

The Revival of Superstition

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Black cats; a broken mirror; walking under a ladder; horoscopes; Friday the 13th. These and other superstitions have lingered in our cultural consciousness from generation to generation. Even those who don't believe in superstition are prone to knock on wood when hoping for good fortune.

Superstition: 1a: a belief or practice resulting from ignorance, fear of the unknown, trust in magic or chance, or a false conception of causation b: an irrational abject attitude of mind toward the supernatural, nature or God resulting from superstition 2: a notion maintained despite evidence to the contrary (*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, p. 1185).

Superstitions are based on two companion concepts: fear and falsehood. According to the definition, superstitions have no basis in reality. But people continue to believe them out of the fear that some malignant force is out to get them.

Christians, of all people, should not be enslaved to superstitious beliefs, for we have been enlightened about the true nature of things by the very One who made them (Jn 1:9-10; 8:31-32). As we mature in faith and knowledge we "*should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men ...*" (Eph 4:13-14).

But there is a new brand of superstition on the shelves and it is being bought by an unsuspecting public. It is the superstition of ancient paganism dressed in modern garb and called the New Age. There are many facets to this belief system, but the basis of it lies in the deification of nature and the quest to become one with the nature-god. Groundless superstitions abound in the New Age movement.

The essence of man is said to be energy, and certain elements of nature are thought to focus energy. Thus, there has been a resurgence of interest in the power of crystals worn or ritually used. Mental imagery or visualization is also highly touted by the New Agers. Success – in business, over disease, in personal relationships – is believed to come from "seeing" it as already having occurred.

"All the methods of the New Age ... meditation, yoga, aerobics, ionics, crystallography, nutrition, transactional analysis and many other systems all ... can be seen as tools for amplifying and transmuting energies ... [and] release[ing] our innate spiritual potentials" (Laurie Warner, in *The Seduction of Christianity*, p. 138).

"Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit ..." (Col 2:8). The New Age is really the Old Age of superstitious idolatry.