

# The Dangers of Occult Involvement

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Throughout our years of researching occult themes we have run into countless stories of people who became caught up in the “search for enlightenment,” only to find that their optimistic dreams turned into palpable nightmares. <sup>1</sup> Why? What kind of reality can transform the genuine sincerity of such people into the terrors they frequently experience?

What *kind* of psychic reality are such individuals tapping into? What manner of powers are they encountering? Is it merely human potential—the “divinity within” of the Eastern philosophy or the “latent psi” of the parapsychologist—somehow gone awry? Or is it something else? Why is it that so many people end up experiencing destructive powers, especially when they had the best of motives and initially encountered powerful and tremendously encouraging and loving experiences? How can something initially so “spiritual” and “blissful” and “beautiful” end up unmasked as something so evil—and so destructive?

In other words, why does the persistent optimism of those who promote the occult so often come crashing down on the individual level? Why the eventual destruction from *religious* practices, from seeking after God? Why do so many spiritistic odysseys lead to tragic deaths? Why are so many deceived by their own gurus or spirit guides, leading to such destruction that they despair of knowing whom to trust or what to believe? Why have millions of people suffered as a result of what they thought were *spiritual* activities?

The reason is as disarmingly simple as it is frequently rejected: There is indeed a world of evil spirits. Their goal is to deceive people and trap them by occult practices—practices that our culture now defines as spiritual and godly. But biblically speaking, these practices are not godly. In the Bible, God declares they are sinful and idolatrous (Deuteronomy 18:9-12). They are dangerous because they attract the demonic.

The question is often raised, “Why is psychic or occultic activity as harmful as it is?” There are at least three reasons.

1. *Occult activity rejects God’s will for man.* Occult practice is hazardous because it is a violation of the will of God, i.e., because God forbids it as an “abomination” to Him (e.g., Deuteronomy 18:9-12). Ignorance of God’s law does not cancel the logical consequences of violating such law, just as taking poison by mistake will still cause injury. In this regard, however, occult activity is not necessarily like other disobedience.

To one degree or another, occult activity involves aligning oneself with the spiritual enemies of God (Satan and his demons), with all that implies, including their goals for men. In other words, the *degree of* confrontation with God appears to be the issue. Occult activity opposes God in a direct and active manner, whether or not one is aware of it. The occult worldview is pervasively anti-Christian.

2. *Men are inherently ill-fitted for encounters with occult realities.* The occult is hazardous because mankind’s current status as spiritually, morally, and physically fallen does not properly equip him to deal safely with the realm of the supernatural. Ultimately, his knowledge of this world is minuscule, nor does he have the means to secure protection from whatever nasty things might exist there. It’s rather like playing tennis with your side of the court underwater. You can’t win regardless of how well you play the game.

The history of the occult reveals that entering the spirit world is equivalent to walking unprotected on a minefield without knowledge of the number or location of the mines. If no one in his right mind would enter such a place on earth, neither should he do so anywhere else. Thus, the inherent consequences of contacting the supernatural realm tend to increase the normal consequences of ignorance, naiveté, pride, or power-seeking. For example, naiveté in repairing your car is one thing and carries its own level of risk; but naiveté in the things of Satan and a supernatural world of evil spirits is more serious and carries more risk.

In this regard, perhaps occult activity may be compared to the AIDS virus—another modern problem men are ill-prepared to deal with. Unfortunately, the occult is in many ways the equivalent of a spiritual AIDS. In both cases:

- One is exposed to something deadly.
- Infection occurs through activity that is exciting and pleasurable and often initially full of promise.
- Infected persons can be symptomless for years, unaware of the death sentence they carry inwardly.
- The disease is spreading rapidly.
- Most people refuse to believe they can be infected.
- Human ignorance concerning the exact nature of the illness is vast.

3. *Occult practices introduce people to spiritual entities who seek their destruction.* Occult involvement does not merely involve consorting with the enemies of God, but also with one's own adversaries. Any enemy, of course, may feign friendship for ulterior motives, but sooner or later it will seek to injure or destroy. In this sense, the spiritual underworld operates in ways similar to the criminal underworld. Just as the latter will use its hirelings only for its personal plans or glory and dispose of them when convenient, the spiritual underworld operates in the same manner.

In summary, the occult is hazardous because it involves first, personally confronting God and opening oneself to demonic influence and/or God's judgment; second, functioning in a hostile and alien terrain containing its own kind of booby traps; and third, encountering the devil's hatred.

However, at what *point* a particular activity becomes dangerous (in such a manner that harmful personal consequences must follow) we cannot say, for it seems to depend on a number of factors. For one person, consequences may come sooner than for another. But for everyone who remains involved in the psychic world, there will be consequences.

While we cannot say that a single deliberate exposure to a given psychic practice or event is dangerous, neither can we say it is absolutely safe. Psychiatrist Dr. Stuart Checkley warns, "I have seen patients whose involvement with relatively minor forms of the occult has caused them to suffer mental illness."<sup>2</sup>

Brooks Alexander senior researcher for the Spiritual Counterfeits Project in Berkeley, California, observes:

Many people seem to have so-called "psychic" experiences without being emotionally or spiritually injured by them. At the same time it seems clear that the world of psychic pursuit and fascination is a demonic playground. How do we know the acceptable level of psychic involvement? We do not know. Each individual encounters the demonic danger at his own level of temptation—whatever that may be.

The fact is that no one knows how demonic beings operate in relation to psychic phenomena. Therefore it is impossible to say that “X” amount of psychic involvement will result in demonic contact. We do not know where the line is drawn between dabbling and demonism, or between curiosity and commitment, nor do we know how and when that line is crossed. It may be that the question of “how much” has less to do with it than we think. I would suggest that the neural and mental patterns set up by psychic involvement provide an *interface* with other forms of consciousness, which are extra-dimensional and demonic in nature. If that is the case, then psychic dabbling is a little like entering the cage of a man-eating tiger. You may or may not be eaten, depending in part on how hungry the tiger is. The significant point is that once you enter the cage, the initiative in the matter passes to the tiger.<sup>3</sup>

It should also be noted that the effects of occult activity are often not discernible (e.g., an imperceptible if increasing resistance to the gospel or the early imperceptible stages of psychological damage or even demonization). Non-Christians, of course, would not think the former was of any consequence, but it is of great concern if the gospel is true, for then one would be predisposed against the one true God with potentially eternal consequences.

Of course, if God chooses He may blunt the effects of sin and protect us from our ignorance or folly, or from the schemes and designs of the spiritual underworld. God’s grace and mercy must always be taken into account, but never taken for granted. The Scripture itself warns all men, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7). As Thomas Hale once warned, “We must not so much as taste of the Devil’s broth, lest at last he bring us to eat of his beef.”

**Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> We have given five of these stories in our *The Coming Darkness* (Harvest House Publishers, 1993), pp. 15-24.

<sup>2</sup> In Russ Parker, *Battling the Occult* (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Personal correspondence, Jan. 25, 1985.