

Preface

How Witchcraft Saves Civilization

“You have bent up the Pentagram, young man!”
–Maria Ouspenskaya, *The Wolf Man*

Why I Bent Up the Pentagram...Twice.

Preface: Take One, 1972

I began this book as an unbeliever in the occult. I leave it, if not believing, then not disbelieving. What is here is not everything you need to know about witchcraft, nor everything you need to know about the selling of God, Sex, and the Age of Aquarius. What is here is not the sociology or anthropology of witchcraft, nor a taxitive compendium of horror movies, sex cults, pornography, and American law. What is here is not anti-Christian or anti-God. What is here, simply, is the popular culture of American sorcery.

The first manuscript pages of this book appeared in 1969, only a few days after British vicar's widow, Maisie Pearson, confirmed an *I Ching* reading. She predicted for me a long occult adventure. “You must do it,” she said.

Some time later, meeting at midnight with Anton LaVey who is the High Priest of the Church of Satan, interviewing white witches, and attending Black Masses, I asked myself, “Is this any way for an exorcist to behave?” I had been ordained an exorcist in the Catholic Church in 1963, but my exorcising days, like my Catholicism, were gone with the winds of spiritual upheaval that blew with Vatican II. Hot knees bewitched mine beneath ouija boards from New York to San Francisco. Witches invited me into their confidence. Reportage became adventure. This was New Journalism at its gonzo best. The reporter, like Alice through the Looking Glass, participated in the experience. To get at the truth of craft, velvet gloves crucified me naked in a New York art gallery and I was dipped naked in the healing waters of the Virgin at Lourdes.

Now, astrology, magic, tarot, yin-yang macrobiotics, as well as occult psychedelia, gender magic, and phallic worship are no more exotic than the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas, the theology of John Calvin, and the sado-masochistic erotica of the Inquisition. I do, however, understand why inside the table top of every altar in every Catholic church rests an altar stone containing human bones.

In the poker game of American spirituality, the witchcraft card trumps traditional religion. No longer a silent minority, witchcraft is part of the liberation movements of sex, race, and gender that are transforming American popular culture. Witchcraft labels Christianity, Judaism, and Islam as cults far less ancient than witchcraft. Most importantly, the U. S. Supreme Court constitutionally guarantees witchcraft is a valid religion whose rituals are now part of the *U. S. Chaplains' Manual* for military bases.

Three hundred years after the Salem Witch Trials, witchcraft has saved civilization by leveling the playing field of spirituality. No longer can Christianity, Judaism, and Islam control

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American spirituality. The occult offers ancient answers to human needs repressed by these dogmatic religions that came along thousands of years after witchcraft ruled the earth. I mean this book to sound no more anti-Christian than I intend it to sound pro-occult.

Arthur Miller titled his Salem witch play, *The Crucible* (1953). This book chronicles how American popular culture is shifting from crucifix to crucible. The crucifix nails dogma down to the four corners of a cross. A crucible is a vessel for melting materials at high temperatures to see what they are made of. The counter-culture revolution is testing declarative faith, revealed fundamentalism, and dictated government. The liberation fronts are opening the interrogative possibilities of intellect and diversity. America works best as an experimental society when it is a crucible for progress.

In these times of fast change, necromancy seems better suited to match the continued questing of the American character, colonial to astronomical. For in the evolution of the world, obviously enough, old maps ill serve a new Columbus who walks on the moon, taking steps to the stars. The space program changes everything about earthbound religions, science, and customs. Old totems fall as fast as old taboos. We look in the last generation of this century for a spirituality progressive enough to match the frontiers of outer and inner space. We re-sensitize. We re-conceptualize. Technology demythologizes the moon. *The Mushroom and the Cross*, a best-selling book written by John Allegro, one of the original *Dead Sea Scroll* scholars, rethinks Jesus into an acid hallucination. Erich von Daniken's *Chariots of the Gods* makes the Bible a documentation of UFOs with Christ as an extraterrestrial cosmonaut.

American astronauts, covering both sides of providence, carry Bible passages, rosaries, and occult amulets to the lunar surface. Despite numerologists' warnings, NASA launched *Apollo 13* at 13:13 Houston time, and carried the 12th, 13th, and 14th men to the moon. Two days later, *Apollo 13* suffered a terrible space accident on Friday the 13th, April, 1970. *Time* magazine asks on its cover *Is God Dead?* *The National Enquirer* knows Satan is alive and well.

Ralph Waldo Emerson was the revolutionary pioneer who gave America soul, and the Over-Soul. Emerson raised the consciousness for alternative spirituality, including witchcraft. He dared tell the Harvard Divinity School graduates that they were as divine as any Jesus. He wanted the American intellectual to be free of European dogma. He wanted American spirituality to be free of the kinds of Puritan theology that hated the body. He wanted personal rights unfettered by race, sex, gender, and religion. His Transcendentalist group changed American society. They began the women's movement with Margaret Fuller, the children's education reforms of the Peabody sisters of Salem, the commune movement at Brook Farm, and the abolition movement set afire by *Uncle Tom's Cabin* written by Harriet Beecher Stowe to whom Abraham Lincoln said, "So you're the little woman who started the Civil War."

Emerson led the way for Henry David Thoreau, the conservationist author of *Walden: Or, Life in the Woods*, and *Civil Disobedience*, as much as for the very Wiccan Walt Whitman and his magic epic *Leaves of Grass* which, like witchcraft, is centered around nature, persona, and sexual energy. Emerson changed American intellect and spirituality by introducing the eastern mysticism of the *Bhagavad Gita*, the German idealism of Immanuel Kant, and the environmental British Romanticism of Wordsworth, Byron, Shelly, and Keats into the New World Magical Mystery Tour long before the Beatles refreshed his act.

Linear western thought debates *to-be-or-not-to-be*. Spiraling in circles, Eastern mysticism challenges global humans beyond *to-be* into *to-become or-not-to-become*. Something in mankind's spiritual psyche refuses to buy our beginning with birth and our ending in a lazy