

News Article: JAA167

MAGIC CHARMS ENCHANT APOSTOLIC-PROPHETIC MOVEMENT

This article first appeared in the News Watch column of the *Christian Research Journal*, volume 30, number 4 (2007). For further information or to subscribe to the *Christian Research Journal* go to: <http://www.equip.org>

Kits to remove curses, cards to interpret dreams, and music to heal people have become popular products in the apostolic-prophetic movement, also called the “New Apostolic Reformation.” The movement, which is fast growing in charismatic churches, has long been criticized for its promotion of modern “apostles” and “prophets” who claim to have great authority and to speak for God. It is now being criticized for selling products that—many Christians believe—have more in common with the magic charms used in occult practices than with Christianity.

Property Dedication Kit. One organization that sells these products is the Elijah List, based in Albany, Oregon, which is founded and run by “prophet” Steve Shultz. The Elijah List e-mails daily newsletters that feature prophecies—and advertisements for products like these—to more than 130,000 subscribers, according to its Web site (www.elijahlist.com).

One of the Elijah List’s top-selling products is the “Portals to Cleansing Property Dedication Kit”—sold for \$12—which is supposed to remove curses from houses and properties. Created by Henry Malone, a professional “house cleanser” and founder of Vision Life Ministries in Irving, Texas, the kit contains anointing oil and wood stakes, with Scripture verses on them, to drive into the borders of a property.

“Use it and make the enemy flee!” Shultz promised his Elijah List readers in an advertisement for the kit, sent on October 16, 2006. Shultz personally vouched for the kit, saying he’s cleansed his own 20 acres of land three or four times and, each time, has seen “a noticeable change in the atmosphere and circumstances.” He said curses are the only explanation for “certain sicknesses, diseases, and even death that comes upon very anointed and pure-hearted people.”

A companion book written by Malone—titled *Portals to Cleansing: Taking Back Your Land from the Hands of the Enemy* (Vision Life Publications, 2002)—is sold separately from the kit. It promises to teach readers the “keys to reclaiming [their] land, home, possessions and animals from the power of Satan and his demonic forces.” (See the book and kit at: www.elijahshopper.com.) The book recommends holding a communion ceremony at the center of a property—where family and friends gather inside a circle drawn on the ground with anointing oil—then burying the unused bread and juice or wine.

After following the book’s advice, Matthew Spencer posted a review on Amazon.com saying that his home had a new “peace” and “lightness of spirit.” Spencer said, “I no longer feel uneasy walking through the house in the dark. Honestly, it is a night and day difference.”

Marcia Montenegro, author of the book *Spellbound: The Paranormal Seduction of Today’s Kids* (Cook/Life Journey, 2006) and founder of the Web site “Christian Answers for the New Age,” however, said Christians don’t need to worry about curses since they aren’t emphasized in the Bible. Even if curses were a threat, though, she thinks the kit would be powerless against them.

“How is that going to remove curses?” said Montenegro, a former professional astrologer and occult practitioner who converted to Christianity. She told the Journal that the kit has more in common with an occult worldview, comparing the anointing oil and wood stakes to “amulets”—objects that occultists believe have powers to protect them from evil, disease, or other harm.

"[With the kit,] it's like you're engaging in the occult to protect yourself from [the occult]," Montenegro said, adding that occult practices are banned by the Bible in Deuteronomy 18:10–12. She believes that a biblical response to threats is prayer to God—which goes straight to the source of divine power—rather than relying on magic charms. "What happened to regular prayer?" she asked.

Amulets have a long history, according to Dr. Ron Rhodes, founder and president of Reasoning from the Scriptures Ministries in Frisco, Texas, and author of *New Age Movement* (Zondervan, 1995). The ancient Babylonians, for example, wore cylinders that were supposed to ward off evil spirits, Rhodes told the JOURNAL.

Today, New Agers wear crystals to ward off negative energies. The purpose of amulets—like all occult charms—is to harness and manipulate the power of a deity or the forces of nature, according to Rhodes. He sees this as the purpose behind the property dedication kit.

"It is definitely an example of paganism making its way into the church," he said.

Third Heaven Vision Anointing Oil. Another top-selling product for the Elijah List is "Third Heaven Vision Anointing Oil," which is supposed to give visions of the heavenly realm. Sold by Tom Panich of Vancouver, Washington, it's made with a base of virgin olive oil and six fragrances that are mentioned in the Bible: calamus, cassia, frankincense, myrrh, Rose of Sharon, and spikenard. A half-ounce sells for \$12.

Anointing oil often has been used by Christians on sick people—along with prayer—in accordance with a Scripture passage, James 5:14–15. Christians historically did not view the oil as having any special power, however; they saw its use simply as an act of faith in God. They also did not use the oil to induce visions or cleanse homes from evil, as it is used in the apostolic-prophetic movement.

In this movement, different brands of oil are depicted as "anointed" and, therefore, as more powerful than other "non-anointed" oils. For example, in the Elijah List's first advertisement for Third Heaven Vision Anointing Oil, sent on March 22, 2004, Shultz said, "We've carried different anointing oils in the past. But I always try to carry anointing oil with *true anointing* on it. This oil fulfills that anointing 'standard.'"

Panich—a graduate of Norvel Haye's New Life Bible College in Cleveland, Tennessee—claims that, in 2003, God told him to make the oil. Panich said, later, he was in the shower one day when he was hit with "a lightning bolt of God's Glory," and the Holy Spirit gave him the name, "Third Heaven Vision."

Panich said, "Every time I mix up a batch [of the oil], a strong anointing hits me and I shake vigorously...Also, on the occasions that I have put a full box (144 bottles) of the anointing oil in the hands of two separate strong intercessors, they have been hit by the power and anointing of the Lord, almost to the point of falling to the ground."

Panich also recommends that the anointing oil be poured over the wood stakes from Malone's property dedication kit, something Panich said he has tried. "After I drove the first stake into the ground, I felt the Presence of the Lord come across the yard, hit me, and then I almost fell over," he wrote on the Elijah List (Oct. 16, 2006).

Such descriptions of anointing oil (as having magical power) concern Montenegro. She said that it's one thing for Christians to use the oil symbolically, "but it's another thing if you think that the oil itself is somehow going to magically protect you," she said. "To think that an object in and of itself has power is [to think according to] an occult worldview." Such a use of anointing oil reminds Montenegro of the New Age practice of burning sage to cleanse and bless houses, she said.

Dream Cards. The Elijah List also sells "Dream Cards," created by Barbie Breathitt of "Breath of the Spirit Ministries," based in North Richland Hills, Texas. The laminated cards contain common dream symbols—such as numbers, colors, and animals—and their interpretations. They are sold for \$10 each or in sets of 6 and 12—for \$50 and \$96, respectively.

Breathitt's Dream Cards are endorsed by Patricia King, the founder of *Extreme Prophetic Television with Patricia King*—a half-hour program featuring well-known "prophets" that airs on Canada's Miracle Channel.

“So many believers are having significant dreams but do not always understand the significance of the symbols within them,” King said. “Barbie Breathitt has done a marvelous job of preparing dream cards as a tremendous tool to help this process.”

Besides dream interpretations, one of the cards lists colors and musical keys that are supposed to bring healing to specific body parts. The use of music and colors for healing is also promoted in occult circles, as on New York psychic Ellie Crystal’s Web site (<http://www.crystalinks.com/colors.html>).

Rhodes said that dream cards that are similar to Breathitt’s are common in New Age stores: “The idea that it [dream interpretation] is penetrating the Christian church is kind of scary,” he said, adding that this represents a growing acceptance of mysticism among Christians.

Rhodes admits that the Bible records times when God’s people, like Daniel, interpreted dreams. He says that in those cases, however, they always made it clear that God gave them the interpretations, not dream cards.

Montenegro, who knew dream interpreters before she became a Christian, said that the assignment of meanings to symbols is subjective. “Who’s going to say what represents what? You can make anything be a symbol for anything,” she said, adding that the people she knew couldn’t agree on the meanings of symbols.

Besides being a waste of time, dream interpretation can encourage egotism, according to Montenegro. “If you start focusing so heavily on your dreams and think everything has a meaning, it leads to self-absorption,” she said.

Prophetic Worship CDs. Another growing industry is “prophetic” worship CDs—combinations of music, teachings, and prophecies that are supposed to bring healing, visions, and supernatural encounters just by listening to them. Many of the CDs are recorded in live settings, where the musicians and “prophets” perform spontaneously, without preparation. They, allegedly, are taken over by the Holy Spirit—composing music and lyrics that come from the “throne room of God.”

One of these CDs, sold by the Elijah List for \$15, is called *Invitation to Intimacy*. It was recorded by James W. Goll, the cofounder of Encounters Network in Tulsa, Oklahoma, while he was “caught up into another realm,” according to the advertisement. The CD contains over an hour of “prophetic, spontaneous worship and teaching with keyboard and instrumentation in the background.”

Divine encounters are offered by Ryan Wyatt’s CD, titled *The Overshadowing*. Wyatt—founder of Abiding Glory Ministries in Seymour, Tennessee—urges his listeners to “sit back and relax as you are taken into the Open Heavens and experience Visions of God! Rest under the wing of God as He overshadows and saturates you with His thick, weighty, intoxicating presence!”

CDs that offer physical healing include one by “prophetic revivalist” Matt Sorger of Seldon, New York, titled *Healing in His Wings*. The advertisement says the CD combines instrumental music and many other “heavenly sounds, healing scriptures, spontaneous healing prayers and prophetic song.” It claims to be a “powerful combination of both the biblical healing word and the manifest healing presence of Christ.” Another CD by Canadian “prophet” Todd Bentley, titled *The Voice of Healing*, promises to “bring the transferable, tangible healing anointing and atmosphere to your home, hospital room, or healing service.”

The concept of music or teaching that is composed directly by the Holy Spirit alarms Rhodes. “That whole idea assumes a direct pipeline to God,” he said, adding that if someone claims to receive revelation from God, then it needs to be perfectly consistent with the Bible. “But oftentimes it’s not,” he said.

Rhodes also objects to the idea that an anointing can be transferred through a CD, saying, “There is definitely a pagan connection there—a transference of anointing or power or energy.”

Rhodes said that New Agers also have released music they claimed was inspired by the Holy Spirit, but they redefined the Holy Spirit in non-Christians terms—as a nonpersonal force rather than as one of the three Persons of the Godhead. In the same way, people in the church sometimes redefine the Holy Spirit,

Rhodes added. “Just because someone is talking about the Holy Spirit doesn’t mean it’s the Holy Spirit you and I know from the Bible,” he said.

Hocus Focus. Rhodes suspects that many of the people who sell dream cards, prophetic music, and similar products are motivated by a love of money—something the Bible warns against in places such as 1 Timothy 6:10. “People are capitalizing on, and ripping off, gullible people,” he said.

Rhodes believes the biggest danger for Christians, however, is not being conned out of cash, but being deceived by a magical worldview that diverts their focus. “Their attention is being taken off of God and put onto objects and potions,” he said.

— *Holly Pivec*