

# What Psychic Counselors Say About Occult Practices

by John Ankerberg, John Weldon

With the casualties from occult practice mounting, a few organizations are beginning to take notice. The Freedom Counseling Center in Burlingame, California, began a nationwide hotline connecting willing therapists to assist people having difficulties brought on by their psychic experiences.<sup>1</sup> The Psychic Integration Institute of Navato, California, and the Institute of Noetic Sciences in Menlo Park, California, both make referrals.<sup>2</sup> The John F. Kennedy University, a leading U.S. parapsychology center offering accredited master's degrees in that discipline as well as a psychic training program, includes an emergency telephone service for people in need of help.<sup>3</sup> On a more expanded level, in 1980 Christina Grof established a worldwide "Spiritual Emergence Network" (SEN) of crisis intervention counseling for people having spiritual crises resulting from their psychic practices.<sup>4</sup> Involving over 1,100 counselors and 40 regional coordinators, its goal is to support those undergoing what SEN terms "spiritual emergence" and to validate crises experiences as higher forms of spirituality.

A number of books supporting SEN philosophy have now been produced to help people accept and reinterpret their occult emergencies as forms of "spiritual development" because allegedly "these states have tremendous evolutionary and healing potential."<sup>5</sup>

In other words, what frequently turns out descriptively to be the phenomenon of demonization and its accompanying physical/emotional manifestations<sup>6</sup> is now seen as forms of ultimately benevolent or divine "spiritual emergence." For example, Stan and Christina Grof categorize the varieties of "spiritual emergence" as including 1) the shamanic crisis, 2) kundalini arousal, 3) psychic opening, 4) past-life experiences, 5) channeling and other direct contact with spirits, 6) near-death experiences, 7) UFO close encounters, and 8) possession states.<sup>7</sup>

Consider the kinds of experiences we are talking about. Shaman initiation involves "attacks by demons who expose them [humans] to incredible tortures and ordeals."<sup>8</sup> Kundalini awakening produces powerful, controlling currents of energy, overwhelming emotions, violent shaking and spasms, and strange uncontrollable behaviors such as making animal sounds and movements.<sup>9</sup> UFO abductions comprise "unimaginable tortures."<sup>10</sup> States of possession include "serious psychopathology, such as antisocial or even criminal behavior, suicidal depression, murderous aggression or self-destructive behavior, promiscuous and deviant sexual impulses or excessive use of alcohol and drugs."<sup>11</sup>

We are asked to believe that all these crisis phenomena are supposedly potential manifestations of "spiritual emergence" which, handled properly, can lead to true spiritual wholeness and personal knowledge of God.

Unfortunately, this is a kind of Tantric/Zen approach to counseling which sees encounters

with the demonic as legitimate avenues to the experience of God.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately again, this kind of approach seems to dominate the field.

In *A Source Book for Helping People in Spiritual Emergency*, psychic counselor and New Age practitioner Dr. Emma Bragdon explains: "Spiritual emergency is a new diagnostic category which refers to profound disorientation and instability that sometimes accompanies intense spiritual experience. It appears as an acute psychotic episode lasting between minutes and weeks, and eventually having a positive transformative outcome."<sup>13</sup>

She also proceeds to describe the outcome as a "spiritual emergence" that involves classic occult phenomena, including astral travel, kundalini arousal, psychic healing, channeling and other direct spirit contact as well as monistic consciousness wherein a person "becomes God."<sup>14</sup>

In essence, people who are clearly demonized from a biblical standpoint and who even willingly describe themselves as possessed by spirits are the very ones described as encountering a benevolent "spiritual emergence." Demonization itself can thus become the means to spiritual growth since this, too, is a "gateway" phenomenon to "a profound spiritual experience."<sup>15</sup>

Regardless, those who function as counselors for psychic practitioners are well aware of the hazards that exist. Psychologist and psychic Eleanor Criswell observes the large range of problems that are encountered:

The experiences dealt with in a psychic counseling setting have an exceptionally broad range: Individuals have reported such problems as being psychically controlled by others from a distance, poltergeist activities, problems with psychic children, bi-location experiences, encounters with entities associated with automatic writing and Ouija boards, beginning mediumistic experiences, hyper-sensitivity, feeling witchlike, having a low level of self-esteem, feeling haunted, a feeling of being psychokinetic, visual illusions, "seeing too much, hearing too much," feeling possessed, caught up with so called past life impressions, etc.... Perhaps one of the most common psychic problems that we have encountered is the lack of validation received by individuals regarding their experiences.... Frequently such individuals have been hospitalized in mental institutions and have sometimes undergone electro-convulsive therapy and other somatic treatments in order to stop the psychic process.<sup>16</sup>

In the final analysis it is usually psychically oriented therapists who do the actual counseling. As such, they tend to encourage psychic involvement rather than repudiate it. For example, when counseling a person who is experiencing difficulties from automatic writing, the counselor may urge him to temporarily abandon the activity, but also to join a mediumistic "development circle" so that his/her "latent and natural" abilities may be more "responsibly" and "carefully" cultivated. The counselor imagines he has done the troubled individual a good turn.

The psychic counseling process usually follows a consistent pattern: there seems to be a movement from confusion and fear to understanding and increased self-acceptance.... Having come to terms with their psychic natures, clients sometimes decide to use their abilities directly by developing their mediumistic tendencies through further study or by using them indirectly in their main work, such as being a highly empathic psychotherapist.<sup>17</sup>

In "Emotional Reactions to Psychic Experiences," clinical psychologist Freda Morris provides another example. A woman who was harmed by her first exposure to psychic experiences came to Dr. Morris for counseling. Characteristically, the woman was suffering for attempting to escape these experiences. As those involved will testify, anyone can open the door to the psychic world, but closing it is another matter entirely. The spirits have a vested interest at stake. They can make a person's life a living hell unless that individual gives in to their agenda.<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless, Dr. Morris provided positive reinforcement through hypnotic sessions and encouraged her client to give a lecture on psychic phenomena to a large group of high school students. As a result a new convert emerged:

She began to read psychic literature avidly and was delighted that scientists would seriously consider these phenomena. She asked the author to help her gain more control of her trance states through the use of hypnosis. In the hypnotically induced trance state she was able to have psychic experiences without becoming overwhelmed as she had in the past. Within a few weeks she had secured a job as executive assistant for a psychical research society in Los Angeles and was enjoying herself immensely. She became happy and out-going and is doing an excellent job in the Society. [Thus] In the case of Patricia, severely maladaptive emotional turmoil followed efforts to suppress psychic experiences and a happy outcome followed development of an active interest in psychical research.<sup>19</sup>

In a similar vein, most other counselors, such as Stuart K. Harary of the Freedom Counseling Center, stress “that individuals suffering from anxiety or depression over their psychic experiences should be advised about the normalcy and universality of psychic experiences and urge that this message be repeated until the client has come to accept it.”<sup>20</sup>

The existence of these counseling attempts, if nothing else, indicates many people are asking for help—whether or not they are getting it. As the late D. Scott Rogo, author of almost 20 books on parapsychology and related topics, revealed in *Parapsychology Review*:

Probably everyone working in the field of parapsychology has had to counsel callers or visitors to their laboratories who so often complain about the psychic experiences they are having and are finding disturbing.... Such cases suggest that the parapsychological community should begin thinking about providing the general public with mental health services.<sup>21</sup>

But regrettably, the individual counseled by psychics or their sympathizers is only furthering his problem in the guise of “more responsible” psychic development. Typically, the person is unaware that to develop one’s “psychic ability” is to open oneself to spiritual forces of darkness,<sup>22</sup> rather than to contact divine realms or to develop an alleged “natural human psi.” (See Acts 16:16-19.)

As ex-witch/Satanist Doreen Irvine confesses:

I had known that power often enough, but I believed it was not a natural, but rather supernatural power working through me. I was not born with it. The power was not my own but Satan’s.<sup>23</sup>

While the psychic counselor believes he has displayed a superior knowledge of what is helpful or harmful in the psychic arena, he has really helped ensure further occult bondage and a hardening to genuine spiritual truth.

Compounding the problem, today even scholars and physicians are advocating that occultists themselves become adjuncts to the mental health profession. Roger Lauer, M.D., suggests that mediums can be useful in counseling sessions and that “psychic-psychiatric alliances may be quite useful.... Attempts should be made to develop and assess them.... Mental health personnel should... consider professional collaboration with psychics.”<sup>24</sup> But if we really begin to turn the mentally ill over to experienced occultists for counseling, we may only hazard a guess at the outcome.

And how far are we to take this? In an article entitled “Magical Therapy—An Anthropological Investigation of Contemporary Satanism,” the author suggests that for some people even *Satanism* might be of benefit as a form of personal and societal improvement.<sup>25</sup>

By the preceding examples, we can see that the psychic community is aware that dabbling in this area can be detrimental to people’s health. But one consequence of an increased aware-

ness of psychic casualties is an increased exposure to the psychic interpretation of the solution. Thus, Rogo observes, both mental health professionals and Christian clergy need to be re-educated to accept the “normalcy” of psychic development.

The most imperfect solution to this mental health crisis is, of course, massive public education. If the general public were made aware of the normality of psychic experiences, how they can be used for personal growth, and how common they seem to be, negative reactions to these manifestations (as outlined above) could be prophylactically alleviated.... One long-term plan would call for the massive dissemination of information about psychic phenomena to members of the “helping” professions.... We also need more education within the religious establishment. We should therefore be seeking to educate ministerial students as well as priests, ministers and rabbis, about the nature of psychic phenomena.<sup>26</sup>

This is precisely the kind of approach that should be **rejected** by anyone seeking to help the occultly oppressed.

### Notes:

- <sup>1</sup> “News,” *Parapsychology Review*, May-Jun. 1980, p. 11.
- <sup>2</sup> Eleanor Criswell and Laura Herzog, “Psychic Counseling,” *Psychic*, Jan.-Feb. 1977, p. 46; D. S. Rogo, “Mental Health Needs and the Psychic Community,” *Parapsychology Review*, Mar.-Apr. 1981, p. 23.
- <sup>3</sup> L. E. Bartlett, “Second Thoughts,” *Human Behavior*, Mar. 1978, p. 70.
- <sup>4</sup> Geneane Prevatt and Russ Park, “The Spiritual Emergence Network (SEN),” in Stanislav Grof and Christina Grof, eds., *Spiritual Emergency: When Personal Transformation Becomes a Crisis* (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, 1989), pp. 227-228; Emma Bragdon, *A Source Book for Helping People in Spiritual Emergency* (Los Altos, CA: Emma Bragdon, 1987), passim.
- <sup>5</sup> Stanislav Grof and Christina Grof, eds., “Spiritual Emergency: Understanding Evolutionary Crisis,” in Grof and Grof, *Spiritual Emergency*, p. 7.
- <sup>6</sup> Bragdon, *A Source Book*, pp. 7-11.
- <sup>7</sup> Grof and Grof, “Spiritual Emergency: Understanding Evolutionary Crisis,” in Grof and Grof, *Spiritual Emergency*, pp. 13-14.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.
- <sup>13</sup> Bragdon, *A Source Book*, p. 1.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7-11; Grof and Grof, “Spiritual Emergency: Understanding Evolutionary Crisis,” pp. 13-14.
- <sup>15</sup> Grof and Grof, “Spiritual Emergency: Understanding Evolutionary Crisis,” p. 25.
- <sup>16</sup> Criswell and Herzog, “Psychic Counseling,” p. 44.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 43, 45; A similar approach is endorsed by Freda Morris in “Emotional Reactions to Psychic Experiences,” *Psychic*, Nov.-Dec. 1970, pp. 27, 29.
- <sup>18</sup> Holger Kalweit, “When Insanity Is a Blessing: The Message of Shamanism,” in Grof and Grof, “Spiritual Emergency: Understanding Evolutionary Crisis,” pp. 81-93; Lee Senella, “Kundalini: Classical and Clinical,” in Grof and Grof, “Spiritual Emergency: Understanding Evolutionary Crisis,” pp. 106-115.
- <sup>19</sup> Freda Morris in “Emotional Reactions to Psychic Experiences,” *Psychic*, Nov.-Dec. 1970, p. 29.
- <sup>20</sup> In the words of D. Scott Rogo, “Mental Health Needs and the Psychic Community,” *Parapsychology Review*, Mar.-Apr. 1981, pp. 20-21.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.
- <sup>22</sup> John Weldon, Clifford Wilson, *Occult Shock and Psychic Forces* (Chattanooga, TN: Global, 1987), Chapters 18, 21-30.
- <sup>23</sup> Doreen Irvine, *Freed from Witchcraft* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1973), p. 96.
- <sup>24</sup> Roger Lauer, “A Medium for Mental Health,” in Irving I. Zaretsky and Mark P. Leone, *Religious Movements in Contemporary America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1975), pp. 353-354; cf. John Weldon and Zola Levitt, *Psychic Healing* (Dallas: Zola Levitt Ministries, 1991), pp. 20-22 (for further examples).
- <sup>25</sup> E. J. Moody in Zaretsky and Leone, *Religious Movements*, pp. 380-382.
- <sup>26</sup> Rogo, “Mental Health Needs,” p. 23.