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Superstition

By Elise L. Moore

It seems harmless to read the daily horoscope, to avoid taking a room on the thirteenth floor, or to stay out of the way of black cats! Yet each time we do this, we have allowed superstition to influence us. While perhaps not considering themselves superstitious, many people continue to seek or follow advice obtained from the positions of stars or planets, numerology, tea leaves, cards, and other esoteric signs.

Doesn't this habit often stem from feelings of uncertainty, fear, or helplessness in the face of human events, which often seem beyond our control? But turning to the realm of the speculative does not show us how to bring permanent security into our lives. To gain security and dominion over our "fortune," we need to turn away from these changeable material signs to God, who is permanent good.

Superstition denies God. It is based on fear of the unknown, a belief in chance governing the world – and our lives, specifically. It tends to limit the activity of God to the unexplainable or supernatural. In our sincere desire to be Christians, to follow Christ in the daily life, we can willingly part with superstitious habits and humbly and confidently seek to understand the control and government of God.

A devoted follower of Christ Jesus, the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science, Mary Baker Eddy, writes, "Superstition, like 'the fowls of the air,' snatches away the good seed before it has sprouted."¹ The good seed, Jesus explained in his parable of the sower, is "the word of the kingdom."²

The attempted mixture of superstition and religion occurs when God is incorrectly perceived to be a combination of both good and evil or to be confronted with an equal, opposing power named devil, or Satan. God is only and entirely good. God, divine Truth, did not create evil, nor does He tolerate evil. In fact, the presence of God destroys evil.

The idea that God is only good and causes only good comes from the first chapter of the book of Genesis, in which it is repeated six times that what God created was good. The final, seventh, pronouncement is the strongest of all: "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good."³

Nor is there a power opposed to God. In the original Hebrew of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament the words translated as *Satan* and *devil* mean "the adversary, one who opposes, or the false accuser." Satan, or devil, is the *belief* in a power opposed to God; it is not a real power opposed to or created by God. The Bible doesn't encourage us to accept this belief, worry about it, or fear it, but to reject it. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you,"⁴ writes James.

The appearance of evil in this world is not defeated by trying to predict it, appease it, or harness it. Christ Jesus exposed the devil, or evil, for just what it was, a lie.⁵ We must reject superstition as forcefully as Jesus did by recognizing that it is

¹ *Science and Health*, p. 237

² See Matt. 13:3-9, 18-23

³ Gen. 1:31

⁴ James 4:7

⁵ See John 8:44

contrary to God and His Christ. This opens the way to true progress, humanly and spiritually.

In some areas, palmistry is making a comeback. In others, it has never left. Years ago it was popular to read palms at parties. It seemed harmless, as most generally accepted superstitious beliefs appear to be. Someone would look at the various lines on the palm of a person's hand and predict how many children he or she would have, how long the individual would live, and so forth. To me it was just another party game, nothing more. However, when I had class instruction in Christian Science, the teacher specifically mentioned various forms of superstition and the importance of rejecting these beliefs in order to make room for the healing Christ. When he came to palm reading and the like, his comment was, as I remember it, "Don't fool around with such things!"

Instantly I recognized that was just what I had been doing. Even if I didn't believe in the predictions, I was not throwing the weight of my thought on the side of good, the all-knowing, all-loving, divine Mind. To that degree I was contributing to the mental fog that seems to obscure the infinite power and presence of God from human perception. As *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* bluntly states, "Superstition and understanding can never combine."⁶

Unchecked, superstition can begin to undermine the individual's capacity for correct judgment and wise action. The victim of this self-induced mental confusion may become unnecessarily fearful or unwisely overconfident. Like Lonrot in "La Muerte y la Brujula,"⁷ a short story by the noted Argentine author Jorge Luis Borges, we may find ourselves searching for mystical significance in numbers or names where there is none, thus becoming entrapped in a web of our own construction.

Superstitious belief has absolutely no power or influence without our mental consent. So we can reject superstition in all its forms. As we recognize the antipodal natures of superstition and spiritual truth, we cease to attempt holding to two masters.⁸ Our understanding of the one, all-powerful, totally good God deepens, and thus we nurture and water the good seed of Christ planted in human consciousness.

⁶ *Science and Health*, p. 288

⁷ "La Muerte y la Brujula," *Ficciones* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1974), pp. 143-158

⁸ See Matt. 6:24