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1 - INTRODUCTION

For those who follow Christian belief, a difficult question that comes up from time to time: is faith in Christ compatible with Eastern Mysticism? When discussions about Eastern Mysticism or New Age come up, among Christians, there is often a degree of scornfulness towards the subject and worries about demonic influence.

There are certain activities and branches of knowledge that have had this kind of label applied to them... undeservedly. They've been hijacked. That is, the forces of spiritual Darkness have taken credit for what rightfully belongs in God's domain. Astrology is a good example of this - a branch of knowledge that mainstream religion has marginalized. Anyone interested in astrology may, at some time or other, have to face some criticism from Christian teachers. From this author's own study, it has been easy to see that there's a fine line. True enough, astrology can be used by the Dark forces to bestow a kind of false spirituality/wisdom on a person, which can easily draw them into a form of witchcraft - that is, into using their knowledge for selfish, manipulative purposes.

But astrology by itself is not evil. It can be very helpful in understanding one's self and others and in appreciating God's marvelously created cosmos and its amazing integration with our own personal lives and what is going on here on Earth. But its misuse/over-

indulgence can become counter-productive – by causing a person to become too calculating and manipulative. He or she starts operating under their own banner and not under the banner of the One who is the Source of all wisdom.

The same is true in any branch of knowledge. For example, in the study of physics, when scientists use their knowledge to make evil inventions like atom bombs, then that is evil. But the study of physics itself is not evil and, when used by scientists yielded to the Spirit of God, has been used for good to benefit humanity in so many ways with useful inventions of all kinds.

Both Astrology and Eastern Mysticism are studies and disciplines that help us to understand, appreciate, and use certain aspects of God's Creation. And both have been "dirtied", unfortunately, and need to be "reinstated" as legitimate areas of knowledge and activity. In the minds of so many people, to indulge in activities like Eastern Mysticism, Astrology, or even Sex means trespassing into the realm of spiritual Darkness. (For a digression on what is meant by reinstating the activity of sex, see [Appendix](#).)

What's usually missing, though, is a more thorough understanding of the nuances and different aspects involved. In the famous tale of the blind men and the elephant, each blind man could only "see" one aspect of the elephant but could not see the entire picture. Each one had their own conception, or misconception, of what the elephant was like. But by exercising their discernment, followers of Christ can "see" the whole picture. And in this way, can tease out a nuanced perspective that is accurate and godly. The area of knowledge under investigation doesn't have to be clouded over with question marks, such as: is there some form of deception going on here or sinister perversion of foundation truths?

And why not investigate these – what we might call – borderline areas of knowledge? We study physics and medicine and consider them "legitimate". Why should we not cover the full spectrum of God's created order and include these marginalized areas of knowledge and activities? For really, more depends on how one's knowledge or activity is used than on the knowledge or activity itself.

So we see that it's difficult to know where to draw the line sometimes. Christianity tends to "play it safe" - a little too safe perhaps - and draws that line in a way that shuts out anything that seems a bit risky. Sometimes it has to be drawn straight and rigid, but if it's possible to enlarge the boundaries and be more inclusive of what might be considered as fringe or dubious, would that not be an improvement?

So with these perspectives in mind, let us investigate that branch of knowledge known as Eastern Mysticism, also known in the West as New Age teaching. What can we learn from it? And how is it that Eastern Mysticism has gained an unsavory reputation in the realm of Christianity? What direction FORWARD lies ahead?

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APPENDIX: Re-instating God's Creation of Sex

For decades, even centuries, the standard Christian teaching has been that sex is bad. This teaching sprang from real problems that were plaguing the Early Church some 2,000 years ago. In the Greek culture of those days, sexual licentiousness was running rampant, so it is no surprise that some of the epistles, giving counsel to the followers of Christ in those days, tended to emphasize the need to restrain from going overboard in sexual activities.

But these same teachings, when applied nowadays, can result in making persons who are conscientious feel needlessly guilty when they want to enjoy sex. He or she may think that, by indulging in it, they're straying into the territory of Dark spiritual forces. As so often happens, the once-needed guidelines turn into a straight-jacket later on and need to be loosened.

During the late 1960's and early 1970's of the Jesus Revolution, the young people of that era were trying to break away from the narrow confines of established Christianity. And that included a little known (and

controversial) aspect of that movement: the understanding that sex is God's creation and was meant to be enjoyed (in a responsible way, of course). Instead of thinking of it as the Devil's sinful offering, God intended for us to enjoy the sex that He created. Like eating food, practising sex is enjoyable and even necessary for our physical bodies.

Now, half a century later, the pendulum has swung way out to an extreme. Society has reverted to the kind of sexual licentiousness that characterized ancient Greek culture. As a result, now those who desire to follow Christ are having to take an unpopular stand, to resist the irresponsible perversions and excesses of the modern LBGTQ+ movement and risk being labelled as prejudiced, narrow-minded, hate-mongers, and so on. So in this issue about sex, we see, as in the blind-men-and-the-elephant story, there are several different aspects to consider if we want to get an accurate perspective on this panoramic subject of sex.

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