

Spiritual Warfare: The Occult Has Demonic Influence

By Bishop Donald Montrose, D.D.

By the "occult," we are speaking of some supra-human or supernatural influence that is not from God. We commonly associate the occult with that which has demonic influence.

In the United States today the occult has become much more popular than it was twenty years ago. Today, there is popular Satanic music, Satanic street gangs, an increase in Satanic worship, a more widespread use of the horoscope and study of the signs of the zodiac, and Satanic games that can be purchased. In spite of this, many people do not take the occult seriously. They laugh off the notion of the Power of Evil as actually being a part of the "real" world in which we live.

I do believe that demonic influence is very real and that it constitutes a dangerous threat to our spiritual well-being. What is written here is, at best, a brief summary of a reality that I have no desire to spend much time exploring. My purpose is simply to give you enough knowledge to be able to at least suspect the presence of the occult so that you can avoid it completely.

In the letter to the Ephesians (1:3-10), St. Paul tells us that God chose us in Jesus Christ before the world began. We are called to be holy and without sin in his sight. God called us to be his children through Jesus Christ. In Jesus and through his Blood we have been saved and our sins forgiven. This is how generous God our Father has been with us. And He has given us the wisdom to understand this mystery, this plan He revealed to us in Christ.

We are Baptized and Confirmed Christians. In both of these sacraments we have renounced Satan, all his works, and the empty promises of the kingdom of darkness. In these Baptismal promises we profess our faith in Jesus Christ and in the Church. Now the kingdom of God is absolutely opposed to Satan's kingdom. Salvation in Jesus Christ presupposes our rejection of the kingdom of darkness. Our life, though, is a spiritual warfare. In the first letter of St. John (1 Jn. 5:18-20) he tells us two things. First of all, we who are born of God (by Baptism and the Holy Spirit) are protected by God so that the Evil One cannot touch us. But he also tells us that the whole world is under the Evil One.

The Evil One can tempt us, but he cannot touch us directly unless we open the door for him. We should not fear Satan nor should we be constantly looking for him in the ordinary happenings of our life.

Do not concentrate on the Evil Spirits, but fix your eyes and your faith upon Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are saved by Jesus Christ alone, through prayer, our adherence to the Word of God in the Bible, and through the sacraments, especially through the presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.

In our prayer we should not forget to involve Mary, the Mother of God, who has crushed the head of the ancient serpent (Gen. 3:15). Devotion to Mary is a powerful means of protection in our daily life.

What is the kingdom of Satan, the kingdom of darkness like? It is a lie that seeks to resemble the Kingdom of God. Read Isaiah (14:12-15). It is about Satan. The prophet tells us that in his heart Satan is determined to be like God.

Therefore, in Satan's kingdom he wants everything that is in the Kingdom of God. But his kingdom is a lie; it is false. In the kingdom of darkness, there is false worship and adoration; there is evil prayer. He offers us false happiness and peace. He holds out to us dark wisdom and knowledge. This is how he tempted Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:5). Satan said: "No, God knows well that the moment you eat it (the forbidden fruit) your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods who know what is good and what is bad." In his kingdom, Satan also offers us a health that is unto death, and a protection that is false. Just as we picture the angels of heaven singing and worshipping God, there is also a special music that is evil in the kingdom of darkness.

Satan's kingdom is a lie. He wants to be like God. But in the very first of the Ten Commandments, God told Moses: "I am the Lord your God. You shall not have strange gods that are proposed to us in the kingdom of darkness. " St. Paul tells us to be on our guard: "The Spirit says clearly that some men will abandon their faith in later times. They will obey lying spirits and follow the teaching of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1). Let us hold fast to our faith in the Lord Jesus and his Church. Our salvation is brought about by Jesus Christ alone, through prayer, by reading and studying the Word of God in the Bible, and through the presence of Jesus in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in our tabernacles.

When the Israelites were about to come into the promised land, the Lord God gave them many commandments that had to do with the true worship that He desired, and the false worship that He hated. These same commandments hold for us today.

"When you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to imitate the abominations of the people there. Let there not be found among you anyone who immolates his son or daughter in the fire, nor a fortune teller, soothsayer, charmer, diviner, or caster of spells, nor one who consults ghosts and spirits or seeks oracles from the dead. Anyone who does such things is an abomination to the Lord, and because of such abominations to the Lord, your God is driving these nations out of your way. You, however, must be altogether sincere toward the Lord, your God" (Deut. 18:9-13).

The Lord says that we must be sincere with Him. We cannot have it both ways. Jesus said: "He who is not with Me is against Me" (Matt. 21:30). We have to be firm in our resolution to follow the Lord alone.

Let us now consider some examples of forbidden knowledge and power.

When we talk about forbidden knowledge, we simply mean knowledge that is obtained outside of God's influence or the normal way that human beings obtain knowledge. None of us knows the future; from our knowledge of particular circumstances we can know what might possibly happen. This is one thing. But to seek knowledge of the future or intimate knowledge about another person, apart from God, and through the help of clairvoyance or spirits is what is meant by forbidden knowledge.

Forbidden power is a kind of magical power that produces effects apart from God and in a way that is beyond ordinary human means.

THE KINGDOM OF DARKNESS AND FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE

"Do not go to mediums or consult fortune tellers, for you will be defiled by them. I, the Lord, am your God" (Lev. 19:31). "Should anyone turn to mediums and fortune tellers and follow their wanton ways, I will turn against such a one and cut him off from his people" (Lev. 20:6).

ASTROLOGY, HOROSCOPES ARE PAGAN CUSTOMS

Fortune tellers try to predict the future through the use of occult, magic, or superstition. It is forbidden to seek knowledge of the future by using playing cards, tarot cards, the crystal ball, the study of the hand, the stars, examining the liver of dead animals, shooting arrows, the Ouija board, or any other superstitious means.

A medium is a person who has immediate or secret knowledge either by some questionable power of his own or through the power of an evil spirit that works through him. In I Samuel chapter 3, read how King Saul consulted a medium and died the next day. I Chronicles 10:13 says that Saul died because of this.

ASTROLOGY AND HOROSCOPES

Jeremiah 10:2--"Thus says the Lord: Learn not the customs of the pagans and have no fear of the signs of the heavens, though the pagans fear them." By studying the stars and planets an astrologer casts a horoscope on the basis of the month and the day of an individual's birth. The horoscope is a prediction of events likely to occur in a person's life based upon the movement of the stars and planets. Even though millions of people follow horoscopes with greater or lesser interest, this is still a type of fortune telling. Even if you say you do not believe in horoscopes,

and only read your own for fun, you should abandon this practice. The daily horoscope can easily influence us from time to time. It is a way in which we open ourselves to the occult.

If you want to live in the Kingdom of God, renounce horoscopes and all other means of fortune telling. Any playing cards, Ouija boards, or other things used for fortune telling should be destroyed.

THE KINGDOM OF DARKNESS AND FORBIDDEN POWER

Witchcraft or superstitious magic is used to produce effects that are beyond the power of man. These effects may be good or bad and are brought about by the use of magical words or gestures, or the use of magical herbs, powders, liquids or similar things. There is often a specific invocation of the devil. Physical evils are directed against individuals because of hatred or jealousy. We have all heard about sticking pins in dolls, the evil eye, the eating of cursed food or drinking a liquid, that through the power of darkness is to cause harm, sickness, or death. This is witchcraft. Today, witches can be found almost everywhere, and often they are presented in a positive light. Just remember everyone involved in false worship, seeking forbidden knowledge, or using forbidden power should be absolutely avoided.

There is also an increased interest in African witchcraft-- voodooism. The gods of voodooism are good and bad. Usually a voodoo service begins after sunset and ends in the early morning. It often includes a bloody sacrifice of a goat or chicken. There is prayer and singing. The gods are supposed to briefly enter into the persons during the ritual.

In voodooism and witchcraft, Catholic objects such as images of saints, crucifixes, candles, holy water and Catholic prayers are sometimes used, as well as other objects and prayers. Do not be fooled by the apparent religious nature of what happens.

If you have any objects or written prayers that have been used in witchcraft or given you by a witch, they should be completely destroyed.

If you have been involved in witchcraft you must renounce the devil, renounce the witchcraft in which you have been involved and all witchcraft, ask God's pardon, and confess your sin to a priest. In Confession (the Sacrament of Reconciliation) there is Divine Power needed to free one from the influence of evil.

CHARMS AND AMULETS

This is a form of magic in which the particular object is believed to have power to attract the good or to ward off evil. These are particularly bad when given to us by a fortune teller, spiritualist, "curandero" or some person involved with the occult. When the object is worn on the person or carried in the purse or placed in the home, it means that the influence of evil is always present there with us.

Examples are: carrying garlic in the purse in order to always have money, keeping an open pair of scissors for good luck, keeping special herbs in a jar, wearing a crescent around the neck or a necklace of garlic, putting alfalfa and flowers in front of a statue, placing figures of oriental or Indian gods in the house, and so on. Much of the modern jewelry worn about the neck is

now actually representative of something used in witchcraft. Usually people wear this jewelry innocently.

We must be careful not to use religious medals or statues in a superstitious way. No medal, no statue, nor religious article has any power or luck connected with it. A medal, statue or candle is only a sign of our prayer asking the saint to intercede with God for us. All worship is given to God and to Him alone.

All of the objects described above or any other objects used in a superstitious way should be effectively thrown away or destroyed. If we are wearing jewelry that corresponds to a zodiac sign, or if we wear something that is representative of witchcraft, we can open ourselves unwittingly to the kingdom of darkness. People wear religious medals because they seek the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary or the saints, and they desire the protection and the blessing of God. Wearing something that represents the occult, even in an innocent way, is symbolic of our being under the power of darkness. We should not hesitate to get rid of this type of jewelry. Either we want to be in the Kingdom of God or we don't.

Renounce Satan, renounce the use of charms and ask God's pardon. If you deliberately carved such an object to ward off evil or to attract good luck, it would be well to mention this when you go to Confession.

Place your faith, not in the kingdom of darkness, but only in Jesus Christ who cures, who saves, who protects and who loves us.

SPIRITUALISTS OR SPIRITUALISTIC CHURCHES

Spiritualism involves a communication with the dead or with the spirit world by some psychic or occult means.

Great care is to be used because many people are fooled. There can be the use of the Bible, holy water, statues of saints and Catholic hymns.

Spiritualists often believe in the Fatherhood of God, doing good to others, personal responsibility for what one does, reward for good deeds and punishment for evil deeds. Many are Christian or even Catholic and profess faith in Jesus.

But there is always a dangerous attempt to communicate with the dead or with spirits in some way. It can be through a seance, or perhaps the person just seems to go into a trance.

Sometimes spiritualists are involved in healing, witchcraft, fortune telling or even blessing homes to protect them. Sometimes they believe in reincarnation as well.

REINCARNATION (THEOSOPHY)

This is the belief that the soul, after death, passes into the body of another human being, an animal, a plant or even an object. Many oriental religions or cults believe this. In Hinduism the god Vishnu is believed to have several reincarnations as a fish, a dwarf, as the person of Rama, and as Krishna in the different ages of the world. This is contrary to the Bible and to all Christian belief in the afterlife. "It is appointed that men die once, and after death be judged" (Heb. 10:27).

Those involved with spiritualists must renounce Satan, renounce spiritualism, ask God's pardon, and confess their sin to a priest.

CURING SICKNESS THROUGH SUPERSTITION ("CURANDEROS" AND "SANTEROS")

It doesn't matter if there are statues, holy water, crucifixes, prayers to Jesus, Mary and the saints, if there is any superstitious practice it is evil. These are some examples:

--using charms or a tomato to wash one's body, putting the remainder under the bed,

--cleaning one's body with eggs or lemons and burning the materials with charcoal,

--using rose water and alcohol for healing. (In one case this was prepared by placing a skeleton in the water for six hours, followed by singing and praying over the water.)

Sometimes a "curandero" gives a special vitamin to take or even prescribes "Catholic" prayers to be said. None of these "prayers" should be said in these circumstances because they were prepared under the influence of evil.

Other examples include:

--taking a special bath prepared with wine, flowers, bread, cinnamon, black sugar, and water from a river.

--wrapping a person in a special bandage, cutting off piece by piece, and burying it in a recent grave in the cemetery.

These are just a few of the superstitions used, but there are many more.

Sometimes people pray to God and to the saints and then go off seeking relief through the kingdom of darkness. Many times God does not heal through prayer or doctors because He wants the soul to be healed first of hatred, jealousy, or some other sin. God knows what He is doing. We have to choose either the power of God or the power of evil. If you have any objects used in these false cures, destroy them. Renounce Satan, renounce this sin, ask God's forgiveness and confess your sin to a priest.

HYPNOTISM

Although hypnotism is now used sometimes by respectable doctors, dentists and therapists, it was linked in the past with the occult and with superstition.

Even when it is legitimate, there are certain real dangers that must be very carefully considered. In hypnotism, one surrenders for a time his own capacity to reason; there is a dependence of the one hypnotized on the will of the hypnotist; also there can be unfortunate aftereffects that result from this technique.

Except for a very serious reason, avoid submitting to a hypnotist; never do it for the purpose of entertainment.

MUSIC

In our day, hard rock music played by "satanic" musical groups presents additional problems. This music often glorifies Satan and also, at times, awakens desires to commit suicide, to use drugs, and to misuse sex. The music is also known to encourage physical violence. Even hell is proposed as

a desired end of life. The evil is found in the musical combination of words, rhythm and noise. Records or tapes of this kind should not be kept in the home but should be destroyed, even if they have cost a considerable amount of money. Choose the Kingdom of God!

DEVIL WORSHIP

It goes without saying that praying to the devil, worshipping Satan, reading the Satanic bible, or taking part in a Black Mass which mocks the crucifixion of Jesus and the Eucharist are among the most serious sins that one can commit.

In some Satanic worship, there is at times sacrifice to Satan by a horrible killing of animals, and even the murder of human infants. The secrecy surrounding this activity enables the "Church of Satan" to obtain a certain respectability in our society. It has the same legal standing as any other church.

Do not be deceived; being involved in this false church is a very serious matter. Catholics who wish to repent must resign from the false religion at whatever cost, renounce Satan and their sin in all their heart, and confess this sin in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT

Although virtually unknown a few years ago, this movement is gaining in popularity on an international level. On the surface it appears to be a "peace" movement, but in my estimation, it definitely belongs to the occult. This is

because it presents some basic characteristics that are identified with the occult, even though Satan is not mentioned.

For example, the "god" of the New Age is not the God of Christianity and Judaism. The New Age god is more like an impersonal energy or force of which the whole universe consists. This is a form of pantheism. For us God is Creator and Lord of all. We are his creatures. In the New Age, Jesus becomes one of the many spiritual masters who discovered his higher self. It is believed that in the New Age we can also be enlightened, and this through our own efforts not through revelation and the grace of God.

The New Age Movement is sometimes called a peace movement. Somehow, it is said, that when we become a part of this "Harmonic Convergence" we can bring to bear a mighty power that is beyond ourselves for achieving world peace. But when we talk about any power that is not from God, and beyond ourselves we are really talking about the occult.

Do not be deceived by the talk about ecology, the beauty of nature in the world, and the fundamental goodness of the apparent goals of this movement. Those who join the New Age Movement are entering a movement dealing with occult spiritual power. It is not a spiritual power that comes from God, but from the Kingdom of False Light and Darkness.

THE KINGDOM OF DARKNESS

This kingdom offers a false peace and happiness in sin. Man is capable, especially in heaven, but even here on earth, of experiencing a deep joy and a deep peace given by God. Many of us have experienced this. The false joy offered, for example, in the sin of drunkenness or drug abuse. This false joy

is also offered in the sins of sex before marriage, adultery after marriage, or homosexuality.

When people are deeply involved in these sins, or in murder, violent anger or in deep hatred, jealousy and unforgiveness, they are really living in the kingdom of darkness and can open themselves up to the possibility of direct attacks from the evil spirits.

The danger today is that sin has become very "respectable" in our society. Sex before marriage, adultery, heavy social drinking, abortion, and homosexuality have all attained a certain "respectability." They do not seem so bad. That is because they are not bad in the kingdom of darkness.

ELIMINATING THE KINGDOM OF DARKNESS

Our homes should be sacred, peaceful places in which to live. Our homes need to be clean. We should not let them become dirty or allow disorder by having junk and filth accumulate in our drawers and closets. The power of evil abhors cleanliness.

Remove anything in your home that has had something to do with witchcraft, a spiritualist, a curandero, a medium, an oriental religion or cult or that has been used in a superstitious way. Destroy it or see to it that it is destroyed. Do not keep jewelry that is symbolic of witchcraft or is a sign of the Zodiac. Remove and burn all pornographic pictures and magazines--even those that have been put away in a drawer, closet or trunk. Get rid of all religious literature that does not agree with the basic truth of our faith that Jesus Christ is divine. He is the Son of God, our only Savior who brings us to the Father. Remove and destroy literature from the Jehovah Witnesses,

Mormons, Christian Science, Unity, Science of Mind, Scientology, Hare Krishna, Yoga, Transcendental Meditation, Divine Light Mission, Unification Church of Sun Myung Moon, the Children of God and the Way International. None of this or similar literature should be around our homes. Do not allow the influence of evil to come into your home through television. Carefully monitor the programs that are seen. The values taught by television advertising are not the values preached by Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospel of St. Matthew, chapters 5, 6 and 7.

IN THE HOME--SEEKING GOD'S PRESENCE

Although you are not a priest, as a baptized Catholic you have a power that you do not realize. St. Paul, in his letter, told the Ephesians this truth (Eph. 1:19): "How very great is his power that works in us is the same as the mighty strength which He used when He raised Christ from death and seated Him at his right side in the heavenly world. " Think about that for awhile! The power of prayer is greater than we know.

Although we do not have the power of an ordained priest, we can ask God to protect and bless our homes. It is good for us to keep blessed water in our homes and use it frequently. If we wish to ask God's blessing on our own homes, we can say a simple prayer of blessing and then sprinkle holy water in each room. Such a prayer of blessing could be something like the following:

"Heavenly Father, we ask your blessing upon our home. In the name of your Son Jesus we ask to be delivered from sin and all evil influence. Protect us from sickness, accidents, theft and all domestic tragedies. We place our home under the Lordship of Jesus and consecrate ourselves to the

Immaculate Heart of Mary. May all who live here receive your blessing of peace and love."

An "Our Father" and "Hail Mary" could also be recited.

The consecration of the family and the home to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is another beautiful Catholic custom. We need to have a crucifix and pictures of the Sacred Heart and Our Blessed Lady in our homes. We want home to be a sacred place.

There needs to be a place in the home where the members of the family come together to pray. In some Mexican families the custom of having a little altar with pictures or statues, not only of Jesus, Mary and the saints, but also pictures of members of the family is observed. It reminds us to pray for them.

FREEING MY OWN SELF FROM THE POWER OF EVIL

Through his passion, death, and resurrection, Jesus has broken the power of the Evil One. When the influence of evil is perceived in one's own life, it most frequently comes about from personal sin. Family members suffer because of the sin of an individual member of the family. It is through the sacred power that the Lord has placed in his Church that the evil of sin is conquered.

Through medicine, psychology and other human means, suffering can often be alleviated. But Jesus in his Church, has given us basic helps that are often neglected.

In our day the Sacrament of Reconciliation has fallen into disuse. There exists a power in this sacrament to break the power of the Evil One and sin that is not possible otherwise.

Our faith in the Eucharist is weakened. In this sacrament is the power and presence of Jesus Himself. Persons who have actually needed exorcism from the power of the Evil One have been cured by sitting in church in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, an hour each day, for one or two months. These were very difficult cases.

Our Blessed Mother has been designated by God as the one who crushes the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:1s). The Rosary is a very powerful means of protection and salvation. Many sons and daughters have been saved from the power of sin and the loss of faith through the perseverance of their parents in saying the Holy Rosary.

THE "EVIL EYE" OR "HEX": A SPECIAL NOTE

Once in a while people are afraid because they believe that someone has looked upon them with an "evil eye," placed a "hex" upon them or has done something by means of witchcraft to bring them under the destructive power of the enemy. What about this problem?

My own personal beliefs are as follows: Jesus is Lord and God. He is Lord and therefore has dominion over both the Kingdom of Light and the Kingdom of Darkness. Satan has no dominion over the Kingdom of Light. He is allowed a limited dominion over the Kingdom of Darkness.

Therefore, if I am baptized and am living in the Kingdom of Light in the state of Sanctifying Grace, Satan has no dominion over me unless through fear I open the door to his influence. Sanctifying Grace means that I am sharing in a mysterious way in the life of God Himself and He is dwelling in my soul (Rom. 5:5; 2 Cor. 6:16; John 14:23). However, when I commit a mortal sin, a serious sin, then I lose Sanctifying Grace and begin to live in the Kingdom of Darkness. Even though I have been Baptized and possibly Confirmed, I become somewhat vulnerable. As I persist, unrepentant in serious sin, I become vulnerable to the influence of Satan.

When we are living in the Kingdom of Light, in the state of Sanctifying Grace, we should simply reject all fear, and place our confidence in God and in Our Lady, then live according to the advice previously given in this article as far as the Kingdom of Darkness is concerned.

Again, however, there is the difficulty of defining sin in our present age. We have to define sin according to the Gospel and the official teaching of our Church as it has been handed down by the Church's Magisterium and not define it by the viewpoint of the modern age which has been contaminated. Many people live in sin and have false peace, because their conscience has been formed, not by the Gospel, but by the spirit of this age. They may be leading very respectable lives, be law-abiding citizens, and in the estimation of people, leading good lives. But if they are not living according to the Ten Commandments, the Gospel, and the moral teaching of the Church, even in just one area that concerns serious sin, they are probably living in the Kingdom of Darkness.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Eucharist, (as well as all of the sacraments) are very special weapons that Jesus gave to his Church to overcome the Kingdom of Sin and Darkness. We need to use these sacraments as Christ meant them to be used and have no fear of the enemy. If one has a heavy problem in this regard, I suggest daily Mass and Communion.

CONCLUSION

There are many and varied ways in which sin and evil are presented to us in an attractive way. This article presents some ways that many of us rarely think about. I pray this article will be a source of knowledge and help for those who read it.

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