



STATEMENT DO-015

DOWSING: DIVINE GIFT, HUMAN ABILITY, OR OCCULT POWER?

by John Weldon

Many first-time observers of the ancient art of dowsing have watched in mute fascination as a dowser seeks out — and finds — underground water. This feat the dowser accomplishes merely by walking the land with his or her dowsers' stick until it is forcefully thrust downward at the location where the water is to be found.

Although millions of people have come to accept dowsing as a unique ability or even a divine gift, few have examined this widespread and seemingly innocuous practice critically — with an eye to uncovering the real source behind its power. The fact that dowsing is also increasingly accepted in the church as a spiritual practice adds to the need for an evaluation of this technique.

Dowsing itself is a broad category encompassing many different forms, one of which is dowsing for water. It is the thesis of this article that all forms of dowsing are ancient pagan practices that are really forms of divination.

HOW DOWSING ALLEGEDLY WORKS

Dowsers claim that they possess a natural sensitivity to alleged earth magnetism, water "radiations," or some other natural phenomenon. They believe their dowsing stick or other device (often an occult pendulum) somehow "focuses" or otherwise identifies this energy so that one is able to find water or other substances or things that one is seeking — including oil, treasure, and lost persons or objects.

The fact that dowsing works is clearly its major defense. Dowsers think that if it works it must therefore be both a helpful and legitimate method: "What interests us about all dowsers is not the theories they develop but the results they obtain. It is these results which will attract more and more adepts [initiates] as well as less and less convinced adversaries."¹

Hoffman-La Roche, the huge multinational pharmaceutical company headquartered in Basel, Switzerland, has been employing dowsers on the company's payroll since 1944. The dowsers are used in seeking water for the company's operations. When interviewed as to the unscientific nature of dowsing, a company spokesperson replied as follows: "Roche uses methods that are profitable, whether they are scientific or not. The dowsing method pays...."²

But so do prostitution and selling crack cocaine — in the short run. The question remains: should dowsing be used if it is really a method of occultic divination? Before I document that it is and therefore should be avoided, we need to understand the influence, variety of phenomena, and wide-ranging uses of modern dowsing.

THE INFLUENCE AND PHENOMENA OF MODERN DOWSING

The modern impact of dowsing is unmistakable. Dowsing societies exist throughout the world — in Britain (e.g., The British Society of Dowsers), Kenya, Sweden, New Zealand, Austria, Argentina, Vietnam, Germany, India, Spain, Israel, Mexico, and other countries. In France, dowsers have a national union, and dowsing societies in many

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countries — such as the United States and Germany — have memberships of several thousand. Today, dowsing is used by medical personnel, public utilities, geologists, engineers, and even the military.³

Types of Instruments

The instruments of dowsing are nearly endless, as are the uses. As I will show, this fact underscores the psychic nature of dowsing in that the dowsing power does not reside in the object used.

Consider the variety of implements that have been employed to dowse: pencils, scissors, pliers, welding rods, jewelry, candles, seashells, needles, bent coat hangers, crowbars, guns, whale or shark bones, barbed wire, clothes, water "bobbers," feathers, "aura" meters, cut tree or shrub branches — even thumbs, fingers, hands, or feet (i.e., no instruments at all).⁴ Obviously, the kind of equipment one uses is irrelevant. The power resides somewhere else. The key question is: What is the true origin of the power used by the dowser? Later I will show why I believe the real source of a dowser's power is the spirit world.

Nevertheless, every effort is made to remove dowsing from the halls of occultism. Promoters continually stress its supposed "scientific" nature, but they cannot easily escape the supernatural and occultic reality of their art.

Varieties of Dowsing

Raymond C. Willey is the author of *Modern Dowsing: The Dowser's Handbook*. He has dowsed for over fifty years and was instrumental in organizing the American Society of Dowsters (ASD). He served as its secretary and was editor of its periodical, *The American Dowser*, for over a decade. Willey accepts four basic methods of dowsing: (1) *Field Dowsing* — the "traditional" use of dowsing which involves locating water, objects, and so forth on a given terrain. This is called "witching the area"; (2) *Remote Dowsing* — "witching the area" is not required in this approach. Instead, the dowser locates the target from a distance of up to several miles; (3) *Map Dowsing* — the dowser locates the target using a map or sketch, often accompanied by the use of an occult pendulum. There are no distance limits here, since the dowser can supposedly locate his or her target even 10,000 miles away; (4) *Information Dowsing* — the dowser obtains needed information on any subject with neither space nor time limits. Willey observes that "information dowsing not only saves time, but can aid greatly to increase the scope of the dowsing process."⁵

When people think of dowsing they often assume the process is confined to category one — field dowsing. In fact, it is all four categories that constitute the practice of dowsing. Willey concedes that although all four areas involve dowsing, many people only accept the possibility of field dowsing.⁶

The reason for this is simple. Field dowsing appears to offer the greatest opportunity for a mundane explanation. Here we are presented with a variety of "naturalistic" theories to supposedly explain the phenomena — from an innate sensitivity, to so-called radiations, to currently unexplored alleged geophysical phenomena.⁷ Were the supernatural element not apparent in other forms of dowsing, one might think that simple water dowsing *could* have a natural explanation. But, as we will see, this view is problematic at best.⁸

The Uses of Dowsing

At this point I will list a sampling of dowsing uses culled from the principal U.S. periodical, *The American Dowser*.⁹ Anyone who reads this list and still believes dowsing is a scientific practice rather than a psychic ability has more faith in science than is safe.

Dowsters claim their art has successfully been used: to instruct children in developing their psychic abilities; to find accident-prone highway sections; in veterinary diagnosis; for automobile diagnosis (car dowsing); to derive information in a pending malpractice suit; in narcotics detection; to find fish in the lake (and whether or not they are biting!); to find archaeological sites and artifacts; for finding downed planes or tracking submarines and ships (e.g., predicting the time of their arrival, not to mention their contents and port of origin); to check an area for snakes; in sport hunting (e.g., dowsing for deer); to find unmarked graves; to find lost objects or valuables, murder weapons,

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and so forth; to find missing persons (e.g., determining whether or not a person is dead by their photograph and, if alive, locating them); for checking the "accuracy" of students' homework; to determine if letters, wills, paintings, and signatures are genuine or forged; to track storms; for use in astrology and most other forms of the occult; to detect multiple personalities or spirit possession; to find "subconscious blocks"; to determine the soil composition and fertilizer needs of one's house or garden plants; to sort eggs to determine the sex of the chick.

As if all this were not enough, dowsers Erwin Stark, Raymond Willey, and Gordon MacLean¹⁰ tell us that in addition to the above we can: track down hunted criminals; uncover a spouse's infidelity; locate "subluxations" or cavities if we are chiropractors or dentists; forecast the weather; measure intelligence; detect pregnancy; find the "right" medical specialist for rare diseases by dowsing the phone book; find ghosts or poltergeists; detect acupuncture points; determine the height, weight, and age of kidnappers or rapists; detect oncoming earthquakes; determine edible plants in the wilderness; find avalanche victims; and — for the amateur astronomer — determine the composition of moon rocks, determine whether or not a planet is inhabited, and diagnose the conditions of the astronauts before they land. (Not to mention the further benefit of locating fleas on one's dog!)

Now, did I leave anything out? (How about returning safely from the Twilight Zone?)

DOWSING AND THE CHURCH

The research of Ben G. Hester, Dr. Kurt Koch, and others reveals that dowsing is considered an acceptable, or at least innocent, practice in the minds of many Christians. Dr. Koch observes that "believing Christians are divided on the question of what they should think of rod and pendulum [dowsers]. I have met doctors, pastors, missionaries, and even evangelists who use the rod or pendulum and believe they have received this gift from God."¹¹ Hester, whose text on the subject is probably the best expose available, personally told me how dowsing was practiced extensively among the leadership of a large, conservative, denominational church.¹²

To cite another illustration, Monte Kline, an evangelical Christian promoter of many dubious holistic health methods (e.g., homeopathy and applied kinesiology) argues that the practice of dowsing is a natural ability and therefore acceptable on the following basis:

After some study and considerable experience in dowsing myself, as well as training others, I am quite certain this is merely a natural, explainable phenomenon....My training in dowsing came from a committed, doctrinally-sound, Spirit-filled Christian, and I have trained two other above reproach Christian men (one of them a pastor) in dowsing. An associate recently shared with me that a relative of his, a well-known former evangelical Bible college president, has dowsed for water all his life.¹³

Christian dowsers sometimes attempt to justify the practice by appealing to the Bible. Unfortunately, Christians who claim the Bible teaches dowsing are forced to treat Scripture in the same manner as cultists who distort it to justify their particular religious beliefs and practices.

Biblical passages that refer to digging wells or searching for water — but never mention dowsing — are said to be "mistranslated." If they were "properly" translated they would, supposedly, mention dowsing.¹⁴

In fact, there is only one direct reference to dowsing in the Bible. But here the practice is specifically condemned by God: "My people consult their wooden idol, and their diviner's wand informs them; for a spirit of harlotry has led them astray, and they have played the harlot, departing from their God" (Hos. 4:12). And so, the verdict of Scripture is that those who practice dowsing are being led astray by "a spirit of harlotry" and have "departed from their God."¹⁵

Further, the Bible condemns divination by name in several passages. Because dowsing is a form of divination, it is also rejected in such passages. For example, God tells His people, "There shall not be found among you anyone who...practices divination..." (Deut. 18:10).

Let's consider one example of how Christian dowsers seek to justify their practice. In his article, "Dowsing: Its Biblical Background" (from *The American Dowsers*), Reverend Norman Evans finds it difficult to admit that dowsing is not taught in Scripture. Rather, he attempts to show that it *is* taught although "hidden in Biblical

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references" and "not plainly evident at the first reading."¹⁶

Evans even quotes Hosea 4:12 in *defense* of his view, "My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them...."¹⁷ But, somehow, he fails to quote the remainder of the Scripture, "for a spirit of harlotry has led them astray, and they have played the harlot, departing from their God."

Still, he proceeds to claim, "Abraham, Issac and Jacob were undoubtedly dowzers."¹⁸ He even classifies dowsing as one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit: "I would be very happy if Paul had listed 'dowsing.' But he did not....However, Paul mentions 'knowledge.' I shall classify dowsing within the gift of knowledge."¹⁹ He concludes, "As a Christian my gifts are a part of my offering when I yield myself to my Savior. Love is the way in which gifts are to be used...."²⁰

But Reverend Evans never demonstrates that dowsing can be considered the biblical gift of knowledge or any other gift of the Holy Spirit. Further, his argument is spurious. Activities that are condemned in the Bible as sinful and occultic can never be used "in love." Would God ever accept the other activities condemned along with divination in Deuteronomy 18:9-12 — such as sorcery, witchcraft, necromancy, and human sacrifice — merely because the one using them claimed to do so "in love"? All kinds of evils are done in the name of "love"; this does not justify them.

Unfortunately, many dowzers continue to maintain that their "gift" is from God.²¹ Even the official "Dowser's Prayer" which hangs on the wall of the American Society of Dowzers in Danville, Vermont accepts that dowsing is a gift of God: The Dowser's Prayer reads: "Lord, guide my hands, enhance my sensitivity, and bless my purpose that I may be an instrument of Your power and glory in locating what is searched for."²²

DOWSING AND SCIENTIFIC TESTING

Dowzers often claim that their practice is scientific. They do so despite other dowzers freely confessing that "Dowsing is witchery" and that it "violates every principle of known science."²³

Worldwide, scientific testing of dowsing consistently disproves the dowser's claim that it merely represents a natural or learned sensitivity to radiations or some other physical phenomenon. Careful examination of the claims and activities of dowzers (which are frequently contradictory) reveal that there is no factual basis for regarding dowsing as a physical phenomenon. For example, controlled tests conducted by famous magician and psychic debunker James Randi yielded no evidence that dowzers have any unique ability to find water. Like other people claiming psychic powers, dowzers — when their abilities are tested scientifically — characteristically fail.²⁴

In fact, dowsing abilities have been examined in many countries around the world, and the results do not confirm the scientific claims of dowzers. Tests in Australia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and elsewhere prove that dowsing does not work on the basis of its stated claims.²⁵

In 1984, Michael Martin, a professor of philosophy at Boston University, tested Paul Sevigny himself, the president of the American Society of Dowzers. He reports that even after 40 trials, Sevigny performed at levels worse than chance.²⁶

After Martin reviewed his own results, those of James Randi, plus a scholarly overview of the evidence for dowsing provided by Evon Vogt and Ray Hyman,²⁷ he concluded: "The available evidence can be succinctly summarized: When dowzers perform under controlled conditions, they do not do better than one would expect by chance."²⁸

DOWSING AND THE OCCULT

From ancient times dowsing has been considered an occult art, and has often been defined as a form of witchcraft. The common descriptive terms "witching" and "water witching" reveal how closely the taint of witchcraft has remained to this day. Historically, the church has labeled dowsing as a work of the Devil,²⁹ a fact even many dowzers concede.³⁰

In this section I will supply my reasons for classifying dowsing as an occultic, spiritistic power rather than the

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normal human ability or divine gift that dowzers claim. Below I will list seven common characteristics of dowsing practice that reveal its true nature as a psychic ability.

(1) Many dowzers enter a trance when dowsing. Dowzers admit that a particular "mood" or altered state of consciousness is vital for dowsing to work.³¹ Note the following descriptions from dowsing literature:

The dowser enters into a light trance as he or she becomes more involved with the person, place or thing being sought, and less involved with his or her own thoughts. I was once startled by someone when I was map dowsing and was quite surprised to discover how deeply I had become involved in a state of trance.³²

The secret of good dowsing...is a curious state of mind....Dowsing has been compared to a mild state of hypnosis, or trance, or meditation.³³

The fact that dowsing requires an altered state of consciousness in order to work properly suggests it is not a scientific practice.

(2) Dowsing may cause one to develop other psychic abilities. As dowzers progress in their practice, many of them discover they are slowly developing psychic powers. The fact that dowsing can lead to the development of psychic abilities (such as telepathy and clairvoyance) is mentioned by Hester and many practicing dowzers.³⁴ For example, as a member of both the ASD and the British Society of Dowzers comments: "Over many years I find the methods used by me have, in the course of their progress, transferred to Psychometry and now Astral projection, the latter two methods projecting me to all parts of the World, no matter how remote."³⁵

The fact that dowsing can cause one to develop psychic abilities also associates dowsing with the world of the occult and spiritism, not science.³⁶

(3) Dowsing requires faith, respect, and a personal interaction/response with the rod. Raymond Willey observes that "you must be prepared to treat this faculty of dowsing with respect."³⁷ Further: "Anything that causes the dowser to question the act, or to lose 'faith' in it, immediately renders him incapable of performing. He can get no answers from his device, or method....We have found repeatedly that a mental 'set' or faith is an absolute necessity to successful dowsing."³⁸

The facts of dowsing suggest that the force behind this practice is personal, intelligent, and desirous of human interaction. Perhaps this is one reason Martin Luther referred to dowsing as a form of idolatry.³⁹ If men were only dealing with an impersonal force, it would never require *respect*, or *faith*, or *personal* communication. But these responses are exactly what spirit guides require and demand of their human mediums. Many illustrations of this kind of spirit-human interaction could be cited from those who use Ouija boards, the I Ching, rune dice, tarot cards, or who employ ceremonial magic and other forms of the occult.⁴⁰

Many indications exist that a personal spirit entity operates through the dowsing implement and that interaction with it is necessary for success. For example, the dowser is instructed to ask specific questions of his rod or pendulum. In reading the accounts of dowzers' personal communications with the supposedly impersonal "force" of dowsing, one is immediately struck by the similarity to a Ouija board and other psychic oracles that require "yes" or "no" answers: "Every move, question or word in the dowsing act speaks of supernormal intelligence — greater intelligence than can be credited to any phenomenon of human intellect....Every book or pamphlet on dowsing instruction stresses the necessity to ask the device questions from the very first try. They urge the learner to keep trying until the thing suddenly does answer.... Is there any basic difference in this and the use of the Ouija Board?"⁴¹

The Ouija board itself, of course, is merely wood, just like the dowser's stick. Yet it is difficult to deny that there is frequently a living power behind it — an independent, personal spirit entity that demands one to inquire of it if one wishes success. And few who are familiar with the facts surrounding the potential consequences of using a Ouija board would venture to deny that this power is evil.⁴²

Willey confesses of dowsing: "One of its most dramatic features is its 'selectivity.' This means dowsing supplies an answer to a *specific* question....(You have learned how a *yes* and *no* answer is obtained from dowsing devices, often obtaining answers to questions which cannot be answered from other sources)."⁴³ Another dowser acknowledges the universal necessity for the following: "Always decide precisely what you seek and ask for it in unmistakable

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terms."⁴⁴

Dowsers are thus taught to talk to the power. But one can only ask why this is so. And one can only wonder — *to whom are they talking?* Why does a truly impersonal force need to be spoken to? How can it "demand" this — unless, of course, one is really dealing with something personal like a spirit entity?

(4) Dowsing is linked to other forms of the occult. Dowsing is often linked with other forms of occult practice. For example, dowsers have made connections between dowsing and such practices as astral projection, remote viewing, shamanism, and yoga.⁴⁵ Dowsers also frequently employ occult pendulums and other radionic devices (i.e., instruments used for detecting "vital energy").⁴⁶ Most water dowsers are typically "sensitive" to the pendulum and a majority of dowsers employ it.⁴⁷ This is why dowsing societies routinely sell a wide variety of pendulums and other occult implements such as "aura indicators."⁴⁸ But all such implements are simply useless radionic devices: the psychic power comes from the spirit entity who works behind the device, not the device itself.

All divinatory methods utilize some principal object that becomes the focus and/or vehicle through which spirits work to serve the client and produce the needed answer to questions, character analysis, future prognostication, and so forth. The object becomes the contact material for spirits to work through. The following is a sampling of common forms of divination with their associated contact materials. *Astrology*: the horoscope chart; *tarot*: a deck of cards with symbols; *I Ching*: sticks, printed hexagrams; *runes*: dice; *Ouija board*: an alphabet planchette; *Radionics/psychometry*: the divining rod, pendulum, "black box" (a diagnostic apparatus for calibrating energy patterns); *palmistry*: the hand; *crystal-gazing*: the crystal ball or crystal rock; *metoscopy/physiognomy/phrenology*: the forehead/face/skull; *geomancy*: combinations of dots or points; *water-dowsing*: the forked stick or other object.

Is it reasonable to expect that mere pieces of paper bearing symbols (horoscopes), simple forked sticks, cards, hands, dice, letters of the alphabet, rocks, facial lines, or dots could supply miraculous information? Even many practitioners of these arts refer to "supernatural influences" — to gods and spirits who operate through these methods.

Space does not permit documenting the spiritistic nature of the above, but sufficient illustrations are cited elsewhere to establish that even practitioners of those arts acknowledge or suspect spirit influence in their methods.⁴⁹ Frequently, these practices do two things: they develop a person psychically⁵⁰ and they lead to spirit contact (though in many forms of divination this may not be readily discernible).⁵¹

(5) Christian activities such as conversion and prayer hinder dowsing powers. Conversion to Christ may mean loss of the dowsing ability altogether. Prayer may hinder or prevent the dowsing process. For example, Hester and Koch both refer to cases where conversion and/ or prayer have had these effects.⁵²

This reveals an additional link to spiritism. Regeneration (John 3:3-8; 6:63; 2 Cor. 5:17) and answers to prayer (Prov. 15:8, 29; 1 John 5:14) are activities of God. When these activities counteract certain practices, then, by definition, those practices cannot be activities of God, or else God would be seen to work against Himself. Thus dowsing cannot be a gift of God.

We would expect the activity of the demonic spirit world to be hindered by conversion or prayer. Jesus came to destroy the works of the Devil (1 John 3:8). Consequently, Christian actions can hinder genuine psychic activity but it is not credible to think that a neutral or natural power would be so affected by Christian activity. Thus dowsing is also not a natural human ability.

Christian dowsers often reply that they have "prayed" about using the device. But does one ever pray about committing the sin of divination? Since dowsing is condemned in Scripture (Hos. 4:12; Deut. 18:9-12) there is no need to pray about employing the practice. If one is ignorant of the biblical prohibition, that is one thing. But if one knows that God has warned against divination, to *then* pray concerning whether or not it is permissible reflects doubt over God's Word (James 1:5-8).⁵³

(6) Dowsing power is uncontrollable and supernatural. If dowsing were really a learned human ability *then* it could be controlled at will, just like any other learned human ability from bike riding to typing.

What proves dowsing is *not* a human ability is its uncontrollable nature, independent will, and supernatural power. Because the issues involved are so important I will document this section in a bit more detail.

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Let me begin with a personal illustration. "Sam" is a friend of mine who owns a farm in California. He called a local drilling company only to discover they employed a dowser to locate water.

Although he was skeptical, Sam agreed to permit the dowser to try to find the best spot to drill. The dowser cut a forked branch from a tree and proceeded to walk the property. Everyone present noticed the forceful thrust of the stick downward. But Sam was more skeptical than ever.

The dowser offered to prove the power was real. He challenged Sam to use the stick himself. Sam proceeded to walk the property. When he got to the same spot as before, the stick was powerfully thrust downward as if by an invisible hand. Sam was shaken; he couldn't believe it. He knew he had done nothing to move the stick, but it had still reacted powerfully to the same location. Next, the rest of Sam's family tried. It worked for two others, but for three additional members it would not work at all — no matter what they did. Nevertheless, water was found at the exact spot the stick indicated.

The next day Sam relayed this incident to me. I informed him that this was a spiritistic ability and something to be avoided. Sam did not want to believe in such things and challenged, "Look, I'll show you it works."

As he proceeded to cut a branch from a tree, I told him that there would be no power manifested. Try as he would, Sam could not get the stick to react. In fact, he kept cutting different branches from trees and bushes, thinking the power somehow resided in the "proper" branch. But, I explained, the power resides in the spirits who work through the dowser. No power was manifested because (1) the dowser was not there, therefore his spirit guide was probably not present; and (2) even if it were, I had prayed that God would prohibit spiritistic activity.

Sam never understood why the power wasn't there. It was obviously present one day. But the very next day it was entirely absent. "Why?" he asked over and over, mystified.

This reveals that dowsing cannot work on the basis of a natural sensitivity to water "radiations," which most dowsers claim. If that theory were true, the experiment should have worked the second time because the water was still there and it had powerfully worked for Sam the day earlier. And if it is a natural practice, why did it only work for certain members of Sam's family? The fact that it did not work for everyone shows that some other factor must have been responsible.

A former *ASD* editor reveals a conclusion arrived at by many practitioners, that the dowsing power operates *independently* of the dowser:

There is easily demonstrated evidence that the force which moves the dowsing device is independent of the *searching-out ability* of the dowser....These facts...have been given little weight by most students of dowsing....many who could create this movement [are] reluctant to do so in public because there were supernatural implications....⁵⁴

Another leader in dowsing reports, "the force can be activated to move devices when no dowsing search is involved, demonstrating that this unknown force has an independent existence,..."⁵⁵

But the power of dowsing is too great to be explained by anything natural or human. An examination of dowsing phenomena itself reveals that a genuine supernatural power is at work. Note some illustrations:

Hard as I gripped, I couldn't keep that rod vertical, although I persisted until my hands were on the verge of blisters.

Strong men have tried all kinds of gadgets to retard the movement of the dowsing rod without avail — the best one can describe the movement of the rod is that the movement, being very sudden, is like a mysterious hand which grasps the end of the rod and either moves it up or down. Even at times when one is practicing on something that is *known* to be present the shock of the movement is so sudden that one wonders where the power comes from.⁵⁶

Hester cites his own conclusion and then supplies a personal anecdote that underscores the power of the force operating behind dowsing:

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It can be stated no more clearly, *it is an outside force that moves the rod*, not the slight muscle twitch of the dowser's arms. We watched and interviewed an internationally known dowser who, at our request used two pairs of pliers to hold his forked stick. The pull downward by some external force was so great it stripped the bark off the stick held in the pliers. We tried to pull the stick up from its downward position and found it necessary to exert what we estimated to be more than a ten pound pull.⁵⁷

Another indication of the spiritistic nature of dowsing is that, as even dowsers confess, the dowsing power has an independent *will* of its own:

The rod or the pendulum seems to take off spontaneously, moved by some force which you can't understand or control, and like anything supposedly inanimate which seems to have a will of its own, it can be unnerving.⁵⁸

It may even be best to pretend that the pendulum or the rod has an independent existence, its movements willed from outside in spite of your rational brain saying that this is impossible. The British dowsing instructor, Tom Graves puts it this way: "Treat the instrument as if it has a life and mind of its own, which in most senses it hasn't but that's beside the point. I sometimes think of instruments as being like cantankerous children: they won't work unless you ask them to, and certainly won't work if you try and force them to; they occasionally lie and sometimes sulk and refuse to work at all; so you have to use a little guile, a little ingenuity, and a little wit to get the results you need...."⁵⁹

And, just as clearly, the dowsing power is not subject to human control:

Looking at the history of tests of dowsing ability held under controlled experimental conditions, it is clear that none of them have unambiguously proved dowsing to be a repeatable faculty to be summoned at will.⁶⁰

Dowsers have always been aware of a physical force they could not control.⁶¹

Once started in its movement [the implement] *cannot* be controlled or stopped by the dowser. This is the witness of every experienced dowser. They describe it in such terms as "almost frightening," "challenging," "exciting," and "my greatest experience." Dr. Bruce Copen of Sussex, England...describes this vividly..."one thing is very certain, that once the rod decides to move — it *moves* and nothing can stop it!"⁶²

It is also clear that, just like the spirit world, dowsing has access to supernatural information — information a person could not possibly know by normal means. The dowsing rod is supposedly able:

(1) to have total recall of past events, (2) to foretell future events, (3) to project itself through anything, (4) to project itself anywhere instantaneously, (5) to contain infinitely more information than it had ever been taught or heard of, and (6) advise its present possessor on all things in a manner than [*sic*] can be classed as no less than superhuman. Some dowsers attribute these six characteristics to "the God within you."⁶³

In addition, because dowsing is practiced worldwide, this means the dowsing power can somehow respond to literally scores of foreign languages. The dowser must ask the device specific questions to receive specific answers. But how did an impersonal force learn every language under the sun? More to the point, how did it learn *any* language at all?

(7) Dowsing is a hazardous activity. In another text I have documented that numerous psychological, spiritual, and physical ailments may be associated with psychic and occult activities.⁶⁴ If dowsing is truly a psychic activity, it is logical to expect similar types of hazards. T. E. Coalson refers to the characteristic minor ailments, the "number of...physical discomforts in dowsing: malaise, headaches, tension, and irritability."⁶⁵ Hester observes: "That it is detrimental to the health of the dowser is a matter of record" and he supplies many illustrations.⁶⁶

Other hazards are the more obvious ones, such as being deceived by the device (e.g., leading to financial loss) and incorrect medical diagnosis leading to further complications or death. "We found many well drillers reluctant to

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discuss dowsing, but after friendly conversation their reluctance changed to bitter denunciation of the dowsters and the financial havoc they create by their failures."⁶⁷

Frances Hitching quotes research chemist P. A. Orgley: "The nuisance value and the menace of dowsing is not sufficiently realized. A water or mineral witcher can cause an awful waste of private and public money. The medical witcher can cause a waste of public life."⁶⁸

Finally, Hester discusses his response to a Christian dowser who claimed the technique was harmless:

The record is there for the reading....nausea, dizziness, convulsive pains, muscle spasms, loss of memory, fainting and headaches during and after the simplest type of dowsing — water witching. Some dowsters do not recover their sense of well being for hours or many days after witching. This does not include the physical discomfort of some types of dowsing: bleeding hands, burning feet, the rod flying back to slap the dowser in the face as the water is located (we know of one dowser who wears a crash helmet to take the force of the blow)....Dr. Kurt Koch has told us of dowsters who, although apparently suffering none of the above effects, have fallen prey to severe psychic disturbances at a later date. Dr. Koch has also recorded case histories of severe psychological and psychic trauma by recipients of medical dowsing. We have written of the harm a dowser can cause a "victim" at will, but it is obvious that if this occult power is used to cause harm, it will seldom, if ever, be confessed.⁶⁹

Dowsing and Spiritism

I have summarized seven reasons that collectively assign dowsing an occultic status. This coincides with its use throughout history where the staff has been a tool of witchcraft, magic, sorcery, and other occult arts. Despite its modern explanations being couched in scientific or psychological language, the occult nature of dowsing has not changed throughout the centuries. I agree with several critics who have pointed out after an exhaustive analysis that "everything we have presented here shows that the forked stick or any other dowsing device has *nothing but* occult associations."⁷⁰ But even dowsters will occasionally confess to the occult nature of their art.

The former president of the British Society of Dowsters, Major General Jedyll Scott Elliot, made the following comment to George Crite at the annual convention of the American Society of Dowsters. This was reported in an article, "Water Witching" by George Crite himself, in *New Times* magazine: "What all of us are doing at this convention is witchcraft; in another age we could have been burned for it."⁷¹

Some dowsters also admit connections to the spirit world. A report on one dowsing seminar confessed that "dowsters...are always surrounded by discarnate entities eager to express themselves....They most easily accomplish this by breaking in and influencing the movement of whatever dowsing instruments are being used..."⁷²

Another dowsing instructor personally revealed to Hester that his real source of power was a spirit entity and that "several well-known historical figures were his 'spirit guides.'" Further: "Verne L. Cameron, the grand old man of dowsing, known all over the world for his ability, and completely generous in sharing his 'know-how' tells in *Aquavideo* that his decision to dowse (he was primarily a water dowser) is nothing more than getting in touch with a spirit entity. He makes it sound like a most beneficial experience, saying that the entity will tell you things you never dreamed of."⁷³

A former dowser who became a Christian concluded that dowsing was "nothing more than an *instrument of divination*. The spirit that takes over the mind of the passive dowser is a divining spirit as described in the Bible."⁷⁴

Even Hitching, a dowser, admits: "The use of the pendulum in dowsing seems to have grown naturally out of its ancient use, worldwide, among priests and seers to divine the future and receive messages from the world of the spirits."⁷⁵

All this is why, after years of research into dowsing, including discussions with many leading dowsters, Hester concluded that "we can be no more positive than to state that dowsing *is* making contact with the spirit world just as certainly as using the Ouija Board. The spirit world contacted is the world of evil spirits or angels under the

leadership of Satan."⁷⁶

In conclusion, dowsing is neither a scientific technique nor a natural human ability. It is a spiritistic power used by dowsers who only think they are using a natural or divine gift. Unfortunately, they are really practicing a forbidden art.

NOTES

- ¹ Otis Brickett, "The Gift of Healing," *The American Dowser*, August 1979, 116.
- ² Christopher Bird, "Dowsing in Industry: Hoffman-La-Roche," *The American Dowser*, August 1975, 106.
- ³ Erwin E. Stark, *A History of Dowsing and Energy Relationships* (North Hollywood, CA: BAC, 1978), 4-16; T. E. Coalson, "Dowsing: The Eternal Paradox," *Psychic*, March/April 1974, 13.
- ⁴ Taken from various issues of *The American Dowser*, 1974-1979.
- ⁵ Raymond C. Willey, *Modern Dowsing: The Dowser's Handbook* (Sedona, AZ: Esoteric Publications, 1978), 59.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁷ Ben G. Hester, *Dowsing: An Expose of Hidden Occult Forces*, rev. ed. 1984, 59-71, self-published and available from the author at 4883 Hedrick Ave., Arlington, CA 92505.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, 58-94.
- ⁹ *The American Dowser*, May 1976, 90; February 1977, 20-21; February 1975, 15-18; August 1976, 101, 109, 118; May 1977, 66-69; August 1977, 10-11; November 1977, 176-77; February 1978, 27; May 1978, 64; May 1979, 53, 82-83; Hester, 3-4.
- ¹⁰ Stark, 17-24; Willey, *Modern Dowsing*, 45; Gordon MacLean, *A Field Guide to Dowsing* (Danville, VT: The American Society of Dowers, 1976), 18-20.
- ¹¹ Kurt Koch, *Occult ABC* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1980), 185-86.
- ¹² Hester, personal conversation, 1988.
- ¹³ Monte Kline in his *Christian Health Counselor*, March/April 1989, 6. For a critique of homeopathy and other methods, see John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Can You Trust Your Doctor?* (Irving, TX: Word, 1991).
- ¹⁴ E.g., Susan Stewart, "What Is Dowsing?" *The American Dowser*, May 1975, 58.
- ¹⁵ NASB; the NIV reads, "They consult a wooden idol and are answered by a stick of wood. A spirit of prostitution leads them astray." See NIV text notes.
- ¹⁶ Norman Evans, "Dowsing: Its Biblical Background," *The American Dowser*, May 1979, 70.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 75.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 73.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 77.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 78.
- ²¹ Ann Fleming, "Ideas about Dowsing," *The American Dowser*, August 1978, 102.
- ²² "The Dowser's Prayer," as given in *The American Dowser*, November 1977, 169.
- ²³ Fleming, 103; Harry Steinmetz, "Telerradiaesthesia: Fact or Fiction?" *The American Dowser*, August 1978, 103.
- ²⁴ James Randi, "A Controlled Test of Dowsing Abilities," *The Skeptical Inquirer*, Fall 1978, 16-20; James Randi, "The Great \$10,000 Dowsing Challenge," *The Skeptical Inquirer*, Summer 1984, 329-33; Dick Smith, "Two Tests of Divining in Australia," *The Skeptical Inquirer*, Summer 1982, 34-37.
- ²⁵ Smith, 34-37; Samuel Pfeifer, M.D., *Healing at Any Price?* (Milton Keynes, England: Word Limited, 1988), 99-100.
- ²⁶ Michael Martin, "A New Controlled Dowsing Experiment: Putting the President of the American Society of Dowers to the Test," *The Skeptical Inquirer*, Winter 1983-84, 139.
- ²⁷ Evon Z. Vogt and Ray Hyman, *Water Witching U.S.A.*, 2d ed., (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1979).
- ²⁸ Martin, 140.
- ²⁹ Hester, 41.
- ³⁰ Frances Hitching, *Dowsing: The Psi Connection* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1978), 41; Stark, 12 cf. *The American Dowser*, November 1979, 187.
- ³¹ Raymond C. Willey, "Dowsing Basics," *The American Dowser*, November 1977, 178.
- ³² Gordon MacLean, "Dowsing Experiences and Problems," *The American Dowser*, May 1976, 70. Cf. Hitching, 182-83.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, 79.
- ³⁴ E.g., *The American Dowser*, February 1976, 15; May 1976, 87; August 1976, 118; November 1977, 176.
- ³⁵ Augustus T. Nottingham, "Reaching Into Space and Time," *The American Dowser*, February 1977, 8-9.

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- ³⁶ See John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *The Facts on the Occult* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1991), 11-21.
- ³⁷ Willey, *Modern Dowsing*, 6.
- ³⁸ Quoted in Hester, 57-58.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, 15-16; Hitching, 41.
- ⁴⁰ E.g., John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Astrology: Do the Heavens Rule Our Destiny?* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1989), 244-46.
- ⁴¹ Hester, 41-42.
- ⁴² E.g., Edmond Gruss, *The Ouija Board: Doorway to the Occult* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1973); cf. Stoker Hunt, *Ouija: A Most Dangerous Game* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985).
- ⁴³ Willey, *Modern Dowsing*, 67, 111.
- ⁴⁴ Gordon MacLean, *A Field Guide*, 7; cf. *The American Dowser*, August 1977, 108.
- ⁴⁵ Hitching, 130, 204-5, 243-44; MacLean, *Field Guide*, 27; Egon E. Eckert, "A Dowser's Trip to West Germany," *The American Dowser*, May 1975, 68.
- ⁴⁶ E.g., *The American Dowser*, February 1976, 3, 13; August 1978, 118-19; May 1975, 68; November 1977, 177; May 1977, 76-77.
- ⁴⁷ E.g., A. J. Soares, "My Pendulum Said 'No'," *The American Dowser*, November 1977, 191.
- ⁴⁸ *The American Dowser*, February 1976, 3; Standard ASD Supply List for 1983.
- ⁴⁹ See Ankerberg and Weldon, *Astrology*, 245-47 for primary documentation.
- ⁵⁰ See John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *The Facts on the Occult*, 11-21 and note 74 of this article.
- ⁵¹ See note 69.
- ⁵² Hester, 58, 188; Koch, *Occult ABC*, 188-91.
- ⁵³ Hester, 118, 157.
- ⁵⁴ Willey, *Modern Dowsing*, 23-24.
- ⁵⁵ Raymond C. Willey, "Editorial," *The American Dowser*, May 1976, 75.
- ⁵⁶ Harvey Howells, "How We Came to Dowsing," *The American Dowser*, August 1976, 116; Bruce Copen, *Dowsing for You* (Sussex, England: Academic Publications, 1982), 5, cited in Hester, 70.
- ⁵⁷ Hester, 70.
- ⁵⁸ Hitching, 68.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 79.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 103.
- ⁶¹ Hester, 6.
- ⁶² *Ibid.*, 69-70.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*, 104-5.
- ⁶⁴ John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *The Hazards of the Occult* (tentative title), to be published by Harvest House, 1993.
- ⁶⁵ Coalson, 15.
- ⁶⁶ Hester, 155.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.
- ⁶⁸ Hitching, 104.
- ⁶⁹ Hester, 199-200.
- ⁷⁰ E.g., *Ibid.*, 156.
- ⁷¹ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 7.
- ⁷² William Vrooman, "Dowsing for Health: Mental and Spiritual Bodies of Human and Non-Human Entities," *The American Dowser*, November 1977, 151.
- ⁷³ *Ibid.*, 44, 114.
- ⁷⁴ Pfeifer, 104.
- ⁷⁵ Hitching, 60.
- ⁷⁶ Hester, 157.