

Does the Bible take a position on clairvoyance and parapsychology?

Romans 1:20

Yes, it does, and it's a decidedly negative position. The Bible is unequivocal in condemning the use of clairvoyants, psychics, horoscopes, tarot cards, or any other aspect of the occult.

Clairvoyance (literally "clear vision") refers to the practice of seeking information through means other than the known human senses. Parapsychology, a discipline in rapid decline, is an attempt to use the scientific method to measure psychic ability and answer questions about life after death.

Even though history is replete with examples of the universal human desire to know what lies beyond the limitations of the five senses, you don't have to look any further than common human experience. The longing to reach beyond the boundaries of our creatureliness seems to be woven into the fabric of human thinking.

But God imposed creaturely limitations on us for a reason. He made us to be dependent on Him. The five senses He gave us are to enable us to see clearly "His eternal power and divine nature...through what has been made" (Romans 1:20). If we want knowledge beyond what our senses can tell us—and we most certainly do—we are to seek that information from God, and from God alone. The Holy Spirit alone has written the revelation of God in the Bible. Clairvoyants, psychics, and occult practitioners have no part in conveying the revelation of God; all they can provide is a cheap and damning counterfeit.

The biblical term for clairvoyant is "medium" or "spiritist." The ancient, pre-modern world acknowledged the source of extra-sensory perception as originating with spirit beings that inhabited a spirit world. Pre-moderns were comfortable with knowing that a medium was channeling messages between the living and the dead, or between the physical and spiritual worlds. But the modern mind denies the existence of a spiritual realm inhabited by angels and demons. People today use more sophisticated, scientific-sounding language, like "paranormal psychology" or "clairvoyance phenomenon."

It's probably true that most instances of clairvoyance amount to little more than parlor tricks and stage magic. The rigorous application of the scientific method has ruled out any serious claims of paranormal activity. Parapsychology is no longer considered a serious scientific discipline by the mainstream scientific community.

Whether the phenomena are evidences of a clever trickster, demonic activity, or the staid and serious pronouncement of the scientific community, the Bible calls all of it an abomination. Deuteronomy 18:9-14 says,

When you enter the land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not learn to imitate the detestable things of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up

the dead. For whoever does these things is detestable to the LORD; and because of these detestable things the LORD your God will drive them out before you. You shall be blameless before the LORD your God. For those nations, which you shall dispossess, listen to those who practice witchcraft and to diviners, but as for you, the LORD your God has not allowed you to do so. (emphasis added)

If the Old Testament saints were commanded not to seek mediums, spiritists, and the like, it's even more emphatic that clairvoyance has no place in the life of a Christian. A Christian has a personal relationship with the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ, is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and can read and discern the mind of God in the Holy Scriptures.

Luke records an incident in Ephesus that poignantly illustrates the Christian attitude toward clairvoyance and parapsychology. Many Ephesians responded to the gospel Paul preached; they demonstrated their repentance publicly and made a massive impact on the pagan culture. Acts 19:18-19 conveys what happened in the public square:

Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices. And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of all; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.

A piece of silver was one day's wage for a workingman—quite a sum of money invested in books on the occult (clairvoyance and parapsychology included). In their newfound faith, they gained God's perspective on their former practices, seeing them as sin that they needed to confess, and consigning their books to the flames.

If Christians today will take the same attitude toward their former worldly thinking, being willing to take bold and dramatic action to rid their lives of all that offends God, they can expect to receive blessing from Him, just as the Ephesians did: "So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing" (Acts 19:20).