

Sects and Cults

Astrology

One of the strangest facts of our times is that astrology is being taken up seriously and semi-seriously by the most sophisticated and science oriented generation in history. Carroll Righter, one of the U.S.'s most famous astrologers, has his rooms crammed with photographs of his Hollywood stars clientele - Ronald Reagan included. When he was governor of California, Mr. Reagan was asked whether he used astrology to run California. He replied that he was no more interested in the subject than the average man.

Astrology's popularity

How interested is the average man? When I visited one of Canada's leading bookstores recently, I was surprised by the large display of titles on astrology. Any bookstore or market is likely to offer such works as *Astrology for Everyday Living*, *Astrology Made Practical*, *Astrology Answers Your Questions*, *Your Character in the Stars* and *Astrology and Your Destiny*. You can even buy the title *How to Find Your Mate Through Astrology!* Many people accept horoscope and astrological readings as a way of life. Dr. Kurt Koch has called this rage "the most widely spread superstition of our time."

Canada's Allen Spragget, former evangelist and religion editor of the *Toronto Star*, is now occupied as a promulgator of the Unexplained; ghosts, mysterious happenings and astrology. He claims that even huge companies are using astrology in their business decisions - "Boeing Aircraft and United Airlines - only they call it space-time forecasting." The manager at a research corporation near Boston has been quoted as saying: "I hired everyone building the computer by the zodiac signs under which they are born." But he was a Leo and was prejudiced. "I hired two Cancer men and they both ended up with ulcers."

In Great Britain, more than two-thirds of the adult population read their horoscope. In India, astrology always has had and still has a strangle hold on all of life. Many newspapers carry an astrological column. Of more than 1500 daily papers in the U.S., more than 1200 carry horoscopes. No other religion gets so much free newspaper and magazine publicity as astrology.

Carroll Righter claims that in 1904 we entered the Age of Aquarius. He has predicted that this "will be an age of joy, of science and accomplishment, focussed on the life of Christ." A writer named Richard Orrick wrote that in "March, 1948, the new golden epoch, the long-awaited Age of Aquarius began."

The rapid growth of astrology has been made possible by the apostasy of our times. It is a demonstration of spiritual decay. Kornelis H. Miskotte has pointed out that astrology is accompanied by the decline of our Western civilization and the falling away of so many from the Christian faith.

Astrology's appeal

For some astrology is an attempt to discover some order in the universe. The miraculous and the mysterious have been stripped from Christianity, leaving a spiritual void. Materialism has not satisfied the young born in the post war years of plenty. A Japanese astrologer said that young people get interested in astrology because "they've found the material things failing them, and they're trying to find their souls."

Our times are uncertain. Many are anxious about the future. What will happen to our civilization with the prospects of nuclear warfare or global starvation? Astrology functions for many as a guide and counselor in the maze of our times. Multitudes don't know the way anymore. Predictive astrology generally tends to take hold in such times of confusion, anxiety and breakdown in traditional religious faith.

Astrology has a scientific appeal. It cannot come of course in its original pagan garb. It knocks at the door of the heart in the disguise of science. "Both astrology and astronomy use the same fundamental data ..." said the director of New York's Academy of Mystic Arts.

History of Astrology

Astrology has its roots in ancient Mesopotamia. Astronomy (exploration of the stars) and astrology were a single science. At some time before 7th century B.C. wise men thought that they had found correspondence between things in heaven and things on earth. What happens on earth is a reflection of events in heaven.

As W. Brede Kristensen states: "There is parallelism between heaven and earth; the heavenly bodies, the planets, guide the earthly events and God guides the heavenly bodies." Man was very much regarded as a small part of the cosmic family. Horoscopes were not cast for the personal lives of individuals. They were only cast for kings, the rulers of nations. Every ruler had his own staff of astrologers.

Astrological documents have been found dating back to the times of Ashurbanipal King of Assyria (668-633 B.C.) Thus a priest writes to him: "The planet Venus is approaching the constellation Virgo. The appearance of the planet Mercury is near. Great wrath will come."

The Greeks and the Romans adopted astrology almost as a substitute religion. It was from this time onward that astrologers offered horoscopes for individuals. In the days of the Roman empire every important personage had his own stars. But not everyone was a believer. The Roman poet Ennius is quoted as saying: "Horoscopes are one drachme, and are one drachme too many." Jews and Christians strongly resisted the faith in the stars.

St. Augustine spoke and wrote against astrology. He referred to it as "the craziest delusion of mankind." He even burnt astrological books. In the Middle Ages, Europe

was in the grip of astrological influences. The politicians of Europe, Kings and Popes were largely controlled by astrology. Pope Paul II (1464-1471) was accused by the cardinal of Padua of continued involvement in astrology. Was it not sufficient, the pope was told, that he, as cardinal was infected by this dangerous astrology? Does he have to go on and make a mockery of the office of chief shepherd? Martin Luther called astrology a "shabby art." But medical doctors watched the place of the stars when they prepared their herbs.

The brilliant scientist Johann Kepler (1571-1630) was engaged in astrology against his wishes. He had to be a practitioner as his emperor's superstitious nature demanded it. His famous statement is: "Astronomy is the wise mother and astrology is her whoring little daughter, selling herself to any and every client willing and able to pay so as to maintain her wise mother alive." After the Reformation there was a decline in the practice of astrology. It didn't get revived again until the early 20th century.

Critique

a. Astrology is unscientific

Our world has yet to find scientists who believe in astrology. They have denounced it as a superstition. Recently 186 leading scientists signed a statement condemning astrology in no uncertain terms. It said in part: "Those who wish to believe in astrology should realize that there is no scientific foundation for its tenets ... We are especially disturbed by the continued unethical dissemination of astrological charts, forecasts, and horoscopes by the media and by otherwise reputable newspapers, magazines, and book publishers ... The time has come to challenge directly, and forcefully, the pretentious claims of astrological charlatans." This statement was drafted by Bart Kok, former president of the American Astronomical Society.

b. Astrology is fatalistic

Astrology has replaced God's will with the purely mechanical motions of heavenly bodies. Man can only resign to his fate. He has no free will. Man has no control over his own destiny. He is without choice. He is a powerless creature who drifts alone on the river of fate. What is written in the stars determines the future. How different from our Lord's exhortation: "Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matth. 6:34 N. 1. V.).

c. Astrology and the Bible

The Bible denounces astrology as pagan idol worship, blasphemy and apostasy from the living God. Creation is placed before the Creator. King Josiah removed astrologers as part of his reformation (2 Kings 23:5). The verses 27 and 28 of Daniel 2 are specially important as they originate in ancient Babylon: "No wise man, enchanter, magician can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, but there is a God in heaven who

reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come."

May we not read horoscopes and astrological columns just for innocent entertainment? No! If we do, the Lord will be dishonoured and displeased. We must let the Lord and His Word chart the course of our life. "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path" (Ps. 119:105).

Johan D. Tangelder
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