

The Modernization of Magic (Archimandrite Gregorios Konstantinou)

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Magician, witch or priest of the religion of Zoroastrianism for the people of Media: in classical antiquity this role referred to the priestly art of divination of Mazdaism (Zoroastrianism), who's practitioners were also known as magicians or "magi." During the Hellenistic period the magicians of Persia travelled throughout the world offering their services to Roman Society at large. These services which they provided were enthusiastically accepted by those lacking formal education, who were then able even to penetrate into the Imperial Court of the Roman Emperors. However, this does not mean that these practices were accepted by those more culturally developed who manifestly disdained the magicians. For exactly this reason men of high culture began to use the term "magic" in order to highlight different evils which conveniently operated on the fringes of official religious practice. With the emergence of Christianity magic became understood as superstition, or more negatively as a deadly sin, by means of which the magicians attempted to counterfeit various religious rituals and in this way utilize the activity of the Devil. Given this a theological conflict quickly developed, in which God and the Devil were lined up in battle against one another. This resulted in the persecution of the magicians in equal measure by both religious and secular authorities, an incident which, by the time of the Middle-ages, resulted in no end to trials of magicians, where the guilty were sentenced to be "burned at the stake."



Every man who embraces magic has the power to bewitch. Magic as a term describes ritualistic actions and modes of behavior by which a man tries to influence situations, events and objects which cannot effectively be influenced by means of normal methods. In opposition to the religious idea and understanding the magician believes that he can direct his magical powers to specific energies achieving his goal.

In antiquity, mages were adept in the use of drugs and medicines. Among less developed peoples the duties of the magicians were usually carried out by the elders, who also functioned as the guardians of magical knowledge. However, among peoples of a slightly more elevated culture development, magic became a profession, the development of which probably helped the natural genius of some people who, due to their capabilities.

Magical activities were supported largely by two defining principles: imitation magic and sympathetic (i.e. infectious) magic. The first corresponds to the erroneous principle that like produces like. This principle they would support with the view that objects which were at one time united remained connected even after their separation: thus, for example, in order to create rain they would pour water while imitating the sound of thunder with a drum; or in order for profitable hunting they would imitate a hunting campaign which had resulted in the killing of the desired animals, etc. The second principle was based on the property of infectiousness: therefore in order to produce an effect on someone they would act

on something which was found with him, or he had come into contact with, so if they wanted to instigate someone's death they would burn his hair or else destroy some other object from among his personal possessions. Based on this, the theory was supported that the magician could influence some person if he happened to have in his hands one of that person's personal possessions.

The Bible carefully addresses the subject of magic. Particularly in many books of the Old Testament we find magic being confronted with exceptional severity. In the book of Exodus we read the severe words of God to Moses for any Israelites who practice magic: "no witch must be allowed to live." God reserves the same punishment for those assisting in magical acts or anyone who has recourse to magic. In the New Testament things are every bit as severe, magic is understood as a demonic activity and the man who has recourse to it is deserving of severe punishment. We are all familiar with the case of Simon who practiced the art of magic and how he was harshly confronted by three Apostles: Peter, Phillip and John. Another incident mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles is that of Bar-Jesus who was a sorcerer and acted unhindered in Cyprus dragging away many of the faithful with his magical arts. The passages of the New Testament which deal with magic are extremely harsh. It is also clear among the Fathers of the Church and their writings that they consider someone who practices magic as committing a grave sin. Saint John Chrysostom says that magic is a purely satanic energy. The same position is held by Saint Basil the Great as well as other Fathers.

In our own days however, as has also been the case for quite some time, Magic and Astrology have become social epidemics, with the result that they have transformed into profitable business ventures. The large department stores throughout Europe have special sections which sell "magic items." All of these items are produced by various workshops which then channel them to the market. Among the products which they manufacture are beads for the evil eye, special candles, oils of love, etc. "We don't claim that our products have metaphysical properties," says the owner of one such workshop named Kan in Great Britain, which has personally experienced a boom in business in recent years. "But with magical items nobody really knows what can happen," he adds. He also insists that his customers are not crazy or strange but mostly ordinary middle class people. Young girls easily and enthusiastically purchase the various love potions and beads, while married women prefer special oils "which iron out their family problems." As a rule men typically buy the black mirror, which when looked into allows them to see their future.

One wonders why, after so many centuries of persecution and the execution of tens

of millions of people sentenced as witches and sorcerers, that this art continues to survive and even spread quickly throughout the whole world? In order to explain this phenomenon we should bring to mind the writings of a real magician. The first thing that we learn by doing this is that magicians don't have gender. In agreement with the "Satanic Bible" there is no distinction between "white" and "black" magic, because there is no distinction between "good" and "bad." Whatever the Magician happens to do in accordance with his own interests is "good," because "he judges it to be right." Dr. Ray Backland, a graduate in Anthropology as well as a magician, maintains that "magicians do not believe in the Devil and therefore it is not possible for them to worship him." He also makes a distinction between Voodoo and Magic. Voodoo is something completely different. "Magicians who practice white magic seek to do only good. They believe that every thing you do to others rebounds and comes back to you three-fold. So what is the point in causing harm to your neighbor? You will simply suffer more harm than you caused others," underlines Dr. Backland. This particular mage has struggled for a long time to enlighten the world about Magic which he believes has long been a misunderstood topic. Magic has existed for about 25,000 years, and is therefore, in his view, an ancient religion. The secrets which it hides cannot be revealed to all those who have not been initiated into it. Dr. Backland says that he began to become interested in Magic many years ago when he studied everything related to it from ghosts to spirits. Finally he ended up with Magic when he realized that it is a religion. "I grew up" he tells us "in London during the Second World War and I was never religious. Magic, however, satisfied one of my needs of which I had never really been aware."

His wife Rosemary Backland spent a long time researching and studying various organized religions, trying through this research to find something which satisfied her religious questions. Her marriage to Ray Backland in 1935 and their new relationship caused her to turn definitively with him towards Magic. Their acquaintance with and initiation into Magic began when Gerard Gartner the "great old man of Magic" offered to take them on as his students. Gartner had first revealed his identity as a Magician in 1951 when the law against witchcraft had been repealed in Great Britain.

Dr. Backland explains that the first thing a magician does when he becomes initiated into Magic is to take a new name. This name is derived from a magician of the past, or from a mythical hero or in other cases it can be a simple combination of letters. Dr. Backland's name as a magician is Rabat, the name of a great 16th century magician. Rosemary also took the name of Rouen when she was initiated into Magic. Rouen comes from a goddess in Celtic mythology who was the daughter

of the goddess of horses. Some magicians allege that if you reveal your name to non-magicians you lose your power, however Dr. Backland seems to be indifferent towards the risk.

The religion of Magic has many gods and goddesses, it also has its own ritual and its own priesthood. All these things and similar details are described in the Satanic Bible, the Bible of Magic, which is also termed Salomonic. Each magician's group should have about the same number of men and women. At the full moon of each month specific rituals are performed. These rituals are concluded with sexual orgies: First, because with sex the power of an individual is strengthened. Second, they become united together. Third, they believe in group sex. Fourth, because satanist women become pregnant and give birth to new followers of Satan. In between these rituals there are also other unofficial gatherings called "Esbats," distinct and separate from the eight other festivals which carry the name "Sabbaths."

It is very common to hear people say that on Halloween witches fly through the sky riding on a broom. One major indicator that magicians do not possess such miraculous powers is that Rosemary Backland was once caught in a traffic jam in New York and arrived late to a scheduled meeting. If she had the power to fly through the sky with her broom, would she have remained tormented in rush hour traffic?

Magical elements exist in all primitive cults, says Dr. Backland, for example sympathetic magic: where the magician produces an object or a thing resembling that which he wants to bewitch. "Cave dwelling humans before the time of Christ would make a model of an animal and symbolically kill it before going out for a hunt, believing that the successful portrayal would ensure good hunting."

Although ancient, Magic remains something new. It has endured centuries of persecution only to reemerge once again. Dr. Backland believes that it has again become popular because many people today are not satisfied with their religion, with the result that they are turning to other more dangerous directions.

After everything which has been said it should be understood that those who practice Magic are instruments of Satan, and this is attested by those of them who claim to have the power to bind or release human souls with magic spells. Frequently these so called magicians carry with them an assortment of icons of saints and use different prayers as a lure and deception for their victims who are often simple people.

Magic is a satanic practice, because of this our Church has exorcists and different

prayers used for the deliverance from Magic. Don't forget that Magic has no effect on those who believe in Christ, who receive Holy Communion and confess their sins. Contrary to this those who are separated from God and who live outside the Church and its sacraments are conquered. The holy Fathers stress that we must not only live within the Church of Christ, but also resist the temptations of the evil one. Otherwise if we are not careful, we will be seduced by his various wiles, and when he approaches us with Magic he will lead us out of the Kingdom of God, then together with him we will inherit eternal death, hell.