

Divination

by Sebastian R. Fama

Ouija Boards, psychic hotlines, Tarot Cards, and ESP are some of the more common forms of Divination. We are told that these occult practices are nothing more than harmless entertainment. Some people even see them as a source of great comfort. But inevitably, these practices can produce a great deal of harm. How can that be, you may ask. What is wrong with letting people know that a deceased relative or friend is happy and in a better place? Isn't the ability to see the future a gift from God?

We know none of these practices are gifts from God. If they were, He would have told us so. We would also see those closest to Him utilizing these so-called gifts. But we see none of that. Instead, we see Him condemning these practices. The Scriptures are clear; for instance: "**Do not go to the mediums or consult fortune tellers**, for you will be defiled by them. I the Lord am your God" (Leviticus 19:31). The command is repeated later with more detail in the book of Deuteronomy:

When you come into the land which the LORD, your God, is giving you, you shall not learn to imitate **the abominations of the peoples 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 the LORD, your God, is driving these nations out of your way** (18:9-12).

There is no ambiguity here. Fortune telling, consulting the dead etc.... "is an abomination to the Lord." An abomination is something that is sinful and disgusting. I think it is safe to say that God's gifts are not sinful and disgusting.

Occult practices are condemned in the New Testament as well. It also reveals the power behind them. In Acts 16:16-18 Paul encounters a slave girl who practiced divination. I believe this passage tells us all we need to know about the subject:

As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave **girl who had a spirit of divination** and brought her owners much gain by soothsaying. She followed Paul and us crying: "These men are servants of the most-high God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." And this she did for many days. But **Paul was annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "I charge you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour.**

The girl was possessed by a spirit (demon) of divination, which Paul cast out. So according to Paul, divination is not a gift of God but an action of the devil. Unfortunately, many are deceived by the seeming pleasantness of their occult encounters. But that is nothing more than a deception. As the Scriptures tell us:

...for **even Satan masquerades as an angel of light**. So, it is not strange that his ministers also masquerade as ministers of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds (2 Corinthians 11:14-15).

False messiahs and false prophets will arise, and **they will perform signs and wonders** so great as to deceive, if that were possible, even the elect (Matthew 24:24).

The Early Church Fathers were unanimous in their condemnation of occult practices. One example comes from the writings of Lactantius:

[Demons] brought to light astrology, and augury, and divination; and though these things are in themselves false, yet they themselves, the authors of evils, so govern and regulate them that they are believed to be true. . . . Thus, by their frauds they have drawn darkness over the human race, that truth

might be oppressed, and the name of the supreme and matchless God might be forgotten (*Epitome of the Divine Institutes* 28 [A.D. 317]).

The seeming benefits of occult practices are what I would call "the worm on the hook." If you did not put a worm on a hook, you would never catch any fish. Satan is not stupid. He meets you where you are. Most people would not respond to the temptation to rob a bank or commit a murder. But they might accept an invitation to talk to their Uncle Fred who has been dead for ten years. If Satan cannot get you to submit to his influence willingly, he will try to get you to submit unwittingly.

On the surface talking to Uncle Fred does not seem harmful. But that is a false perception because you are not talking to Uncle Fred. You are talking to a demon who is impersonating Uncle Fred, a demon who was around during Uncle Fred's lifetime. That is how he knows things that you thought only you and Uncle Fred knew. Whenever you open yourself to demonic influences, you are traveling in dangerous territory. Once you develop an appreciation for something, it is much easier to be drawn deeper into it. The deeper you are drawn into the occult the farther you are from God and the more likely it is that your faith will be harmed.

Interest in the occult is understandable. Man has a natural curiosity to know the future. However, "Knowledge of the future belongs to God alone. To ask it directly or indirectly from demons is to attribute to them a divine perfection and to ask them aid is to offer them a species of worship" (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, volume 5, page 50, © 1909). And of course, that would constitute idolatry. And the practice of idolatry is a violation of the first commandment: "I am the Lord your God: You shall not have strange Gods before me."

It is important to remember that Satan:

1. Uses the occult to pull people away from God
2. Is smarter than you
3. Knows your weak points
4. Is dedicated to your eternal damnation

Prolonged participation in occult practices can lead to demonic oppression or even possession. Furthermore, your involvement could be seen by others as an endorsement which may result in their becoming involved. Occult practices include but are not limited to:

Ouija Boards
Psychic Hotlines
ESP
Séances

Astrological Horoscope
Past Life Regression
Reading Tea Leaves
Palm Reading

Fortune Telling
Numerology
Crystal Gazing
Clairvoyance

Any practice that seeks hidden knowledge via the spiritual realm can be included on this list. Needless to say, any occult practice, no matter how benign in appearance, should be avoided at all costs. The Catechism of the Catholic Church sums it up well:

All forms of divination are to be rejected: recourse to Satan or demons, conjuring up the dead or other practices falsely supposed to 'unveil' the future. Consulting horoscopes, astrology, palm reading, interpretation of omens and lots, the phenomena of clairvoyance, and recourse to mediums all conceal a desire for power over time, history, and, in the last analysis, other human beings, as well as a wish to conciliate hidden powers. They contradict the honor, respect, and loving fear that we owe to God alone (CCC 2116).

In the end we have two choices. We can submit to a loving God or we can submit to the one who seeks our destruction.