scary place. Pain and death loom closely over every difficult intersection,

bad meal, slick road, dirty doorknob, stray spark, or natural disaster. Apart from God, man is justified in being terrified of the world. Superstition is like a thin security blanket for those who are missing their Papa. But the security is false, a hollow comfort. The only true source of security in this threatening world is to know that your soul is secure in the hands of the omnipotent God. Superstitions are tiny wedges between man and his only source of true hope and comfort. They are subtle doubts about God's power and they threaten to undermine man's fidelity to God since they appeal to forces apart from God. A strong and tested knowledge of God is like an impenetrable fortress while superstition is a baby's pacifier. The character of God makes all forms of superstition obsolete.

Entranced with the Spirit

Perhaps the blurriest line between occultism and Christianity is that of Pneumatology, theology of the Holy Spirit. Deliberate "possession" by the Spirit of God is at least similar to deliberate possession by any other spirit (IE: mediumship, demon possession). Biblical examples exist with men such as the Apostle Paul whose spiritual experiences upon hasty analysis seem to be altered states of consciousness and identical to occult trances (Acts 9:1-19; 2 Cor. 12:1-6). Occultism embraces hypnotism, altered states, trances, out-of-body experiences, and astral projection. All of these are dangerously close to some of the practices surrounding the doctrine of the "filling of the Spirit," which some refer to as a "second blessing" and still others as "baptism of the spirit."²⁷ To demonstrate this frightening parallel consider the following example in the evangelical book *Concise Dictionary of the Occult and New Age*. This book defines Altered States of consciousness as, "a changed condition of awareness in which the mind seeks to transcend the mundane material reality and enter into ethereal dimensions of time and space."²⁸ This definition, coming from evangelicals, should not express any bias *favoring* occultism, yet it defines this notably occult phenomenon in a way that equally suits many ardent evangelicals who seek to escape the mundane material reality and be caught up in a spiritual experience of God. Speaking in tongues, hysterical laughing, passing out, visions, mystical revelations, animal-like behavior, dancing fits, and all manners of erratic, spastic, and "wild" behavior can be found in occult circles and charismatic circles alike.²⁹ It is not enough to say that these features differ widely so that in Christianity they are true while in the occult they are not. Such a demarcation does nothing to help people discern between true Christian practice and errant Christian practice. A person can be Christian yet unwittingly playing the part of an occultist. Therefore we need to dig deeper. Not everything called "of the Spirit" is Godly or even spiritual. Such a blurry line should be noted by Christians and trod carefully in this regard. Several points can be noted however to aid in discerning between these spiritual states.

First, much of what is called "filling of the Spirit" is explainable in natural terms such as self-hypnosis, trances, altered states, subliminal suggestion, and psychosomaticism (psychologically induced states). This point is controversial but, to be fair in our assessment, when a natural explanation is adequate, the spiritual explanation should be questioned that much more. Natural resistances in the mind can be lowered by the use of rote repetition, dim lighting, soft music, soothing speech, sleep deprivation, dehydration, starvation, exhaustion, long hours, and willful participation. When several of these factors are employed the mind is not at its peak to discern truth and ward off error. A person in that state is highly susceptible to suggestion. Such a person may respond to different kinds of suggestion including

- 1) Verbal—such as "Do you need to come to Christ?," "Do you want the Holy Ghost

tonight?"

- 2) Physical—Pressing on the forehead so that someone is "slain in the spirit," or touching a sore spot relieving the pain on contact (though not really healing the ailment).
- 3) Visual—Mimicking what is seen on the projector screen, or seen around you.
- 4) Auditory—mimicking noises heard around you (laughing, barking, wailing, etc).

Sadly, a medical hypnotist could boast over how many of our worship services are orchestrated to illicit congregational responses by way of hypnotic suggestion. A long drawn out altar call coupled with 52 rounds of the same chorus, dim lighting, the soft inviting tones of the preacher ("Come to Jesus, He's waiting for you"), and a congregation hungry for lunch—altogether these make for a powerfully suggestive combination. The occultist does not have to blush at this knowledge because in that worldview, the natural subsumes the supernatural. It's all divine anyway. If a person can induce a trance-like state at will, by "natural" means, all the better. Such people are adept and skilled for their craft. But, for the Christian, if these experiences can be fully explained through psychology then they are not of the Spirit. This understanding does not discredit all spiritual experiences set in those kinds of suggestive environments. Will power plays a large part so that a cautious and discerning person is less likely to be taken-in by an entrancing service. Nonetheless, Christian Churches should be aware of these psychological factors and take care not to betray the truth of the Gospel by manipulating their congregations. Nor should the Church slip into the habit of judging spirituality or spiritual success entirely by visible responses such as volume of singing, slayings in the spirit, clapping, claims of healing, outbursts, etc.

Second, even if it is granted that trances are mentioned approvingly in Scripture, they are rare and by no means normative for believers of any dispensation.³⁰ While experiences happen, emotions happen, and strange things can happen, Scriptural truth is the basis of the faith. All else, experiences included, are to be tested by it.

Third, experiences, such as altered states, are never to be the goal in our spiritual pursuits. Scripture has examples of men having little sleep or being hungry having concurrent spiritual experiences (1 Kings 19; Dan. 10; Matt. 4:1-11). But Scripture does not prescribe that people deprive themselves in those ways *so that* they may have an experience, altered state or otherwise. Rather these disciplines should be aimed at expressing repentance, achieving purification, or pleading to God. The effort in fasting or praying long hours is not to achieve a new level of consciousness, but to achieve a new level of holiness.

Fourth, experientialism, the appeal to experience as the sole criterion of truth, is dangerous and objectionable.³¹ Experience does not equal truth and it makes for a poor test of truth as well. A person can have a genuine experience of a lie (Mormonism's "burning in the bosom"). And a person can encounter the truth with a minimal experience to show for it. Experience is tangential to truth. And experiences can be quite deceptive, especially when they overpower our other means of discernment.

Fifth, new levels of consciousness are not suitable pursuits for the Christian. Scripture shows no support for self-hypnosis or deliberately induced trance states. But on a more narrow level, the Christian is not even to pursue God's will, or a second blessing, or an experience of God, or even holiness so much as they are to pursue Christ. This is a subtle but crucial distinction. The proper object of Christian pursuit is Christ, hence the concept of the "disciple" which means "follower." A Christian is, by definition, a disciple or "follower" of Christ (see Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 11:26). All other good goals should fall within the pursuit of Christ.

Everything worthwhile falls into place within that proper objective. Jesus would say in Matthew 6:33, "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you." (see also, Prov. 3:5-6). Some of the most slippery idols are the things of God, good things which become enemies of the best by stealing our focus away from God Himself. Of course it is permissible to speak of "pursuing holiness" or "seeking God's will" so long as it is understood that we are disciples of the person of Christ, not disciples of holiness or worshippers of God's will. When these secondary issues take main stage, the Christian risks worshipping a "holier self" or a more "Spirit-filled life" rather than worshipping God. We are to seek spiritual transformation and filling of the Spirit not as ends in themselves, so that we can boast in ourselves, but as a means to better follow after Christ as sanctified vessels for His glory and service.

Sixth, it bears repeating that, as with meditation, clearing the mind and leaving oneself open and volitionally pliable is spiritual suicide. Trance states usually include eastern meditation.

Seventh, the validity of certain "charismatic" phenomena should be questioned since they have no Biblical support either in precedent, principle, or teaching. Examples include animal noises, pew jumping, and uncontrollable laughter. While these are attributed to the Holy Spirit, the normative witness of the Holy Spirit throughout Scripture and church history defies such an explanation. These phenomena are easily faked and are more readily attributable to hypnotic suggestion. I am not saying that all such cases are fake, or that the Holy Spirit cannot manifest Himself in odd ways. But I am saying that indiscriminant acceptance of all things called "Spiritual" is an insult to Christian intellect and to the very wisdom we are supposed to have through the Spirit (John 14:17; 16:13).

In summary, the danger about the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is that if we do not adhere closely to Scripture in our theology and practice we risk misrepresenting the ministry of the Holy Spirit and in turn, excusing under its banner all different manners of experientialism, sensationalism, irrationalism, and ultimately occultism.

Conclusion

Hopefully you have seen in this survey that Occult beliefs and practices are sneaky and pervasive, not always draped in black cloaks and pentagrams. Occultism is not so much an organized religion distinct in all its ways from Christendom. Rather it is a low level of human spirituality to which we sink when we lack the patience and humility to press on for the genuine article in Christ. Occultism persists within us feeding on the same self-exaltation that spoiled Adam and Eve (Gen. 3). It sprouts from there like a weed on our Christian faith and bears wicked fruit by corrupting our practices. Fortunately, a heart loyal to Christ, a strong mind, a little humility and patience, a good grasp of Scripture, and maybe a little Christian accountability are sufficient tools to prevent the slide into occult Christianity.

ENDNOTES

1. Since the installment of Part 1 of this article I have come to realize that the phrase "Christian Occultism" may, on the surface, seem like a contradiction in terms. While that article did express how a Christian can have some beliefs consistent with an occult worldview, I did not there broach the question of whether a Christian can be an occultist in any formal sense. Clearly there is a marked conflict between Christianity and occultism so that one cannot be consistently both. Christianity is exclusive and permits no contradictory religious belief be it from a cult, world religion, philosophy, or the occult (Acts 4:12; John 14:6). However, the reverse of that scenario, that an occultist can be Christian, would be openly espoused within many occult circles such as in New Age Philosophies, the Mind Sciences, and most any group whose theology is sampled primarily from the pluralistic stream of Eastern philosophy. The occultist coming from a pluralistic worldview may say that "all religions are valid." And since his occultism takes precedence, he may see no conflict between being in the occult and claiming Christianity. Whatever exclusivity Christianity holds will be reinterpreted through a pluralistic filter, and he will thus make room to claim both (albeit inconsistent with respect to Christianity). However the key question here is not whether an occultist can claim Christianity, but whether a true Christian can knowingly and deliberately be an occultist. To answer this question, permit me one analogy. Can a living person be dead? A living person may die, and a dead person can, theoretically, be resurrected. But a person cannot be both alive and dead in the same sense at the same time. A live person can however act as if they were dead. Likewise a Christian cannot be anything but Christian, for as soon as they are adopted into God's family through faith in Christ (Eph. 1:9; 2:8), they are a new creation in Christ, the old has gone and the new has come (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15). The former slavery to sin is no longer binding (John 8:34-36). But just as a freed slave may still be in the habit of acting like a slave so a person freed from occultism by their faith in Christ may still act like an occultist. Occultism no longer defines them, but they do struggle with occult practice. By this understanding it is necessary to distinguish between being an occultist and practicing occultism. As I believe man is more than what man does, I likewise believe that when a Christian practices occultism that is not enough to make them an occultist. Those practices may have been enough, before salvation, to define that person as an occultist. The occultism lays claim to the spiritual void in his heart and life so that, by default, he can rightfully be called an occultist. But after salvation, their essence is defined by relationship with Christ, their soul is claimed and nothing else can lay claim to that soul (John 10:28-29). With this understanding, a Christian cannot be an occultist though they may play the part (cf. Rom. 7:14-25). Admittedly, this qualified speech of "an occultist" versus "a Christian who practices occultism" may be impractical and pedantic at times, the basic idea is nonetheless indispensable as it addresses the whole issue of sanctification and relates to any category of human sinfulness be it homosexuality (Can a Christian be gay?), lying, greed, gluttony, murder, or any other pet sin we may harbor.

2. I owe this observation on occult counterfeits to Dr. Richard Howe formerly of Southern Evangelical Seminary and currently a writer for Christian Research Institute.

3. Scripture is clear on the importance of the practice of prayer. See, Matt. 6:5-13; Luke 18:1-14; 1 Thess. 5:17; 1 Tim. 2:8; James 5:13-18.

4. Ecclesiastes 5:1-2 illustrates how man should approach God, "Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong. Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few." Clearly man is the lesser vessel and God the greater. Man's prayers do not conjure internal human powers. Instead, man is unworthily calling upon God's in His abundance.

5. Dorothy Bomar and Robert A. Bradley, *Psychic Phenomena*. 4th printing. (New York: Paperback, 1972), 147.

6. The proper term for this kind of mental magick is "hermetic magick" wherein the belief is that one can manipulate one's world through concentration and directing mental energies. Amber K. *True Magick: A Beginner's Guide* [9th printing] (St. Paul, MN: Lewellyn Publications, 1999), 230.

7. Some may argue that an angel serves a mediating position in Revelation 8:3-5 relaying prayers to God. However, this event is made possible only because of the intercessory role of the Lamb of God (Jesus Christ) in Revelation 5:1-10. Second, there is no indication that that angel was ever addressed in any of those prayers. Third, just because an angel served a utilitarian role in relaying these prayers does not mean he serves in the relational mediation of prayers. In other words, the angel may serve only as tool used by the real middle man. Fourth, this scene in Revelation, while communicating a literal event, is communicating it in such colorful and, at points, metaphorical narrative that it is difficult if not impossible to squeeze a reliable theology of non-divine mediation from these few verses. Narrative, being descriptive, should be seen as the application of Biblical truth rather than as a simple and direct prescription. This fact is further complicated by the question of how literal these colorful images are to be understood as they apply to actual eschatological events (last days). One can hardly say, from this single passage, that man is to pray either to non-divine characters or that non-divine characters serve in a truly mediatorial role. And lastly, how God chooses to deal with prayers He has received is his prerogative not ours, especially when our directive in prayer is to aim it directly at God (Matt. 6:9).

8. The term "supernormal" is used here instead of "supernatural" to refer to activity that is "beyond normal." Many occultists object to the term "supernatural" since it implies a distinction from nature contrary to the generally held view in occultism that god is all there is, with no ultimate distinction in "himself." Nature encompasses all there is so supernature is defined out of existence.

9. Here we find a teaching application of Matthew 12:43-45 where Jesus was illustrating the dangers of Pharisaic laws about purity. Jesus gives the story of a man who cleaned out his house after being exorcised of a demon. Yet because he did not fill or guard the house, his house cleaning was merely preparation for a bigger crowd of evil guests. Furthermore, Scripture instructs us to fill our minds with the things of God (Col. 3:2; Phil. 4:8-9) and to "always be prepared" (1 Pet. 3:15).

10. First, Scripture offers no examples of believers being demon possessed. Second, Scripture nowhere teaches explicitly that believers can be possessed. Third, the security of salvation suggests that God guards His own against any such ploy of Satan (John 10:28; Rom. 8:36-39). And fourth, Jesus says that "a house divided will fall" thus indicating that He does not cohabit in man along with demons (Matt. 12:25-29).

11. Sadly, church history abounds with Christian scholars espousing an allegorical method of interpretation. Origen is perhaps the most notorious of these. But such trusted Church fathers as Saint Augustine and Martin Luther are equally guilty of permitting an unanchored allegorical interpretation. While an allegorical method is not directly occult, it leaves no defense against occult deviation. Only a consistently and literally applied historical-grammatical interpretive method 1) allows for objective interpretation, 2) does justice to the text, and 3) provides a defense against occult corruptions such as mystical revelatory reading and metaphysical allegorism (IE: Charles Fillmore's *Metaphysical Bible Dictionary*). For more on the issue of objectivity see Thomas Howe, *Objectivity in Biblical Interpretation* (Altamonte Springs, FL: Advantage, 2005).

12. My personal opinion is that God can communicate however He so wants but that dreams and visions do not occur today in the sense of apostolic gifts because the role and status of the apostle has become obsolete and thus the need for apostolic gifts to confirm such status is a moot point. If any dream or vision were still to occur today, it may yet be an isolated dream or vision from God not indicating any particular spiritual gifting. But it is more likely explainable in terms of psychology or demonism. For more on this perspective as it relates to charismatic issues see John MacArthur Jr. *Charismatic Chaos* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992). While I do not agree with or approve of all that MacArthur says in that book, I do agree with him in this limited regard. My cessationist views, and my naming of certain charismatic gifts (apostolic gifting, speaking in tongues, prophecy, miraculous confirmations, etc) may seem stilted. But the effort is not at all to "bash" charismatics. The effort is rather to highlight and guard against certain trouble spots within the whole of Christendom where Charismatic, liberal, conservative, evangelical, Catholic, Presbyterian, or Baptist alike may find themselves slipping into occultism. If certain denominations have more potential hot spots, then they should be that much more Biblical and Godly to guard against the abuse and misuse of those practices. The iconism within Catholicism is a potential pitfall into occult superstition and magickal thinking. Presbyterian views on the baptism of infants can depersonalize the relationship of saving faith thus permitting one step toward the occult tendency to depersonalize God. At the same time it may border on idolatry with the introduction of a mediator other than Christ, namely, the faithful parents. Likewise Baptists may err in occult Bible Study, together with occult prayer and meditation. No denomination is exempt. The occult urge is a deeply human tendency that respects no denominational lines.

13. Such qualifications are necessary because not all occultists ascribe to pantheism. But pantheistic tones are prevalent in the tapestry of occult belief. Margot Adler in describing modern paganism would say, "there are some basic beliefs that most [pagans] share: The world is holy, Nature is Holy. The Body is Holy . . . You are Holy . . . Thou art God. Divinity is

imminent in all nature. It is as much within you as without." Margot Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon* (Beacon, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1986), ix. Kevin Logan agrees in his assessment saying that pantheism, which he terms "one-ism," is "the first step into witchcraft, Satanism and the Occult." *Satanism and the Occult* (Eastbourne, East Sussex (England): Kingsway Publications, 1994), 1994. And with the New Age movement, Marilyn Ferguson, David Spangler, and Shirley Maclaine all agree on this belief in pantheism. Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy* (Los Angeles: J.P. Tarcher, 1980), 100-101; David Spangler, *Revelation: The Birth of a New Age* (Findhorn, Scotland: Findhorn, 1978), 110, 121; Shirley Maclaine, *Out on a Limb* (New York: Bantam, 1983), 347.

14. Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 480-87). For an elaborated defense and explanation of miracles see Geisler's *Miracles and the Modern Mind* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992).

15. This point is bolstered when one holds to a secessionist view of the apostolic gifts wherein the prophetic practices of the Church such as those spoken of in 1 Cor. 13-14 are addressed to the church within the first century apostolic era and became moot after that point. But, even if one understands dreams and visions to be a valid means of revelation today, those revelations are to be tested across Scripture and should never take precedence over Scripture. Scripture in its prescriptions, its principles, and its precedents, provides the filter through which we should strain any and all other claimants to knowledge or wisdom. For a good statement of the nature and sufficiency of Scripture see *The Chicago Statement of Biblical Inerrancy*. Chicago: 1978. Quoted in: *Into Thy Word Ministries* [Website]. <http://www.christianity.com/partner/Article_Display_Page/0,,PTID34418|CHID137699|CIID1418130,00.html>(Pasadena, CA: Into Thy Word Ministries, 1998).

16. See the respective chapters on prophecy in John MacArthur's *Charismatic Chaos* and Hank Hanegraff's *Counterfeit Revival*. exp. and upd. (Nashville: Word, 2001), 85.

17. For example, Hank Hanegraff reports on one "prophet" who was given "by God" the verse Isaiah 11:11 which he would later discover to not be a directive toward Scripture but rather a future football record, 11 wins, 1 loss, and 1 tie, IE: 11-1-1. Hank Hanegraff 2001, 85. Such a revelation hardly carries the weight and import of Biblical prophecies which gave spiritual direction, were directed at achieving change in the present, and were notably glorifying to God.

18. Job 42:2; Gen. 1:1; Ex. 3-4; 1 Kings 17:1 cf 18:1; 17:17-24; Acts 17:25.

19. For a critique of pantheism, panentheism, and polytheism see their respective sections in Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*; Norman Geisler and William D. Watkins, *Worlds Apart: A Handbook on World Views* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989); and James Sire, *The Universe Next Door* (Downer's Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1988).

20. Geisler 1999, 461-62.

21. For defenses of the Bible see F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* 6th ed. (Grand Rapids, MI and Downer's Grove, IL: Eerdmans, and Intervarsity [Joint published], 1981); and Walter C. Kaiser, *The Old Testament Documents: Are They Reliable and*

Relevant? (Downer's Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2001). For defenses of Creationism see William Dembski and James M. Kusiner, eds., *Signs of Intelligence* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2001); John F. Ashton, *In Six Days* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2001); and Michael J. Behe, *Darwin's Black Box* (New York: The Free Press, 1996). For defenses of the Resurrection see Gary Habermas, *The Resurrection of Jesus: An Apologetic* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980) and *The Risen Jesus and the Future Hope* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowan & Littlefield, 2003); William Lane Craig, *Assessing the New Testament Evidence for the Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1989).

22. In the strictest sense angels and demons can be included in nature since they are created things. But for convenience sake they are here regarded as supernatural because they are immaterial spirit beings unproven by empirical observation.

23. Ex. 17:5-6; Num. 20:10; 2 Kings 2:8, 14; Matt. 14:13-21; 15:32-38

24. Some good books on Theology Proper to expand your view of God include Stephen Charnock, *The Attributes of God* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1958); Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology Vol. 2: God Creation*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003); Arthur W. Pink, *The Nature of God* (Chicago: Moody, 1999); J.B. Phillips, *Your God is Too Small* 8th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1968); A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1961).

25. *Encyclopedia of Magic and Superstition* (New York: Crescent Books, 1974), 23.

26. Ibid.

27. The phrase "Second blessing" does not appear in the New Testament. The other two do appear though they are theologically distinct. Baptism of the Spirit is the spiritual reality symbolized by water baptism and is not necessarily related to spiritual gifts such as the gift of tongues. It is common to all believers and can equally be called "salvation" or being "born again" (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16; 1 Cor. 12:13). The "filling of the Spirit" refers to a specific empowerment for proclamation but can also refer to the Holy Spirit's filling believers with His character (Luke 1:15, 41, 67; 4:1, 14; Acts 2:2, 14; 4:8, 31; 6:3, 5; 7:55, 6:10; 9:15-17; 11:24; 13:9, 48-53; Eph. 5:1-4; 18, 15-17). Only once are believers commanded to be filled by the Spirit, and this reference explains what it means by that phrase. It says, "Do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but *be filled with the Spirit*, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;" (Eph. 5:18-20, emphasis mine). The altered states typifying much belief and practice about these Biblical phrases do not suit their Biblical meanings. Barry Leventhal, *New Testament 1: The Gospels and Acts* [class notes] (Charlotte, NC: Southern Evangelical Seminary, 2002), 168-73.

28. Lardie, Liroy, and Ingram 2000, 17. The editors express their evangelical stance clearly in the preface and appendices (9-10; 294-301).

29. Richard Cavendish, ed. *Man, Myth and Magic: An Illustrated Encyclopedia of the*

Supernatural. Vol. 1 (New York: Marshall Cavendish Corp., 1970). 129-33.

30. It is questionable whether Scripture portrays any believers experiencing genuine trance states. Dreams, visions, induced sleep, prophetic oracles, and the filling of the Spirit are all distinct from trance states in their own respective ways. But the occult claims all of these phenomena too. And the consideration of these issues overlaps significantly in their relation to trance states. Therefore, for the sake of convenience, they will all be addressed in this paper under the broad (but limiting) category of trance/altered states.

31. Craig S. Hawkins, "The Epistemological Inadequacies of Experientialism as a Sufficient Basis for a Worldview" [Online] (Santa Ana, CA: Apologetics in Ministry, 2000), available at <<http://www.apologeticsinfo.org/papers/experientialism.html>> accessed May 12, 2005.