

## Astrology and the Occult

Tough words from Isaiah:-

*“Stand now with your enchantments  
And the multitude of your sorceries,  
In which you have laboured from your youth--  
Perhaps you will be able to profit,  
Perhaps you will prevail.  
13You are wearied in the multitude of your counsels;  
Let now the astrologers, the stargazers,  
And the monthly prognosticators  
Stand up and save you  
From what shall come upon you.  
14Behold, they shall be as stubble,  
The fire shall burn them;  
They shall not deliver themselves  
From the power of the flame;  
It shall not be a coal to be warmed by,  
Nor a fire to sit before!  
15Thus shall they be to you  
With whom you have laboured,  
Your merchants from your youth;  
They shall wander each one to his quarter.  
No one shall save you.” (Isaiah 47:12-15)*

Such prophetic denunciations go back to Leviticus ...

*‘Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am the LORD your God. (Leviticus 19:31)*

... and were consistently reflected in Old Testament subsequently, most notably when Saul consulted the medium at Endor and thereafter lost his kingship, (1 Samuel 28).

In the New Testament also, sorcery is condemned in the person of Simon Magus (Acts 8:9) and the exorcisms of our Lord himself take very seriously the dangers of souls vulnerable to demonic influence. Well into the patristic era, the message is the same ... astrology, spiritualism, necromancy, sorcery, divination ... all these things are demonically inspired because they subvert the love, justice and providence of God. Let us recall a few witnesses from this period concerning astrology:-

*“If we are but instruments of heavenly rotations, then we do not have free will. And if mankind loses freedom, it loses everything.” (St. Gregory of Nyssa)*

*“Anyone who believes that our loving God would give power to stars in order to direct and govern our lives offends God’s justice and love.” (St. Augustine)*

*If we are directed by star-power, then there is no such thing as good or evil, because we do what we do under the star's direction. This means that God's commandments, that man shall not sin or that man shall do good, comes down to nothing but foolishness." (St. John Chrysostom)*

And so the present day, ostensibly a very rational era, a period of scientific progress and rational discourse. Well, it may be in university lecture halls, research labs or factory operation rooms but on the street we are very far from being a rational, faith inspired, and scientifically literate culture. Here we find superstition, folly and corruption of both mind and heart. A great religiosity prevails but this has nothing to do with Christianity and everything to do with evil, deluding spirits. Never has astrology, necromancy, divination, spiritism, paganism, outright Satanism even, been more popular. Sometimes the very people who believe in these dangerous deceits hold down jobs and lifestyles that require very rational approaches to life situations but somehow they manage to lead a double life when it comes to belief ... the crazier it seems the better. Channelling, crystals, astral travel, you name it, it's all out there and it's a major growth industry.

In a slightly more positive vein we could say that the fascination of "moderns" for such things reflects a terrible lack in our culture, a desert of religious feeling and a lack of authentic, life transforming spirituality in many of the mainline churches. In the absence of life giving water, people, who are all naturally religious however strident atheist voices may seem, seek to slake their spiritual thirst at strange wells. Falling sick they ascribe their poisoning to the culture they are rejecting whereas in fact the cure is worse than the disease ... but this they cannot see. Of course the culture itself doesn't help since it is an unwritten law that one can quite easily believe in Alice in through the Looking Glass vein in "seven impossible things before breakfast," because, "well, dear ... if that works for you."

*Can you keep from crying by considering things?' [Alice] asked.*

*'That's the way it's done,' the Queen said with great decision: 'nobody can do two things at once, you know. Let's consider your age to begin with -- how old are you?'*

*'I'm seven and a half, exactly.' 'You needn't say "exactly",' the Queen remarked. 'I can believe it without that. Now I'll give you something to believe. I'm just one hundred and one, five months and a day.' 'I ca'n't believe that!' said Alice.*

*'Can't you?' the Queen said in a pitying tone. 'Try again: draw a long breath, and shut your eyes.'*

*Alice laughed. 'There's no use trying,' she said 'one can't believe impossible things.'*

*'I daresay you haven't had much practice,' said the Queen. 'When I was your age, I always did it for half- an-hour a day. Why, sometimes I've*

*believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast. [Through The Looking Glass, by Lewis Carroll]*

Such postmodernist nonsense has now made belief in the tooth fairy equivalent to belief in Christ and vice versa and with the same value. Couple with this a desperate desire never to offend anyone and to commend any nonsense so long as it is sincerely held and you have a recipe for madness, quite literally, an insanity.

How, then, are we to help people back towards sanity, towards Christ-mindedness? We must of course warn but taking care not to appear as defensive or concerned only to condemn out of self-righteousness. We must show why such beliefs and practices are both irrational and dangerous. Having done thus we most certainly have not finished. Jesus warned about the man from whom an unclean spirit had departed becoming vulnerable to new infestations ...

*<sup>24</sup>"When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, "I will return to my house from which I came." <sup>25</sup>And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order. <sup>26</sup>Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first." (Luke 11:24-26)*

It is for this reason that we must insist that when a person has repented that he seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit for only good can truly drive out evil by becoming embedded in a person's soul. For that to happen the Church's prayers, faith, sacraments and common life must be embraced to the full. Any lukewarmness in this regard is asking for trouble. Suffice to say that many churches today just don't have the depth of spirituality, prayer and life in the Holy Spirit to provide for a believer's armour and spiritual growth. In Orthodoxy we have got such a wonderful resource of deep wisdom and life changing potential in the Holy Spirit deeply coursing in our Tradition.. As St. Peter said to our Lord when he had delivered a difficult saying:-

"Lord, to whom shall we go; you have the words of eternal life." (John 6:68)

Of no wizard, witch, necromancer, medium or astrologer of this can be said:-

"You have the words of eternal life." Let us not neglect so great a salvation.