Compare 11 Groups with Biblical Christianity

Christianity, Cults & the Occult

- Clear summary of key beliefs
- Large fold-out chart
- Up-to-date research

- Christianity
- Freemasonry
- Kabbalah Centre
- Wicca
- Satanism
- Spiritualism
- Santería
- Voodoo
- Theosophy
- Rosicrucianism
- Astrology & Horoscopes
- and more...

Origins
Key Writings
Key Beliefs
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Recent Events & Headlines
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ROSE PUBLISHING

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Christianity, Cults & The Occult



This handy eBook:

- Can be read in 30 minutes or less, and compares the beliefs of 11 groups with biblical Christianity.
- Includes the origins, founder, writings, beliefs, practices and other information on each religion.
- Shows scriptural passages and warnings about the occult.
- Provides definitions of 26 important terms.

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Astrology and Horoscopes

Biblical Christianity

Origins

Jesus Christ. Founded about AD 30–33 in the Judean province of Palestine (Israel today) under the Roman Empire. Followers of Jesus Christ became known as Christians.

Key Writings

The Bible, written originally in Hebrew and Aramaic (Old Testament) and Greek (New Testament).

Key Beliefs

The one God is Triune (that is, one God in three Persons, not three gods): Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Often the title “God” designates the first Person, God the Father. God is a spiritual being without a physical body. He is personal and involved with people. He created the universe out of nothing. He is eternal, changeless, holy, loving, and perfect.

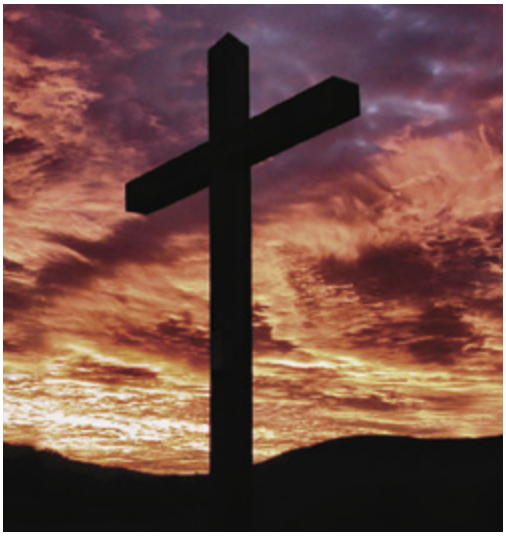
Jesus is God, the second Person of the Trinity. As God the Son, He has always existed and was never created. He is fully God and fully man (the two natures joined, not mixed). As the second Person of the Trinity, He is coequal with God the Father and the Holy Spirit. In becoming man, He was begotten through the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. Jesus is the only way to the Father, salvation, and eternal life. He died on a cross according to God’s plan, as full sacrifice and payment for our sins. He rose from the dead three days later, spiritually *and* physically immortal. During the next 40 days Jesus was seen by more than 500 eyewitnesses. His wounds were touched and He ate meals. He physically ascended to Heaven. Jesus will come again visibly and physically at the end of the world to establish God’s kingdom and judge the world.

The Holy Spirit is God, the third Person of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit is a person, not a force or energy field. He comforts, grieves, reproves, convicts, guides, teaches, and fills Christians. He is not the

Father, nor the Son, Jesus Christ. Salvation is by God's grace, not by an individual's good works. Salvation must be received by faith. People must believe in their hearts that Jesus died for their sins and physically rose again, which is the assurance of forgiveness and resurrection of the body. This is God's loving plan to forgive sinful people.

After death, believers go to be with Jesus. All people await the final Judgment. Both saved and lost people will be resurrected. Those who are saved live with Jesus in Heaven. Those who are lost suffer the torment of eternal separation from God (Hell). Jesus' bodily resurrection guarantees believers that they, too, will be resurrected and receive new immortal bodies.

Basic teachings are summed up in ancient, universal statements of Christian belief, especially the Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed, Athanasian Creed, and Definition of Chalcedon.



Key Practices

Include group worship, usually in churches. No secret rites. Baptism and Lord's Supper (communion). Active voluntary missionary efforts. Aid to those in need: the poor, widows, orphans, and downtrodden. Christians believe that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah promised to Israel in the Old Testament (Tanakh).

Jesus said His followers would be known by their love for one another.

Freemasonry

Origins

No one founder. Freemasonry is a secret society which claims descent from the stonemasons of medieval Europe or Solomon's Temple, but which actually started in London in 1717 as a "lodge" with initiations, symbols, and degrees. Masons pass the **Blue Lodge** first and may continue into **Scottish Rite** or **York Rite**. In the U.S.A., the Grand Lodge of each state is the highest authority. Estimated 3.2 million Masons worldwide; about 1.8 million in the U.S.A.



Key Writings

Ceremonies often use a Bible, but may use other "holy books" instead. Popular writings: *The Builders* by Joseph Fort Newton (1914); *Introduction to Freemasonry* by Carl Claudy (1931); *Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia* (1961); and *Mackey's Revised Masonic Encyclopedia* (1966). The Grand Lodge of each state publishes a Monitor of rituals to use (these are similar, but not identical).

Key Beliefs

Masonry claims to transmit secret teachings from ancient times. The "Masonic Edition" of the Bible says, "Masonry is descended from the

ancient mysteries." Masonry requires belief in a Supreme Being and treats all religions as though they believe in the same God, whom Masons call by such titles as "Great Architect of the Universe" and "Jah-Bul-On" (supposedly His "secret name").

When the Bible is quoted, references to Jesus are omitted; public prayers must not use Jesus' name. In several rituals Jesus is made equal to Zoroaster, Buddha, or Muhammad. Salvation to the "Grand Lodge above" is achieved by living an upright life, without explicit faith in Christ.

Loyalty binds Masons to one another, and Masons promise by oath of gory death never to reveal their secret rituals to outsiders (curses that are symbolic today). Masonic vows include protection to fellow Masons, even in cases of crime.

Occult Practices

Evangelical researchers John Ankerberg and John Weldon state that Masonry serves as an introduction to the occult because, among other reasons, "in symbolism and philosophy it is similar to many occult practices," and because it is "a system of mysticism which accepts the development of altered states of consciousness." Masonic recommended readings for advanced degrees include works by pagan/occult authors.

Watch for…

- Symbols, such as the **Masonic emblem of "G"** (said to represent God and Geometry) within a **compass** (representing spirituality) and **square** (representing morality).
- Controversies among Christians over whether Freemasonry is truly a religion and whether believers can, in good conscience, be Masons.
- Related institutions: American Masonry historically excluded blacks, so **Prince Hall Masonry** was developed for African-Americans. **Order of the Eastern Star** (for women); **Rainbow Girls** and **Job's Daughters** (for girls); and **DeMolay** (for boys) are "appendant orders." **Shriners** are a separate fraternity for Masons who have completed all the degrees in Scottish or York Rite Masonry.

- Elements derived from Masonry in **Rosicrucianism** and the **Mormon** temple endowment ritual.



Order of the Eastern Star

Rosicrucianism (AMORC)

Origins

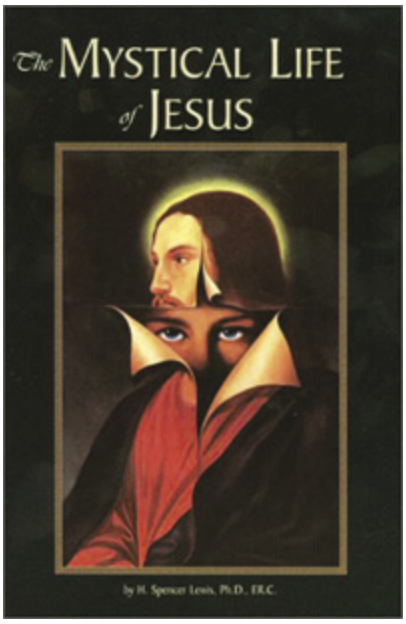
Said to be founded by **Christian Rosenkreuz** (“rosy cross”), a legendary occultist probably invented in 1614 by **Johann Valentin Andreae** (1586–1654). Europe spawned many Rosicrucian lodges. The largest is the **Ancient Mystical Order Rosae Crucis (AMORC)**—or simply Rosicrucian Order—founded in 1915 by **H. Spencer Lewis** (1883–1939). Headquartered in San Jose, California, AMORC has claimed hundreds of thousands of members in over 100 countries.



H. Spencer Lewis

Key Writings

Mastery of Life is an introductory booklet. Popular books by Lewis include *The Mystical Life of Jesus* (1929), *The Secret Doctrines of Jesus* (1937), and *Mansions of the Soul* (1930). *Rosicrucian Digest* is published quarterly; *Rosicrucian Forum* is for members only. Inner teachings are disclosed to initiates through secret “monographs” sent by mail, as well as by lectures, directed studies, and members-only gatherings.



Key Beliefs

To AMORC, the Bible is neither unique nor reliable. AMORC literature is openly hostile to Christianity and specifically rejects Christian teachings on God, Christ, salvation, and a host of other key doctrines. Supposedly anyone can use the cult's principles, regardless of church or religion. The advertised goal of life is "mastery of the self." The keys to one's spiritual transformation are buried in many places: Egyptian religions, Hinduism, kabbalah, gnosticism, and Gnostic Christianity. Students use mental techniques to actualize their focused thoughts of health, prosperity, peace, and happiness. Belief in karma, reincarnation, and a "Great White Brotherhood" of highly evolved spiritual masters.

Occultic Practices

AMORC offers a blend of necromancy, mysticism, and Egyptian religion with "development of such psychic powers as telepathy, telekinesis, radiesthesia, clairvoyance, clairaudience, and psychic projection." Occult rituals employ mirrors, incense, candles, herbs, and similar paraphernalia. The AMORC-related Traditional Martinist Order studies kabbalah and engages in ceremonies requiring a black mask.



Watch for…

- Similarities between Masonry and Rosicrucianism: Both run as lodges, initiate members who pass through “degrees,” vowing secrecy. Scottish Rite and French Rite Masonry have Rosicrucian degrees. Both present “ancient wisdom,” professing the unity of all religions by teaching syncretism. Masonry, Rosicrucianism, and Theosophy influenced one another.
- The tourist-oriented **Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum and Planetarium** in San Jose, California.
- Related groups, such as the **Traditional Martinist Order**; **Rosicrucian Fellowship** of Max Heindel (1865–1919); **Fraternitas Rosae Crucis** of P.B. Randolph (1825–1875); the **Lectorium Rosicrucianum** of Jan Leene, *aka* Jan Van Rijckenborgh (1896–1968); and the **Confraternity of the Rose Cross** of Gary L. Stewart.

Kabbalah Centre

Origins

In broad terms, Kabbalah (from the Hebrew, “to receive”) is a form of Jewish mysticism and extrabiblical revelation dating at least to 12th-century Europe. The group now known as **Kabbalah Centre International, Inc.** claims it was founded in 1922 by **Rav Yehuda Ashlag** (1885–1954) in Jerusalem. Others say it was founded in 1969 by Shraga Feivel Gruberger (1927?–), now known as **Philip S. Berg**, who is described as “the world’s foremost authority on the Kabbalah.” At least 60 locations around the world.

Key Writings

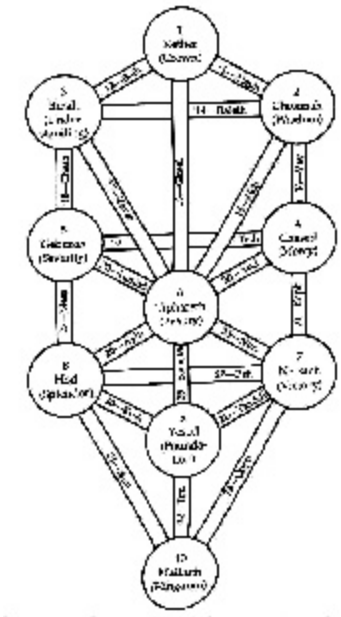
The group’s most important text is the *Zohar* (“Book of Splendor”), a 22-volume collection of Hebrew and Aramaic writings and commentaries on the Torah which first appeared in Spain in the 12th or 13th century. Also various books by Philip Berg and his son, Yehuda, including *Kabbalah for the Layman* (1977), *The Essential Zohar* (2002), and *The 72 Names of God: Technology for the Soul* (2003).

Key Beliefs

The Centre’s doctrines are radically different from those of orthodox Judaism or Christianity. The supreme being (called *Ein Sof*, “endlessness”) is unknowable, infinite, and cannot be named or described. God reveals himself through ten emanations or manifestations, called *sefirot*, which are illustrated with male and female aspects as ten points on the Tree of Life.

The 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet were somehow used to create the world. Humans have a spark of the Creator within. The universe operates on spiritual laws, and Kabbalah enables people to understand and live in harmony with these laws. Man repairs the universe and even God Himself by sharing and living right so that he can hold more of the Creator’s light.

He climbs the Tree of Life back to God, and so restores Eden. Ego is a barrier to being like God; we break down ego to become like God. Evil is not a moral issue, but an issue of violating universal principles. Followers believe in reincarnation. The Jewish Messiah is yet to come.



Tree of Life

Occultic Practices

The *Zohar* is an encrypted code possessing great mystical power. Meditating on the Hebrew alphabet creates a channel to God; simply scanning the Zohar with one's eyes is sufficient to receive supernatural energy, even if one cannot comprehend what it says. Use of talismans such as a red string bracelet (*bendel*) worn on the left wrist to protect the wearer against the negative spiritual influences of the "evil eye" (described as "a dangerous stream of energy that emanates from the eyes of another person"). Use of other items said to possess spiritual power, such as Kabbalah Water (with special healing properties), magical stones, scented candles, incense, and eye cream. Extensive use of astrology and meditation. Philip Berg is said to possess miraculous spiritual powers.



Title page of the Zohar, 1558

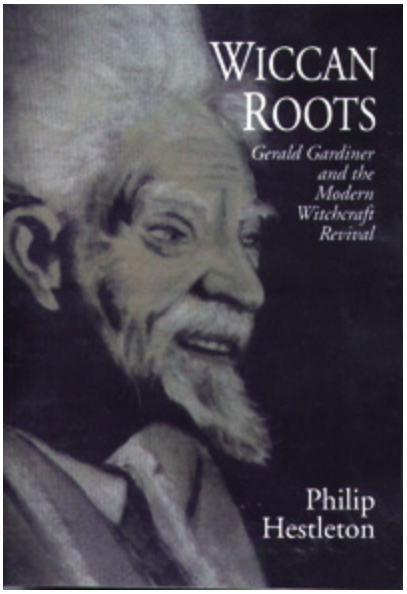
Watch for…

- Controversies over expensive merchandise, courses, and fundraising methods.
- Widespread opposition by mainstream Jewish leaders, who denounce the Centre as a deceptive cult.
- Famous followers are said to include entertainers Madonna, Demi Moore, Elizabeth Taylor, and Britney Spears.
- Related institutions include **Spirituality for Kids** (educational program) and **Oroz Research Centre** (develops products with supernatural powers).
- Red string bracelets.

Wicca

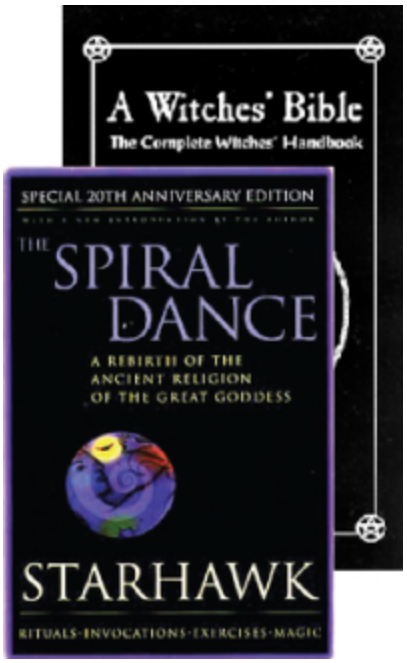
Origins

No one founder. Wicca has its roots in 19th-century Britain. It was partly inspired by **Margaret Murray** (1862–1963) and founded by **Gerald Gardner** (1884–1964) in 1939. Some Wiccans believe it to be the oldest religion. Wicca is a subset of Neopaganism, which a revival of ancient polytheism and reverence for the forces of nature. In both, nature is the model. Wicca sometimes focuses more on the Goddess and has different rituals from other pagan practices.



Key Writings

No holy books; however, many groups use *The Book of Shadows*, first compiled by Gardner and later expanded by him and by other leaders. Other popular works include *The Spiral Dance* by Starhawk (1979) and *A Witches' Bible* by Janet and Stewart Farrar (1996).



✦ Key Beliefs

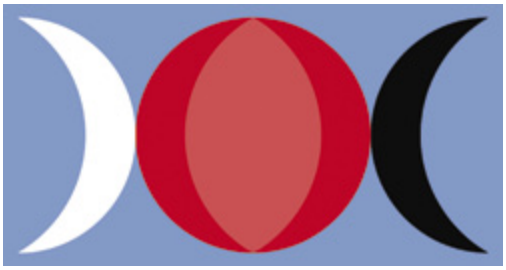
Wiccans can be pantheists, polytheists, or both. The supreme being is called the Goddess, sometimes the Goddess and God, or goddess and horned god ("Lord and Lady"). The Goddess can be a symbol, the impersonal force in everything, or a personal being. Jesus is either rejected altogether or sometimes considered a spiritual teacher who taught love and compassion. Wiccans do not believe that humanity is sinful or needs saving.

It is important for Wiccans to honor and work for the preservation of nature (which they equate with the Goddess). At death one's body replenishes the earth, which is the Goddess's wish. Wiccans generally state no specific belief about life after death, though some believe in reincarnation and others believe in going to a wonderful place called Summerland.

▲ Occultic Practices

Wiccans practice divination and spell-casting, with most rituals performed in a circle. Many Wiccans are part of a coven (local assembly), though many are "solitary." Covens meet for ritual and seasonal holidays, including the 8 major holidays (such as Vernal

Equinox, Summer Solstice, and Beltane). Wicca is an occultic "nature religion," not Satanism.



Watch for...

- Increasing popularity of books and products related to various kinds of witchcraft, paganism, and Goddess-worship. These include do-it-yourself spell-casting kits, candles, incense, lotions, and jewelry—often targeting young adult consumers.
- Wicca-themed web sites and chatrooms for adults and teenagers.
- Pop-culture versions of witches and witchcraft, as seen in mainstream films (like *Practical Magic* and *The Craft*), television programs (like *Charmed*, *Sabrina the Teenage Witch*, and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*), and fiction (such as *Teen Witch* and *Wild Girls: The Path of the Young Goddess*).
- Increasing acceptance of organized groups, such as pagan student unions on college and university campuses.
- Controversies over Wiccans serving as chaplains in prisons, hospitals, and the military.

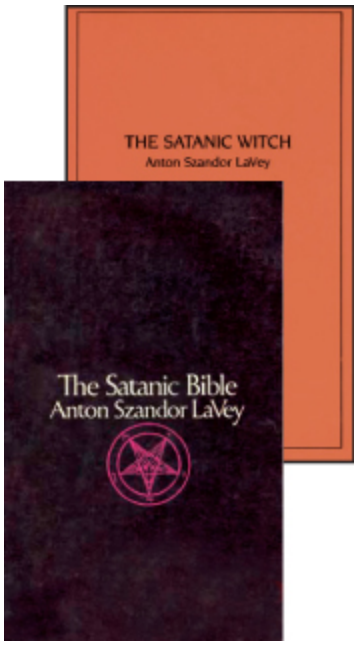
The Church of Satan/Satanism

Origins

First Church of Satan was founded by **Anton Szandor LaVey** (1930–1997) in San Francisco, California, in 1966. Many Satanic groups have modeled themselves on the Church of Satan.

Key Writings

The Satanic Bible (1969), *The Satanic Witch* (1971), and other works by LaVey.



Key Beliefs

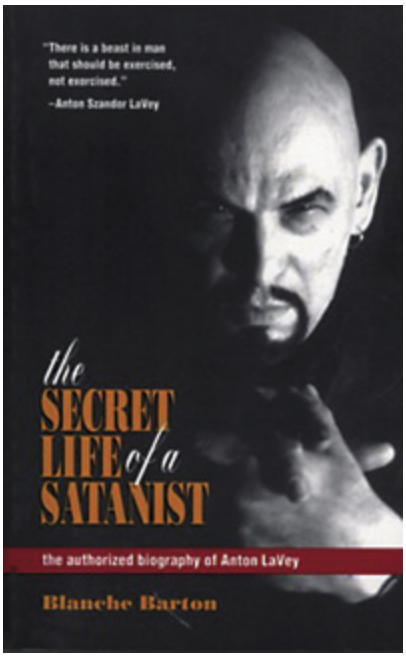
Satanism thoroughly and forcefully rejects biblical Christian doctrine and ethics and is man-centered in the extreme. God is viewed as an impersonal balancing force of nature; LaVey writes that those who believe in a literal God invented him as an externalized form of their own ego. Jesus is regarded as either mythical or a failure. While some Satanists believe that Satan is a real, personal being, those who follow LaVey's teachings usually do not. Instead, Satan

symbolizes man as his own god and opposition to all religions. Man is just another animal and should be free of moral codes. Belief in sin is designed to make men feel guilty so that they can be controlled by hypocritical religious systems. Though man should learn from his mistakes, there is no need for salvation. There is no life beyond death; life is to be lived now, vitally and pleasurably.

There are “Nine Satanic Statements,” or principles, some of which are: Man should indulge, not abstain; be kind only to the deserving; and take vengeance instead of turning the other cheek (“Do unto others as they do unto you”). Satanists look down on those who want to do good, calling them “white-lighters.”

Occultic Practices

Satanic magic is based primarily on desire, manipulation, imagery, and force of will done in ritual. For the Satanist, there is no such thing as “black or white magick”; there is only magic. LaVey wrote that “Satanic Ritual is a blend of Gnostic, Cabbalistic, Hermetic, and Masonic elements” employing “vibratory words of power.” Some Satanists perform a blasphemous ceremony known as the “black mass.” The most important holidays are the Satanist’s own birthday; April 30th (climax of spring equinox), and October 31st.



Watch for...

- Related groups, including the **Temple of Set**, founded in 1975 by **Michael Aquino**. Formal Satanist organizations have generally been short-lived. Many individuals are self-styled Satanists, improvising beliefs and rituals.
- Reports of satanist-inspired crime. Sensationalistic accounts of vast conspiracies of child-murdering Satanists have consistently been debunked.
- Popular films, novels, and rock bands have used Satanist-inspired imagery for shock value.
- Famous followers, said to include entertainers Jayne Mansfield, Sammy Davis Jr., and Marilyn Manson. Convicted multiple murderer Richard Ramirez (the “Night Stalker”) was reportedly a Satanist.



Spiritualism

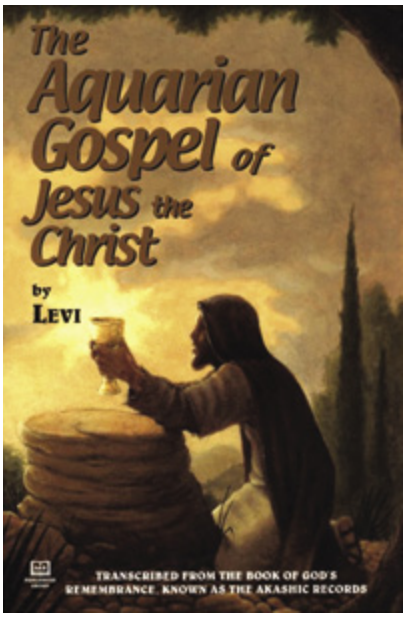
Origins

No one founder. This ancient belief was widely popularized in the United States in 1848 by sisters **Margaret Fox** (1838–1893) and **Kate Fox** (1841–1892) of Hydesville, New York.



Key Writings

Include *Spiritualist Manual* (1911); *Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ* by Levi H. Dowling (1908); *Oahspe* by John Ballou Newbrough (1882); and the Bible (selected portions).



✦ Key Beliefs

Despite their clear denial of central biblical teachings, many spiritualists believe themselves to be practicing an early, authentic form of Christianity. God is seen as an impersonal power controlling the universe. Jesus was a man, not God incarnate. While on earth, he was a prophet or an advanced medium (one believed to communicate with the spirit world). Jesus is now a spirit with whom one can communicate in the spirit world.

Some use the term “holy spirit” to refer to the spirit of a holy person who once lived. After life on this earthly plane, life continues in the spirit world, where one’s spirit may progress from one level to the next. Heaven and hell are considered states of mind. Some spiritualists believe in reincarnation and karma.

▲ Occultic Practices

Mediums conduct séances to contact the dead, assorted psychic demonstrations. Church services feature singing, music, sermons, spirit messages from the dead, and prophecies. Spiritualists may use Ouija™ boards, crystal balls, and other instruments of divination. Spiritualism often attracts grieving people who hope for contact with a deceased loved one.

Watch for...

- The **National Spiritualist Association of Churches**, representing over 100 churches; there are many other small groups, but no single central spiritualist organization.
- The symbol of the **sunflower**, regarded as “the emblem of spiritualism” (“As the sunflower turns its face to the light of the sun, so Spiritualism turns the face of humanity to the light of truth”).
- “Spiritism” as a system of beliefs codified by French author Hippolyte Léon Denizard Rivail (1804–1869), *aka* **Allan Kardec**. Kardecism has millions of followers in Latin America.
- Newspaper articles about spiritualist communities in Lily Dale, New York and Cassadaga, Florida.
- Famous followers, including Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–1930), creator of the Sherlock Holmes detective series.



Ouija™ board with planchette

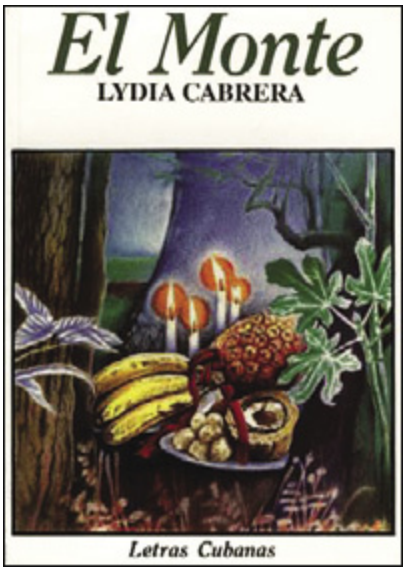
Santería

Origins

No one founder. Santería (from the Spanish, “way of the saints”)—also called *lucumí* and *Regla de Ocha*—comes primarily from the religion of the Yoruba people of southwestern Nigeria, who were brought to Cuba in the 16th–19th century as slaves. Santería was mainly brought to the U.S.A. by Cubans fleeing Fidel Castro’s regime.

Key Writings

None. Santería’s beliefs and practices are based primarily on oral traditions and vary from place to place. Some of the most authoritative written descriptions are Spanish-language works by Cuban author Lydia Cabrera, especially *El Monte* (1954).



Key Beliefs

Santería is an animistic religion but has many Roman Catholic followers. Santería acknowledges a remote creator god, called *Olofi* or *Olodumare*. Followers must placate a variety of capricious spirits, including dozens of lesser deities (*orishas*) and spirits of the dead

(including ancestors, slaves, Indians, and gypsies). Orishas are associated with forces of nature and with Roman Catholic saints (*santos*). The main orishas are known as the *Siete Potencias Africanas* (seven African powers), each having its own elaborate mythology. Jesus is considered to have been “a great sorcerer.” *Ashé* is considered a neutral cosmic energy. Santería teaches reincarnation.

Occultic Practices

Santería has been described as “jungle magic adapted to city living.” Diviners use cowrie shells, coconuts, and other sacred objects to identify and solve personal problems. Spirit possession occurs frequently in group rituals, which can also include animal blood sacrifices (mostly chickens and goats) and the use of various herbs and plants. Use of sacred stones (*otanes*) and various talismans thought to possess great spiritual power.



Santeria priestess

Watch for…

- “Botánicas,” shops in mostly Latino neighborhoods where statues, candles, bones, roots, and other Santería products are sold.
- Remains of animal sacrifices and offerings left on street corners for the spirits.

- Simple clay images (with eyes, nose and mouth made of cowrie shells) representing the messenger/trickster orisha Elegguá.



Elegguá

- **Abakuá** and **Palo Monte/Palo Mayombe** are related movements emphasizing black magic. Other related movements include **macumba**, **Umbanda**, and **candomblé** (Brazil); and **voodoo** (Haiti).
- Famous followers, said to include entertainers Desi Arnaz, Celia Cruz, and Mongo Santamaria.
- In the U.S.A., Santería is spreading most quickly in areas with large numbers of Latino immigrants, such as Miami, New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles.

Voodoo

Origins

No one founder. Voodoo—also spelled *vodou* (from the Fon *vodu*, “spirit” or “deity”) was brought by West African slaves to colonial Haiti, where it is now the dominant religion. It first entered the United States after the Haitian revolt of 1804.

Key Writings

None. Voodoo’s beliefs and practices are based primarily on oral traditions and vary from place to place.



A vèvè, symbol representing a lwa.

Key Beliefs

Haitian voodoo is an animistic religion and combines many elements of African cults, Roman Catholic imagery and ritual, and even European folklore. There are two main types voodoo: *Rada* (seen by practitioners as benign) and *Petro* (seen as dominated by black magic). Voodoo acknowledges a remote creator god, called *Bondye*. Humans must deal with three main types of spirits: *lemistè* (also known as *loa* or *lwa*), *lemó* (the dead), and *lemarasa* (the sacred twins). There are thousands of the capricious lwa, among the most

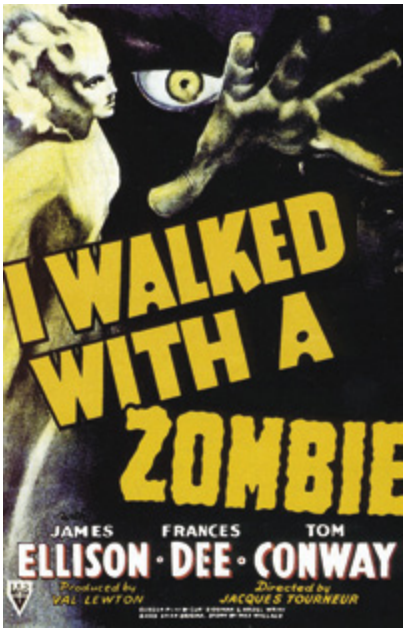
important of which are *Ezili* (associated with Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, love, and beauty) and *Dambala* (associated with St. Patrick and snakes). After death, one part of man's spirit goes to Bondye, and another goes to *Gine* (a kind of African spiritual homeland); there is also a belief in reincarnation.

Occultic Practices

Spirits, summoned ritually by drums, are said to "mount" (possess) worshippers like horses, speaking and acting through them. Various kinds of divination and sorcery are used for protection, healing, direction, luck, and inflicting harm on enemies. Ritual offerings—including food, drink, and animal sacrifices—are made to appease the spirits. Cemeteries are important to some rituals.

Watch for…

- Voodoo should not be confused with **hoodoo**, a form of folk magic originating in the southern U.S.A. (though the two have some things in common).
- Sensationalized "zombies" (the walking dead) and "voodoo dolls," as shown in some novels and movies, that do not reflect main voodoo beliefs.



- Related movements, including **Santería** (Cuba) and **Tambor de Mina** (Brazil).
- In North America, voodoo is most common in areas with Haitian immigrant communities, such as Miami, New York City, Montreal, and Chicago. New Orleans, Louisiana, has its own peculiar form of voodoo.



Theosophy

Origins

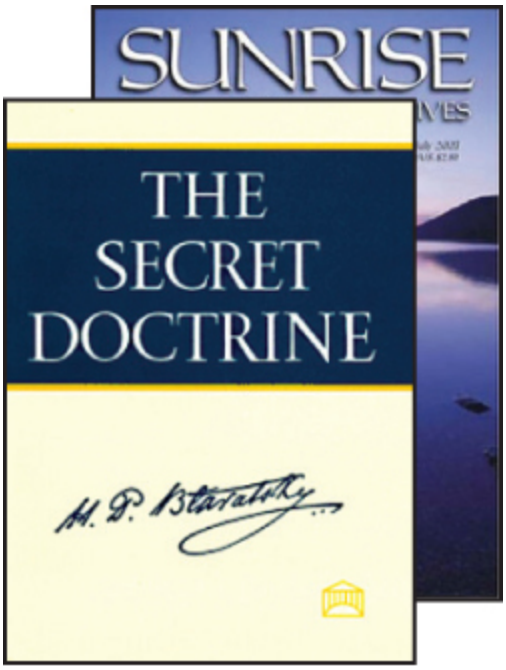
Theosophy (from Greek *theosophos*, “one wise about God” or “divine wisdom”) is an esoteric philosophy and movement tracing its modern origin to **Helena P. Blavatsky** (1831–1891), also known as “Madame Blavatsky” or HPB. In 1875 she founded the **Theosophical Society** in New York with **Henry Steel Olcott** (1832–1907). Four years later, the Society moved to India where it grew quickly, eventually becoming the fountainhead of the “ancient wisdom” doctrine within Western occultism.



Helena P. Blavatsky

Key Writings

Blavatsky’s *The Secret Doctrine* (1888), *Isis Unveiled* (1877), and *The Key to Theosophy* (1889). Periodicals include *Sunrise*.



✦ Key Beliefs

"Ancient wisdom" teachings hold that the world's religions (Greek, Egyptian, Christian, gnostic, Buddhist, etc.) originally taught the same core truths, but were corrupted by the development of organized religion. The oldest scriptures (the Hindu *Vedas*) contain the kernel truths and the others carry parts of this core: monism, reincarnation, yoga, evolution of consciousness, psychic powers, etc.

Invisible to us, the evolutionary progress of Earth has been directed for thousands of years by a seven-tiered hierarchy of Masters or superior beings. Some were originally human, died, and are now "Ascended Masters" (also known as the "Great White Brotherhood"); others are still alive; some never had human embodiment. The Masters reveal themselves to a few select souls, either in remote parts of the world (China, Tibet) or through psychic communication, giving guidance to those who are prepared for it. Blavatsky claimed communication with several of these so-called Masters, as did most of her immediate successors. Jesus is considered the fifth incarnation in the Aryan race of the Christ, or supreme "World Teacher." Theosophy rejects Jesus' atonement and

states that man brings about his own salvation through repeated incarnations; every human being is a potential “Christ.”

Occultic Practices

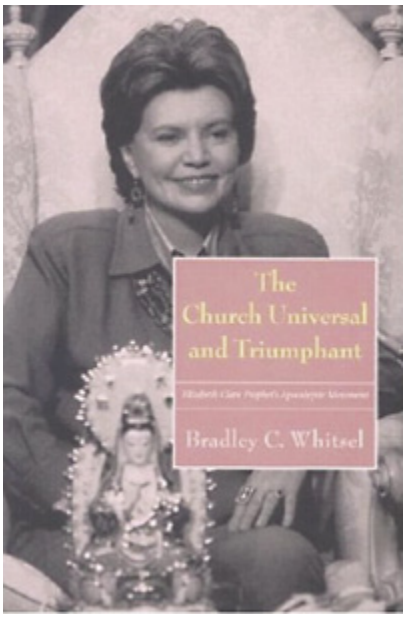
Yoga and meditation are employed in spiritual development; psychic powers (including “easy access” to the mystic “Akashic Records”), astral travel, and other paranormal abilities may follow, depending on the individual. Astrology and some other occult practices are considered “true sciences.” An inner circle, known as the “Esoteric Section,” engages in secret meditation practices to attune its members with the Masters.



Watch for…

- Related theosophical institutions, including the **Theosophical Society** (Altadena, California); **Theosophical Society in America** (Wheaton, Illinois), with its **Krotona School** and **Quest Books**; and the **United Lodge of Theosophists** (Pasadena, California).
- Famous followers, such as children’s authors L. Frank Baum (*The Wizard of Oz*) and Frances Hodgson Burnett (*The Secret Garden*), and poet W.B. Yeats.
- Theosophy-inspired groups, such as the **Krishnamurti Foundations**, based on the teachings of Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895–1986); the **Arcane School** of Alice Bailey (1880–1949); **Anthroposophy**; the **Agni Yoga Society** of Nicholas Roerich

(1874–1947); the **“I AM” movement**; and the **Church Universal and Triumphant** of Elizabeth Clare Prophet (1939–2009).



Anthroposophy

Origins

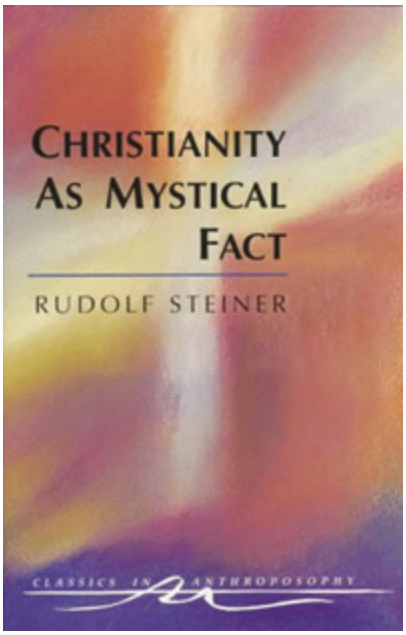
Anthroposophical Society was founded in Germany in 1912 by Austrian psychic **Rudolf Steiner** (1861–1925) as a breakaway group from Theosophy. World headquarters located at the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland.



Rudolf Steiner

Key Writings

All of Steiner's works are considered authoritative. This includes some 6,000 lectures, hundreds of essays, and 33 books, including *A Philosophy of Freedom* (1894), *Christianity as Mystical Fact* (1902), and *An Outline of Occult Science* (1910).



✦ Key Beliefs

Steiner claimed to receive information directly from the spiritual realm. Anthroposophy is based on his personal revelations, which describe an extremely complex evolutionary history for mankind. He began as a believer in Theosophy and embraced such Theosophical concepts as karma and reincarnation. Anthroposophy is relentlessly man-centered and pays little attention to traditional questions about "God" or our relationship to Him.

Though Steiner called his system "true Christianity," he also called it "Christian Occultism" and radically redefined Christian terms. Steiner saw the Bible not as revelation "from without," but as a picture of human potential. He describes two separate "Jesuses" who merged spiritually, after which a "Christ-essence" entered and remained for three years. At the crucifixion, Jesus' blood did not redeem us from sin, but flowed into the physical earth, where its mystical power energizes our cosmic evolution and frees us from the bonds of materialism. This enables the Christ-essence to "mass-incarnate" into the whole of humanity (which is the true "second coming").

▲ Occultic Practices

The central tenet of Anthroposophy is that humans have an ability to contact the spiritual realm directly which can be awakened through exercises in concentration and meditation. The practice of Anthroposophy consists mostly of such exercises. Like all forms of occult meditation, this can open the door to intrusions from the unseen world, including spirit contact and associated phenomena, such as clairvoyance, divination, and mediumship. Astral projection and astrology are also important components of Anthroposophy.



Watch for…

- Controversy over Steiner-oriented **Waldorf Schools**, with parents claiming they were not made aware of the profoundly occultic basis of its educational system when their children enrolled.
- Anthroposophy-inspired organizations, such as **Weleda** (personal and healthcare products); **curative eurythmy** (therapeutic dance); **bio-dynamic farming** (organic agriculture with magical/occult elements); **Camphill Movement** (communities for disabled/special-needs people); **The Christian Community** (a Steiner-oriented church); and the **Christian Occult Society** (name used by some local Steiner groups).
- Famous followers, such as writer and philosopher Owen Barfield and influential New Age author David Spangler.


WELEDA

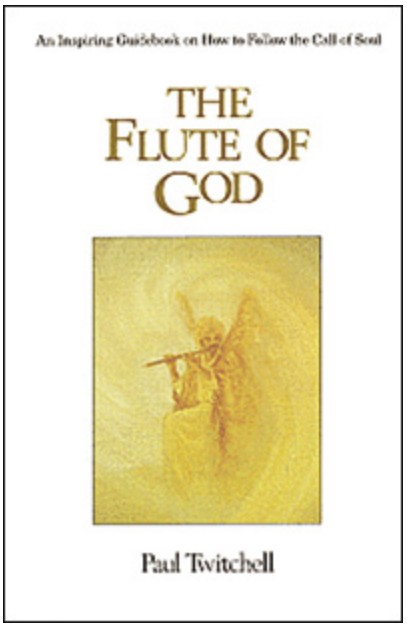
Eckankar

Origins

Founded in San Diego, California by **Paul Twitchell** (1908–1971) in 1965. Proclaims itself the “Religion of the Light and Sound of God” and “the Ancient Science of Soul Travel.” Current headquarters in Chanhassen, Minnesota.

Key Writings

The Shariyat-Ki-Sugmad (1970)—considered “sacred scripture”—and other books by Paul Twitchell, including *The Tiger’s Fang* (1967), *Eckankar: The Key to Secret Worlds* (1969), and *The Flute of God* (1970); writings by Sri Harold Klemp, the current “Living Eck Master.”



Key Beliefs

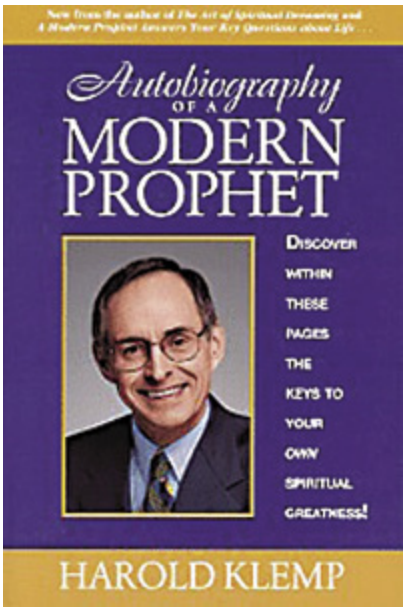
God is a formless essence consisting of light and sound, called the *Sugmad* (said to be “neither masculine nor feminine” and “the source of all life”). The light and sound flow out of the Sugmad and return to it in a current called the *Eck*. Christianity is acknowledged as “an

alternate path” to “a degree of enlightenment.” The biblical concept of the Trinity is not recognized by Eckankar. Twitchell taught that the Devil “is the Jehovah of the Jewish faith and the Father of the Christian teachings....Therefore we really see Jesus as a son of Kal Niranjan....”—that is, the Devil. (Elsewhere the group teaches that Jesus was “the ECK Master in Judea.”) “Holy Spirit” is used as another name for the “Eck” current. Enlightenment, or union with the Sugmad, is attained by tuning in to the Eck current through “soul travel” and following it as it returns to its source. After death one is reincarnated, repeatedly, until one returns to the Sugmad.



Occultic Practices

Eckankar’s practice is based on “soul travel,” which is similar to an “out-of-body” experience. This is said to be “taught only by the Living ECK Master” and made possible by more than 100 “spiritual exercises,” such as visualization and chanting “HU” (“The most ancient, secret name for God”). While “soul-travelling” one can meet with dead Eck Masters and follow the Eck current back to the Sugmad. Members, called *chelas*, pass through a series of initiations, the first of which “often comes in a dream.”



Watch for…

- Related groups, including **Church of the Movement of Spiritual Inner Awareness** (MSIA) and **Insight Seminars**, founded by John-Roger Hinkins (1934–); Ford Johnson's **Higher Consciousness Society**; and Gary Olsen's **MasterPath**.
- The **Temple of Eck**, a 50,000-square foot building at the group's Chanhassen, Minnesota, headquarters, regarded as "the keystone of the teachings of ECK on earth."
- Longstanding controversies, including charges that Twitchell plagiarized much of his writing and most of his teaching from **Kirpal Singh** (1894–1974), a Radhasoami guru he had once followed (but later denied knowing), and from Scientology, which he had also followed.

Astrology and Horoscopes

What Are They?

Astrology (from the Greek *astrología*, “telling of the stars”)—A form of divination that interprets the positions of the sun, moon, and planets as meaningful representations of a person’s life, of an event, or of any entity that has a founding date (such as a country). Astrology differs from *astronomy*, which is the scientific study of space and heavenly bodies.

Horoscope (from the Greek *horoskópos*, “time observer”)—Newspaper horoscope columns are based primarily on the interpretation of the positions of the faster-moving moon and closer planets as influences on the twelve zodiac sun signs. (Professional astrologers often dismiss horoscopes because only the sun sign is taken into consideration.)

Zodiac (from the Greek *zóion*, “animal”)—An imaginary belt in the heavens divided by astrologers into twelve equal divisions, or “signs.” The three main types of astrology practiced today are *western* (originating in the Middle East), *Vedic* (from India), and *Chinese*, each with its own theories and very different zodiac signs.

What Do Astrologers Do?

Natal astrology—Planetary positions at birth are seen as the blueprint for a person’s life, including past, present and future. The chart is read to assess family, social, relationship, career, and spiritual factors and potentials in the person’s life. The astrologer synthesizes planetary signs, positions, the 12 houses, and other factors in the chart. The positions of the planets as they move around the birth chart indicate future influences and trends. Relationship charts are fashioned by making a composite of two charts, or by comparing two or more charts.

Mundane astrology—Chart for an event, city or country. The event could be an earthquake, political election, declaration of war, or any event with a timed beginning.

Horary astrology—Chart done to answer a question. The astrologer notes the time of the question and interprets the resulting chart in order to answer the question.

What Makes Astrology Appealing?

In his book *Wisdom from India: Astrology*, Christian apologist Vishal Mangalwadi identifies four key reasons why astrology "thrives in such troubled times":

- It offers an explanation for our troubles
- It removes a sense of guilt and responsibility
- It offers hope
- It offers guidance when people feel hopeless

What Makes Astrology "Work"?

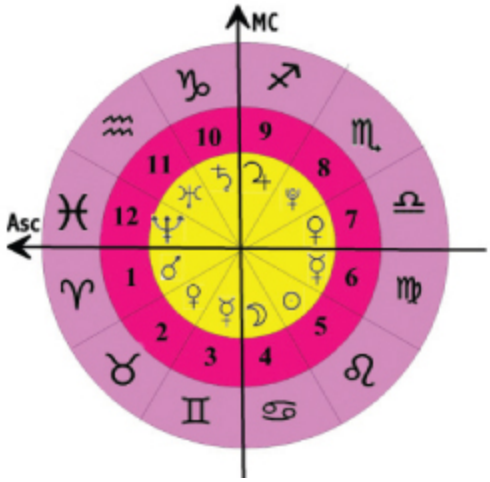
Astrology is not merely forbidden in the Bible—it's demonic. Charles Strohmer, a former professional astrologer, writes in his book *What Your Horoscope Doesn't Tell You*: "As we look honestly at astrology, we begin to see that adherents of this system—without knowing it—are banging on the door through which communication is established with knowledgeable but yet deceptive spirit beings." He further explains that the horoscopic chart is used by the astrologer as the mediumistic point of interaction, and that "without contact with spirit beings, there would be no astrological self-disclosures."

What Does the Bible Say about Astrology?

Since it is a form of divination, astrology is forbidden in passages like Leviticus 19:26 ("Do not practice divination or sorcery"). We also gain insight from such verses as

- Isaiah 47:13–15—*"astrologers" and "stargazers" mocked and condemned*
- Jeremiah 8:1, 2, 10:2—*those who follow, worship, consult the sun, moon, and stars condemned*

- Daniel chapters 2, 4, 5—*after astrologers and other diviners declare that interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dreams and Belshazzar's vision is "impossible," Daniel does so with God's help*



What is the Occult?

The English word “occult” comes from the Latin *occulere*, “to conceal.” This comparison chart is not intended to arouse an unhealthy curiosity about hidden and forbidden things; instead, it is meant to help discern danger so you can avoid it, resist it, and help others.

SOME OCCULT TERMS DEFINED

NOTE: Not all occultists agree on how these terms should be defined. Some who engage in the practices mentioned below believe that their powers are merely natural, not supernatural.

Astral projection, astral travel: The ability to travel outside one’s body during sleep or while in a trance state.

Channeling: Allowing a spirit (demon) to speak through you; also called mediumism.

Degree: A stage of advancement or attainment.

Demon: A fallen angel who serves Satan. Can impersonate dead persons (such as ghosts) and other spirit beings.

Divination: Reading hidden meanings in natural objects and/or receiving information about one’s past, present, or future through supernatural means. Examples: astrology; numerology (*arithmancy*); reading cards (*cartomancy*), palms (*chiromancy*), glass or still water surfaces such as a crystal, mirror, or lake (*scrying*), tea leaves (*tasseomancy*), hexagram patterns (*I Ching*) or special Norse symbols (*runes*), and the earth to determine the best location for structures (*geomancy*).

Familiar spirit: A spirit that aids in divination or magic; demon.

Lodge: Can be used to refer to a governing body, branch, meeting hall, or members of an organization (e.g., Freemasons,

Theosophists, Rosicrucians).

Magic(k): To bend reality to one's will by using supernatural or mysterious powers. (Not to be confused with stage magic practiced by illusionists for entertainment.)

Medium: Psychic who attempts to communicate with the dead and/or other spirit beings.

Necromancy: A form of divination in which one seeks to communicate with the spirits of the dead. (From the Greek *nekrós*, "corpse," and *manteía*, "divination.") May also be used to refer to witchcraft or black magic in general.

Occult: Practices to uncover hidden meanings or use supernatural powers, or contact with spirits.

Ouija™ board: Popular "talking board," a device manufactured by Parker Bros. and widely used in necromancy and divination. Often promoted as a fun children's game, Ouija™ boards can be a "doorway to the occult."

Possession: Being inhabited and controlled by a demon.

Psychic: Someone who gains information through paranormal powers of seeing (*clairvoyance*) or hearing (*clairaudience*).

Reincarnation: The rebirth of a soul in another body. This may occur over many lifetimes until the soul has evolved enough to attain a more perfect state.

Satan: Powerful angel who rebelled against God and tempts and deceives man.

Sorcery: The use of drugs or spirits to access supernatural power; sometimes considered by occultists to be the use of harmful or black magic.

Spell: Verbal formula believed to possess supernatural power.

Spirit: A being with no physical body, such as an angel or demon.

Spiritism: Attempting to contact a disembodied being such as a dead person or an angel.

Spirit Guide: A disembodied entity who acts as one's guide; a demon.

Supernatural: Above or beyond what is natural; abnormal or extraordinary.

Syncretism: The fusion of different systems of belief.

Talisman, amulet: An object or set of secret words or symbols with supernatural power.

Tarot: A set of 78 illustrated cards used for divination.

Witchcraft: The practice of occult arts; also, a modern religion based on the belief that nature is divine, and belief in the Goddess or many gods. Modern witchcraft religion, which includes a category called Wicca, is a subset of Neopaganism, a revival of ancient pagan polytheism and magical practices.

Why Choose These Groups?

The occult takes many forms. Often occultism is practiced and promoted through organized groups—some of them admittedly religious, some not. Some of the movements described here (like Theosophy) may seem small, but their influence far exceeds their membership. Freemasonry itself has few occultic elements, but its rituals have been adapted by many occultic groups. Other religious groups with occultic roots (such as Mormonism and Scientology) are not listed here; the main focus is on groups openly practicing occultism today.

SCRIPTURAL WARNINGS ON THE OCCULT

In both the Old and New Testaments, God commands His people to abstain from occult practices of any kind—in the strongest possible terms. Scripture consistently associates occult activity with superstition, idolatry, deception, fear, futility, uncleanness, and rebellion. God regards such things as evil, demonic, and deserving of swift and severe judgment.

NOTE: In the Bible, some of the same Hebrew and Greek terms can be translated into English as *witchcraft, sorcery, enchantments, divination*, and *soothsaying*, depending on different Bible versions.

The Bible Condemns Magic Arts, Enchantments
Genesis 41:8, 24
Exodus 7:11, 22; 8:7, 18–19
Leviticus 19:26
Deuteronomy 18:10
2 Kings 17:17; 21:6
2 Chronicles 33:6
Isaiah 47:9, 12
Jeremiah 27:9
Acts 8:9–11; 18–21; 13:6–12; 19:19
Revelation 9:20, 21; 18:23; 21:8; 22:15

The Bible Condemns the Use of Magical Charms, Amulets
Isaiah 3:18–20
Ezekiel 13:18–20

The Bible Condemns Sorcery
Exodus 22:18
Leviticus 19:26
Deuteronomy 18:10, 14
2 Kings 17:17, 21:6
2 Chronicles 33:6
Isaiah 47:9
Jeremiah 27:9–10
Micah 5:12
Nahum 3:4
Acts 8:9–11; 19:19

Galatians 5:19–21
Revelation 9:21, 18:23, 21:8, 22:15

The Bible Condemns Spiritism, the Consulting of Mediums, and Necromancy (attempting to contact the dead)
Leviticus 19:31, 20:6
Deuteronomy 18:10, 11
1 Samuel 28:3, 9
2 Kings 21:6, 23:24
1 Chronicles 10:13
2 Chronicles 33:6
Isaiah 8:19, 19:3
Jeremiah 27:9

The Bible Condemns Casting Spells
Deuteronomy 18:9–11
Isaiah 47:9, 12
Micah 5:12

The Bible Condemns Divination
Leviticus 19:26
Deuteronomy 18:10, 14
1 Samuel 15:23
2 Kings 17:17, 21:6
2 Chronicles 33:6
Isaiah 2:6
Jeremiah 27:9–10
Acts 16:16–20

The Bible Condemns Witchcraft (referring not to a specific religion, but to occult practices generally)
Deuteronomy 18:10, 14
1 Samuel 15:23
2 Kings 21:6
2 Chronicles 33:6
Micah 5:12
Nahum 3:3–4
Galatians 5:19–21

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